

Reconceptualising the Creative Economy: Possibilities in Place in Rural Victoria

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Abstract

This thesis problematises the creative economy as a solution to decline, based on the standard neoliberal formula that foregrounds the creative class as leading agents of regeneration. Incantations of the creative class as saviours of rural economies are widely critiqued as imposing a typology of creative people and ‘vibrant’ places that derive from subjective urban capitalistic metrics. In response, this thesis takes a diverse and community economies approach to understand how rural creative economies might be constituted in response to decline through postcapitalist practices of economic experimentation. In addressing this aim, an ethnographic study was undertaken in two rural Victorians towns that are enacting creative economic experimentation through Booktown and Slow Food networks. Drawing upon twenty-five in-depth interviews and participant observation with Clunes Booktown and Slow Food Mildura, I engage with actor-network theory to elicit how these networks enable new possibilities for rural creative economies. A key finding is that rather than understanding the creative economy as an external solution to rural decline through importing a generic typology of creative people and places, the rural creative economy is relationally shaped between people and place. This finding is supported by three main strands: i) agency is not enacted by a creative class but through a ‘hybrid collective’ of actors who are mobilised by and with place to act ii) attending to place concerns and enacting creative economies involves drawing upon local resources or ‘cultural commons’ that offer more-than-capitalist (or creative class) benefits iii) practices of local cultural resource use and exchange foster new socialities between market and place. Taken together, these findings provide important insights into how community and place are active agents of change beyond creative class framings. I recommend that investing in these relations rather than individuals or sectors provides a genuine place-based approach to regeneration.

Statement of Authorship

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma. No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis. This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution. Research procedures reported in this thesis were approved by the College of ASSC Human Ethics Sub-Committee.

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Publications

Parts of the following publications completed during my candidature have been reproduced in this thesis:

Book chapters:

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CHAPTER ONE

The Problem with the Creative Economy as a solution to decline

1.1 The need for reconceptualising

Since the 1990s, interest in the creative economy as a solution to decline has spread across the world. For former industrial cities grappling with a loss of traditional industries such as automotive or shipbuilding, the creative economy provides opportunities for generating new economic activity. Particular interest is paid to how immaterial resources such as knowledge and creativity can be leveraged to meet the demand for the production of symbolic content like literature, music, film, design and gastronomy. At the same time, creative economies can revitalise perceptions of place by turning decaying sites of industrial production into more politically desirable sites of redevelopment and consumption. Given this potential, we are witnessing a global proliferation of creative cities and culture capitals ranging from supranational projects such as UNESCO's creative cities network (embracing cities of Crafts and Folk Art, Design, Film, Gastronomy, Literature, Music and Media Arts) and the European Union Capitals of Culture Program; to city development strategies largely influenced by urban gurus Charles Landry and Richard Florida; extending to policy interests around creative leaderboards and hotspots in regional settings (Regional Australia Institute 2018). It appears that now hardly anywhere is untouched by the desire to be recognised as creative in defeating decline, but who is leading this charge?

This thesis problematises the creative economy as a solution to rural decline, based on the standard neoliberal formula that foregrounds the creative class as leading agents of regeneration. Incantations of the creative class as saviours of rural economies are widely critiqued as imposing a typology of creative people and 'vibrant' places that derive from subjective urban capitalistic metrics. This approach is underpinned by measurements such as 'creativity indices' that reify creativity as fixed to a typology of creative occupations and places—privileging certain places as more creative than others. Rural communities across Australia, however, have a long history of attending and adapting to economic challenges and drawing upon the distinct assets and resources

of place. The thesis asks if the creative economy is constituted in *place* in response to decline rather than as a neoliberal policy solution? Can we imagine alternative economic subjects beyond a creative class who are mobilising creative economies in response to decline? Are there ways that place resources are used and exchanged for community, rather than individual benefit, in a creative economy?

Creative economy and creative city strategies are increasingly critiqued as entrepreneurial governance techniques. Political economist Jamie Peck (2011, p. 43) describes the spate of creative city strategies as linked to a ‘fast policy market for creativity makeovers’, promoting urban imitation and competition. At the heart of many of these strategies is fostering the conditions necessary to attract the ‘creative class’, a concept coined by urban scholar Richard Florida in his 2002 publication *The Rise of the Creative Class*, to describe employees in creative and largely commodifiable knowledge-based industries including software, technology and design. Described as a ‘once-in-a-generation idea’ capturing scholarly, policy and public interest (Argent et al. 2013, p. 89), Florida gained attention by documenting how the creative class represented a new economic grouping that was overtaking traditional classes like agriculture and working classes in the USA. According to Florida, these workforce transitions were a wake-up call for struggling cities to create the ‘people climate’ (2002, p. 283) desired by this lifestyle-seeking cohort. Florida’s publication and promotional circuit inspired a regeneration formula setting out the desirable conditions for a creative class including vibrant cultural and recreational facilities, diverse cultures and exciting atmospheres. Through this work, creativity indices and leaderboards were popularised, effectively, and admittedly by Florida (2002, p. 235), positioning places as winners and losers according to their creative class share.

Florida’s competitive and market-based framing of a creative economy has spread to rural areas. This has been fuelled by the creative class theory’s alternative to conventional ‘smokestack chasing’ (Argent et al. 2013, p. 88) economic development models that place a development emphasis on attracting industries such as manufacturing and food processing factories. Global and national economic regulation and restructuring has diminished the capacity of this model, painfully witnessed in Australia (and elsewhere) through the flight of multinational corporations to cheaper labour markets, such as the departure of the Heinz factory from the Victorian agricultural town of Girgarre in 2011 (Isaacs & Dixon 2015, p. 157). Furthermore, diminishing state intervention in regional development has exacerbated pressure on individuals and communities to devise new solutions for decline. Florida’s creative class theory has thus had rural resonance, giving weight to

the neoliberal prioritisation of individual entrepreneurialism and self-sufficiency and generating interest in the relationship between rural creativity and growth and the conditions necessary to attract the creative class to repopulate and restimulate rural towns in Western economies (Argent et al. 2013; Argent 2018). As a result, hopes are pinned on the creative class as ‘agents of transformation’ (Petrov 2008) creating opportunities for rural towns to confront decline by attracting this heroic cohort, but as many are asking—at what cost?

The spread of the creative class ‘contagion’ (Peck 2005) is met by concerns over its effects in perpetuating gentrification and inequality in urban and rural areas alike. Indeed, Richard Florida has recently expressed such concerns in his publication, *The New Urban Crisis* acknowledging the damaging effects created by this new class geography on socio-spatial polarisation (Florida 2017). Florida admits that the benefits of inner urban revival are disproportionately accrued to the creative professionals and tech workers who can afford rising house prices, pushing less well paid creative and service workers to the outer suburbs. Therefore, while creatives are contributing to the vibrancy of inner cities, they are excluded from the benefits. Similarly, in rural areas, the creative class is associated with rural gentrification concerns around social divide and displacement (Fleming 2009). Such tensions are accompanied by broader questions around the role of the entrepreneurial governance and the creative economy in confronting rather than exacerbating concerns around social and ecological crises (Banks & O’Connor 2017; North & Nurse 2014).

Critical scholarship on rural creative economies is exploring how the rural context provides important opportunities for reconceptualising the creative economy. Central to this approach is the issue of place. Oakley and Ward (2018, p. 5) observe how the widespread application of urban creative economy models has perpetuated a ‘lack of attention to social and spatial difference’. Geographer Neil Argent (2018, p. 7) however notes in a recent review article how rural geographers are turning away from Florida’s metrics and engaging in important explorations of ‘the intrinsic importance of arts and cultural practices to local rural social life’, with particular concern to ‘how such practices reflect local people’s relationship with place’. The turn to place provides an important step in decodifying creative economies from their urban capitalist origins and providing specific insights into who and what mobilises rural creative economies beyond perceptions of passive communities being rescued by a heroic creative class imposing their visions and taste upon place.

A range of studies are providing an alternative framing of a creative economy. Growing emphasis is placed in considering rural creative economies as relational and noncapitalistic—performed by identities outside of creative class framings such those who undertake creative activities in pursuit of a ‘good life’ based on ethical and wellbeing aspirations (Luckman 2015; Oakley & Ward 2018) or as part of vernacular or everyday community cultural participation (Edensor & Millington 2019; Edensor et al. 2009; Gibson & Gordon 2018; Mayes 2010). Challenging urban capitalist approaches to creative economies that focus heavily on private intellectual property, rural cultural resources are considered as part of a broader shared stock rather than individual commodity (Scott 2010), with exchanges taking place outside of capitalist markets (Hwang 2013; Waitt & Gibson 2013). Eschewing the creative economy as a top-down government model, global grassroots groups are tackling economic and environmental concerns by reimagining cultural resources through networks such as Booktowns and the ‘Slow’ movement (Mayer & Knox 2010; Scott 2011, p. 859). These insights demonstrate how rural creative economies can be nurtured in ways that reveal the possibility of place in response to decline and provide an alternative to the capitalist economy and creative class as core beneficiaries. Conceptions of a creative economy are therefore seemingly at a crossroads, offering a timely opportunity for intervention.

1.2 Motivating the study

My motivation to explore an alternative vision of a creative economy shaped by community and place was driven by a curiosity in local economic regeneration. Growing up in the harbourside town of Cobh, Ireland, I witnessed the entire remaking of an economy in decline around culture. As I grew up, the smokestacks of the shipbuilding, steel and other manufacturing industries were replaced by cruise ships and tourism experiences promoting a maritime history around the last voyage of the Titanic, convict exportation and mass emigration. Cobh’s story demonstrated how the remaking of an economy could also involve the remaking of a community, as various groups rallied alongside public and private enterprises, to support this new economy through a retelling of stories for locals and tourists alike, through historic figures and fashion (my mother’s beloved ‘Cobh Animation Team’) or sea shantys (‘The Molgoggers’). These cases demonstrate how the gathering together of community members to engage in cultural and creative activities that, while supporting a tourism economy, offer much more than can be quantified according to Florida’s metrics through the sharing of skills, knowledge and layers of cultural resources such as songs, stories and styles that are reproduced into the present.

Across the world in my new home of regional Victoria another (but not entirely different) picture of decline was visible through places experiencing the forces of economic restructuring resulting in the loss of local industry. Debates over the viability of many rural settlements were prevalent in media and academic sources (Forth 2001; Lockie 2000). In contrast, hope became increasingly tethered to counter-urbanisation trends generally framed around amenity migration and presented as ‘seachange’ or ‘treechange’ phenomena, documenting the flight of urban migrants to the coast or picturesque inland areas (Burnley & Murphy 2004; Ragusa 2010). Emergent themes in this research emphasised how these new flows of human capital could lead to the ‘revival’ of certain rural areas (particularly those near urban centres or the coast).

The fortunes of one such treechange town sparked my interest in the topic of rural creative economies. A research project with the central Victorian town of Clunes as part of my Masters in Community Planning and Development in 2010 brought to my attention the way a changing rural community was experimenting with culture and creativity. As Australia’s first Booktown, the community-driven initiative sought to apply the international rural regeneration model by filling empty spaces in Clunes with second-hand bookshops to generate cultural tourism. My preliminary research involved an evaluation of the annual Booktown Festival in 2010 and documenting its role in building social sustainability. Witnessing how a diverse array of community members were responding to challenges of decline through grassroots action has motivated me to engage in a wider exploration of rural creative economies beyond the creative class. This motivation takes me back to Clunes Booktown and introduces an additional creative economy focus, network and site, the Slow Food Movement in Mildura, northern Victoria.

1.3 Research Aims and Questions

The neoliberalised framing of creative economies and championing of creative class ideas in response to decline remain prevalent in policy discourse in Victoria. I recently attended the national Artlands conference in my hometown of Bendigo (11 Oct 2018), and listened to a presentation by the Regional Australia Institute (a think tank that provides evidence for decision makers on change). The session entitled ‘Analysing Creative Hotspots in Regional Australia’ reported on the aforementioned study of creative leaderboards raised in the opening paragraph. Focusing on the rising proportion of creative industries occupations in regional Australia, the presentation was concerned with the spatial distribution of creative industries professions and what this meant for regional ‘vibrancy’. A central focus was the tipping point on what makes a place a ‘country town’

versus a ‘vibrant regional hub’. A list of 15 ‘creative hotspots’ was shown, in mostly peri-urban areas, such as the coastal town of Byron Bay to the forested Macedon Ranges Shire. These rankings reinforced the idea of creative professionals as economic saviours, and vibrancy as something that needs to be marketable to outsiders. The presentation prompted discussion from the packed audience of creative practitioners on what contributes to this vibrancy—good coffee provided another potential Floridian index—but deeper issues were raised around who is included in these ABS measures (not volunteers, non-creative identified workers, or small businesses), place contexts and histories, the role of individuals and personalities in sparking ideas, questions of generating a more sustainable career or livelihood, responding to crises or key event (closure of BHP steelworks in Newcastle), sharing skills, investment, and multiculturalism. Taken together, these responses highlight the multiple ways that creative economies might be driven by more than just a clustering of professionals. In this thesis, I hope to contribute to knowledge on how rural creative economies might emerge through place rather than creative professional proxies.

This thesis responds to calls for more place-based and relational understandings of creative economies. I challenge the way governments look to the creative economy as a solution to decline in the form of creative occupations, commodified cultural resources and capitalist markets. I focus instead on a relational understanding of how communities are building new economic futures around sharing and enlarging cultural assets and resources. To achieve the aim of reconceptualising the rural creative economy as being constituted in place involves a reframing of the creative economy in its dominant form.

The idea of reframing the creative economy was not obvious to me from the outset. In the formative stages of the research design, I had felt readily equipped to approach the study through the suite of tools and techniques that map and measure creative economies using Florida’s categories. Doubts soon formed however around how the creative class and associated indicators of a creative economy (such as the manifestation of intellectual property in patent registration) could truly act as a universal proxy for creative activities. This approach sat in uneasy contrast with earlier observations of the interesting examples of rural creative economies being enacted in Clunes Booktown. Creative economies were being formed here outside of specific sectors and generated by motivations beyond the commodification of culture and place for individual gain.

In place of the individualistic and capitalistic framing of a creative economy apparent in Florida’s work and others, in this thesis I take a poststructural approach that focuses investigation on the

relationality of rural creative economies in responding to decline. What seemed to be occurring in these communities were examples of community members collectively responding to economic shifts in creative and ethically considered ways that attended to the particularities of place rather than catering to outside or individual interests. Specifically, I turn to the diverse and community economies scholarship underpinned by the work of feminist economic geographer J.K. Gibson-Graham. This involves challenging capitalist economic discourse and representation and exploring performative possibilities for alternative economies. The work of J.K. Gibson-Graham and colleagues in the Community Economies Research Network introduces a relational approach to economic geography and turns attention to the interdependencies between diverse ‘economic subjects, sites and practices’ and in a community economy (Gibson-Graham 2006b, p. 81). In this vein, community economy scholars Leo Hwang (2013) and Abby Templer Rodrigues (2018) have initiated a path into ‘rethinking the creative economy’ from a postcapitalist perspective. A postcapitalist perspective allows us to see how alternative economic activities operate beyond the ‘interstices’ of capitalism (North 2014, p. 247), and how these activities might constitute an ethical practice of economy (Gibson-Graham 2006b). Rethinking the creative economy from a postcapitalist stance shows how creative economies are enriched with, rather than devoid of cultural assets and resources, and troubles the competitive and marked-based logics of creative economy discourse. Guided by this rethinking of economy, this thesis seeks to reconceptualise the rural creative economy by questioning how rural creative economies are constituted in *place* rather than assumed creative hotspots.

This thesis is driven by four research questions that seek to understand how rural creative economies might be constituted in place in response to decline. In exploring these questions I address the problematic tendency of dominant narratives to locate rural creative economic activity in the creative class, the lack of understanding of how cultural resources are being mobilised and the narrow focus on GDP contributions of creative economic activities. My research questions are:

RQ1. How are rural creative economies emerging in place?

RQ2. Who is enacting change through rural creative economies beyond a creative class?

RQ3. How are place-based cultural resources utilised in rural creative economies in response to concerns for decline?

RQ4. What types of market transactions underpin rural creative economies outside of commercialisation and GDP?

1.4 Locating Creative Economies in Place

Rural areas offer insightful settings to reconsider the potential of the creative economy by decoupling the creative economy from its urban genesis in capitalistically valued sectors. In rural areas, creative economy models defy easy transfer from urban policies (Bell 2015) and provide opportunities for new insights into motivations and practices of economic work, resource use and exchange that constitute creative economies more broadly.

As discussed in section 1.2, the town of Clunes was the first site selected for this thesis. Clunes (population 1,728 ABS 2017a) is notable as the site of the Victorian gold rush in 1851 which generated a notable streetscape of grand bluestone and sandstone buildings. Located around 141 kilometres north-west of the state capital of Melbourne, Clunes rapidly evolved from colonial pastoral settlement in 1839 to a mining boom town, attracting prospectors from all over the world. Following a decline in minable gold, the population decreased and the town transitioned to an agricultural and manufacturing economy which has subsequently faced restructuring challenges, exacerbated by the millennium drought and a depleted population base and local economy.



Figure 1.1 View of the town of Clunes, c. 1900 (Source: State Library of Victoria, <http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/105440>)

The turn to the Booktown concept offered new hope through mobilising assets that were surplus to a past economy such as empty banks and shops to experiment with a new economy around ‘books, writing and ideas’ (Creative Clunes n.d.a). The concept of a Booktown started in the Welsh village of Hay-on-Wye in the 1960s and has become a rural development model embraced around the world. There are currently 22 accredited and prospective Booktowns throughout Europe, Asia, Australia and New Zealand that are part of a network called the International Organisation of Book Towns (IOB n.d).



Figure 1.2 Clunes streetscape (17 July 2016)

Mildura (population 53,878 ABS 2017b) provides a very different context to Clunes. It is situated in far north Victoria (around 550 kilometres from Melbourne) on the banks of the Murray River. Established as an irrigation colony in 1887 by Canada's pioneering Chaffey Brothers, Mildura has become a major centre for agribusiness and is recognised as a key contributor to the national 'food bowl' with the region generating half of the country's citrus exports (Deloitte 2013 p. 70), along with 98% of its dried grapes, 75% table grapes, 66% almonds, and 20% wine (MDC 2014).



Figure 1.3 Irrigated Vineyard, Mildura [c. 1920–1954] (Source: State Library of Victoria, <http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/65594>)

The region has experienced significant challenges in the context of a drying climate, exploitation of water markets and global commodity downturns. These effects have manifested in government incentives that facilitate the abandonment of blocks of land which have become surplus to fickle commodity markets. The establishment of a Slow Food movement chapter or convivium in

Mildura 2002 emerged in response to concerns around the millennium drought and the sustainability of the Murray River as its cultural and economic spine, and has sought to bring new forms of resource use and exchange into practice. To date, there are around 1,500 Slow Food convivia in over 160 countries (Slow Food 2015).



Figure 1.4 Mildura Centre / Riverfront (9 December 2015)

While Clunes and Mildura contrast significantly in terms of their size and geographical contexts, they are instructive places for investigating rural creative economies for a number of reasons. Both places represent key sites in Australia's economic and environmental history, as places where resource gifts of minerals and water were turned into lucrative settlements and shaped by global flows of labour and capital. These times of boom were followed by busts that have left a legacy of economic externalities and surplus infrastructure in the form of empty buildings and farming blocks and depleted water stocks. Responding to such decline, community members in both sites are questioning how resources should be used to sustain community economic livelihoods into the future, particularly given the shared effects of the millennium drought, a period depicting an extended crisis of aridity across Australia from 1997 to 2009 (Askew, Sherval & McGuirk 2014). With each place turning to global cultural networks, in the form of Booktowns in Clunes and Slow Food in Mildura, an entry point is provided to study relational iterations of rural creative economies and how these networks are drawing together various economic actors, cultural resources and market practices in responding to decline in place. As will be detailed in section 4.3, Booktowns and Slow Food provide key insights into how cultural resources such as books, buildings, food and cultural practices are being foregrounded in local economies and playing an important role in stemming decline. In addressing the aims of this thesis, I therefore seek to

highlight how the constitution of rural creative economies in place forms part of ethical negotiations rather than imposed policy prescriptions.

1.5 Thesis Structure

The thesis is structured over eight chapters. Leading on from this introduction, the thesis unfolds as follows:

Chapter 2 critically analyses creative economy literature as a solution to decline and introduces the diverse and community economies theoretical framework underpinning the thesis. In this chapter, I trace the inception of the dominant vision of a creative economy to its foundations in neoliberal policy discourse, which posits the creative economy and the creative class as a market-driven solution to decline. I then explore alternative threads of research on the creative economy that emphasise relational and place-based approaches. These show how rural communities are utilising a range of skills and cultural resources in building a creative economy. Following this, I draw upon Gibson-Graham's anti-essentialist theorization of economy as a way to reframe the creative economy as more than a capitalist project in understanding its role in responding to decline through drawing diverse economic actors, sectors and sites together. This means considering how a creative economy might emerge through bottom-up ethical debates and negotiations around how local actors and resources can be used to generate alternative economic activity through what Gibson-Graham describe as a *community economy* (Gibson-Graham 2006b). This vision of a creative economy points to a 'politics of possibility', generating a more expansive and ethically negotiated economy that foregrounds care of people and place (Gibson-Graham 2006b) and focus on how action is occurring on the ground, in the 'here and now' (Gibson-Graham 2006a, p. xvii).

Chapter 3 discusses the methodological framework and research design of the thesis. I detail how actor-network theory (ANT) shaped my philosophical approach around who and what to study in a relational exploration of the rural creative economy. ANT scholarship offers a heterogeneous framing of social actors and provides a broad approach to understand how action is performed through relations. Through ANT, emphasis is placed on distributed agency rather than privileging any leading actor and foregrounds the coming together of people and things as 'hybrid collectives' with the potential to create new effects. This approach allows me to explore how people and cultural resources such as food, customs, and books are reassembled into a creative economy. By focusing on the relations that perform this economy, rather than its enactment through leading

occupations or generic models, I make the case that we can better understand the place contexts in which creative economies emerge. I then detail the ethnographic research design of the study and reflect on research positionality and ethics.

Chapter 4 addresses the research question of how creative economies are emerging in place by placing the creative economy in the context of rural economic transition in Australia. It sets the scene for how rural places and resources have been historically valorised and how this has shaped conceptions of economic progress. I explore how narratives of decline in Clunes and Mildura are intertwined with place histories and shifting relations with resources. I then trace how the emergence of creative economic activity is entangled with concerns over rural resources. Finally, I look to how concern over resource use and possibility come together through Booktown and Slow Food movements and its effects in laying the foundations for creative economies in Clunes and Mildura.

Chapter 5 is the first empirical chapter and responds to the research question of who enacts change in a rural creative economy beyond a creative class. Building upon concerns for place raised in chapter 4, in this chapter I explore who (and what) is mobilising change in Clunes and Mildura. Findings in chapter 5 bring into tension narratives of a heroic singular actor in bringing about a rational approach to change or change as being led by a creative class. The ANT concept of the hybrid collective is employed in this chapter to make sense of how a relational network entangled in place mobilises economic change around books and food.

Chapter 6 addresses the research question of how place-based cultural resources are utilised in rural creative economies in response to concerns for decline. This chapter is particularly concerned with how Booktown and Slow Food hybrid collectives discussed in chapter 5 draw upon local resources to enact their vision of economy. Engaging with the concept of the ‘commons’, this chapter shows how Booktown and Slow Food economies utilise a diverse array of public and private material resources like land, food and buildings and immaterial resources knowledge such as stories, cultural recipes and practices. While not without tension, this creative economic activity enlarges rather than enclose local cultural resources (if only sometimes temporarily). Findings in this chapter challenge capitalist framings of the creative economy that encourage the commodification of cultural resources.

Chapter 7 responds to the research question—what types of market exchanges underpin rural creative economies? This chapter explores how the commons created through Booktowns and Slow Food intersects with market imperatives. Findings in this chapter look to the role of Booktowns and Slow Food in fostering socialities around the commodities of books and food as part of ‘relational marketplace’ that facilitates encounters between producers, consumers, distributors and the objects themselves. This chapter also details how practices of commoning are possible through market exchanges.

Chapter 8 brings the thesis to a conclusion and reflects on how a postcapitalist reconceptualising of rural creative economies through place, collectives, commons and markets contributes to a new trajectory for creative economies, alongside implications for scholarship, policy and community planning practice.

CHAPTER TWO

Beyond the Heroic Creative Class: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

The concept of the creative economy is at a crossroads. The dominant vision of a creative economy is founded in neoliberal entrepreneurial governance, positing creative economies as a market-driven solution for economic decline. Through this dominant vision, emphasis is placed on leading occupations such as Richard Florida's creative class mix of knowledge and creative workers as drivers of creative economies. Following this benchmarking of creative people, places are also being benchmarked according to their creative class share. This focus has spread from cities to rural areas, with policy interest in ranking regional 'creative hotspots', based on their proportion of creative professionals and inspired by questions like 'whose town is the most creative?' (Regional Australia Institute 2018). The neoliberal vision of a creative economy puts places in competition with each other for attracting the heroic creative class as economic saviours, and at the same time depicts some rural places as less creative and helpless in self-mobilising creative economies to address economic challenges.

Widespread critiques on the dominant vision of a creative economy are calling for its reconceptualisation. Problems surrounding the neoliberal framing of the creative economy reveal not only its competitive approach but its obfuscation of important noncapitalistic creative economic activities and the communities they are fostered in. These concerns bring the creative economy and the creative class into growing disrepute. Rural areas in particular are highlighted as instructive sites for understanding how creative economies are enacted outside neoliberal ideals of individual entrepreneurship and market competition. This has led to interest in exploring the existing conditions and relations that enact an alternative vision of a creative economy in place that nurtures the *community* as well as the *economy*.

This chapter reviews the key literature surrounding the topic of the creative economy and presents the theoretical framework of diverse and community economies in response to the need for attending to community and place. First, I examine the dominant vision of the creative economy, tracing its trajectory from a policy device to mobilise post-industrial economies to a heavily critiqued instrument of neoliberal governance and assess how this normative vision of a creative economy has extended into rural areas and its resulting effects (section 2.2). Second, I review the key literature that distinguishes rural creative economies from the normative urban capitalist framing (section 2.3). Finally, I introduce the diverse and community economies theoretical framework of the thesis and explain its role in enabling an alternative vision of a creative economy and its possibilities for place (section 2.4).

2.2 The creative economy – a recipe for renewal?

The creative economy is a key focus area for governments, particularly across North America, Europe and Australasia. Faced with difficult transitions to post-industrial economies, governments in certain parts of the world are recognising how creative economy inputs of ‘cognitive capital’ such as knowledge (Scott 2011) are generating new forms of production and consumption, overtaking raw material inputs like gold, steel and coal (Landry 2008, p. 7). Policy interest in creative economies was especially mobilised through the work of the UK New Labour government who brought attention to valorising creative economic activities at a national scale. Creative economies offered a barometer of post-industrial sectors, along with an opportunity to reimagine cities beyond their industrial pasts to highly attractive places competing for creative class workers, investment, trade and tourists seeking cultural and creative ‘experiences’. As a result, the creative economy is underpinned by visions of exemplary economic sectors and attractive urban environments. In the following paragraphs I trace discourses of creative economies originating from a shift from cultural to creative industries, alongside growing interest in the creative economy as a solution to decline.

2.2.1 From Cultural to Creative Industries: Shifting discourses and politics

Scholarship on the creative economy is characterised by a terminological shift from cultural and creative industries. Understanding the distinct contours of cultural and creative industries is important as these terms developed from divergent theoretical backgrounds and policy contexts (Garnham 2005; Hesmondhalgh 2008). Cultural industries are broadly understood as ‘forms of cultural production and consumption that have at their core symbolic or expressive elements’

(Lazzeretti, Capone & Innocenti 2017, p. 1696). Cultural and creative industries scholar Justin O'Connor (2000), groups cultural industries into two broad categories: the 'traditional arts' such as crafts, theatre, literature, museums and galleries; coupled with 'classical' cultural industries like film, broadcasting, recorded music and publishing. The latter classical definition has its intellectual roots in the Frankfurt School through Horkheimer and Adorno's (2006) use of the 'culture industry' to describe industrialised and capitalistic production of culture through industries such as film, radio and music.

Cultural industries lexicon was championed by UK policy focus in the 1980s. Political interest in the sector grew as part of an agenda initiated by the former Greater London Council (GLC), that redirected attention from subsidising elite arts to the production and distribution of culture more broadly (Hesmondhalgh & Pratt 2005; Hesmondhalgh 2008, p. 555). This agenda postulated the leading role of the market in attending to cultural consumption and production more broadly (e.g. music, publishing and broadcasting). This increasing emphasis on the market heightened recognition of culture as an industry rather than intrinsic good, but as Hesmondhalgh (2008, p. 555) explains, 'the aim was not to celebrate commercial production but simply to recognise its centrality in modern culture'. Cultural industries thus became enmeshed within market logics, although its definition is regarded as 'a rather amorphous one that was sometimes indicative of commercial activities, sometimes not' (Pratt 2008, p. 133). Commercial imperatives however became more explicit as part of a semantic and political move to creative industries (Hesmondhalgh & Pratt 2005; Pratt 2008).

The shift in terminology from cultural to creative industries is traced to policy developments in Australia and the United Kingdom during the 1990s. While the genesis of creative industries concept is linked to the Australian Labor government's 'Creative Nation' Policy (Galloway & Dunlop 2007; Luckman 2012), definitive categories for creative industries were developed in the United Kingdom under the Blair New Labour government's inaugural Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) (Flew & Cunningham 2010). The descriptor of 'creative' provided for the inclusion of the expanding digital technology sector (Cunningham 2002; Garnham 2005), a move that was significant in not only amplifying the employment numbers (estimated as reaching around 40%) but also in grouping cultural and creative activities under the banner of the new knowledge economy (Oakley & O'Connor 2015, p. 3).

Creative industries therefore offered a new economic sector based on an aggregation of a wide range of jobs in the knowledge economy that are underpinned by creative processes—from architecture to software development—along with conventional cultural industries. The rebranding from cultural to creative industries was considered a political strategy to distance New Labour from previous government’s cultural industries policies, using creativity as a focus for commercialism (Pratt 2008, p. 113). This brought with it a focus on economic measurements and comparisons with other government policy areas using robust ‘output measures’ such as employment and export (Pratt 2008, p. 113).

A core device to make creative industries knowable and measurable emerged in the Department of Culture, Media and Sport’s ‘Creative Industries Mapping Documents’ (1998). These documents projected a definitive guide of creative industries, ranging from conventional cultural industries including crafts, music and publishing to the inclusion of service businesses who ‘sell’ their creative skills, such as architecture and advertising, along with new sectors like software and computing (BOP Consulting 2010, pp. 15–18). The DCMS mapping document has ‘global strength’ (Luckman 2015, p. 47) due to its influence in shaping a travelling policy pro forma for creative industries across the world. As Prince explicates (2010, p. 120):

The significance of this document is such that its definition of the creative industries, and the practice of “mapping” the sector through the use of statistics to delineate the industries and measure their contribution to GDP, employment and exports, were routinely reproduced in the creative industries policy documents produced by other administrations around the world.

The transition from ‘cultural’ to ‘creative’ industries therefore reflected a highly economic rationale. As Oakley and O’Connor (2015, pp. 2–3) sharply surmise:

‘Creativity’ as an input (rather than culture as an output) allowed the imaginative, dynamic, transformative and glamorous aspects of culture to be pressed into the service of an innovation machine. Questions of value other than innovation and other economic impacts were dropped.

The development of the creative economy within a capitalistic rubric thus put in place a vision of an economy that devalorised noneconomic activities in favour of more profitable sectors like technology. This was also accompanied by a championing of the individual innovators who were driving economic growth.

Foregrounding of the individual entrepreneur as a driver of creative economies manifested through New Labour's policies. Jamie Peck (2011, p. 51) observes how New Labour's embrace of high-tech and new economy sectors positioned individual entrepreneurs as leading figures:

A trajectory was duly established in which the self-managing, creative entrepreneur could now be celebrated as an aspirational model for lumpen classes and lagging regions, as creativity became a byword for atomized forms of innovation and 24/7 productivity.

Focus on the individual entrepreneur as economic saviours as Peck suggests above is a testament of the creative economy's neoliberal framing. Cultural industries scholar Andy Pratt highlights how individualistic terms like enterprise, creativity and innovation have underpinned the neoliberalised approach to creative industries in the United Kingdom (2008, p. 113). This is echoed in other observations that the exaltation of the individual creative 'fits neatly within a neoliberal discourse of entrepreneurialism' (Jones & Warren 2016, p. 189). The foregrounding of individual creativity and entrepreneurialism is thus recognised as one of the key hallmarks of the creative economy's neoliberal underpinning.

Generally understood as a logic that fosters 'a market-centred society' (Schram & Pavlovskya 2018, p. 1), neoliberalism is attached to a focus on individual entrepreneurialism and an institutional framework promoting private property rights, free markets and free trade (Harvey 2005). Or as James Ferguson (2010, p. 170) puts it:

a valorization of private enterprise and suspicion of the state, along with what is sometimes called "free-market fetishism" and the advocacy of tariff elimination, currency deregulation, and the deployment of "enterprise models" that would allow the state itself to be "run like a business".

While Ferguson warns of 'sloppy' applications of neoliberalism and calls for analytical clarity (2010, pp. 171–2), its specific application to creative economies strongly emphasises the aforementioned promulgation of individualism (Jones & Warren 2016; Pratt 2008), along with a focus on markets and intellectual property (Flew & Cunningham 2010; Prince 2010). The focus on 'creativity' does important work for governments in promoting a neoliberalised innovation agenda through its 'ability to act as a catalyst in the cultural transition of individuals from 'citizens' into 'entrepreneurs' and 'consumers' (Gibson & Klocker 2005, p. 94). Concepts such as creativity, innovation and

entrepreneurship are thus key hallmarks of a neoliberal policy agenda. In the following section I discuss how the revaluing of place occurred within this neoliberal policy focus.

2.2.2 The emergence of Creative Cities and the Creative Class: Typologising Creative Places and People

While 1990s discourse of creative industries mobilised policy attention towards understanding and measuring the contribution of this newly formed economic sector, interest in the relationship between culture, creativity and regeneration had formed much earlier. The turn to culture as a driver of urban renewal originated in Western Europe around the 1970s in response to urban de-industrialisation. Culture-led regeneration became a key focus for policy makers to generate economic growth and tap into the growing service economy (Bayliss 2004). This played out materially onto place through the conversion of former industrial zones into flagship cultural precincts, along with boosting cultural consumption through events and ‘spectacles’ like the European Capital of Culture program initiated in 1985, initially as a way to boost relations between EU member countries but quickly evolving as a device to strengthen economic performance by increasing service economy sectors through tourism (Wählin et al. 2016, p. 3).

The intertwining of culture and renewal grew in popularity and policy focus, capturing the attention of cities experiencing industrial decline such as Sheffield and Glasgow (Flew 2002, p. 12). Glasgow’s designation as European Capital of Culture in 1990 popularised ‘the idea of culture as an engine to support a city’s image and economic development’ (Comunian 2011, p. 1158). Such activities work to reimagine and rebrand cities from decaying sites of industrial production to vibrant sites of cultural consumption (Comunian & Mould 2014; Grodach 2012). The production and consumption of culture thus became a core tenet of urban economic development, forming the template for urban revitalisation in the name of creativity, most commonly associated with the ‘creative city’ phenomenon.

Developed by Charles Landry, founder of Comedia a UK think tank, ‘the creative city’ concept has looked to how creativity can be fostered through urban planning and renewal. The creative city concept originated from the late 1980s through Landry’s books and consultancy activities that championed a rethinking of how challenges of economic restructuring, globalisation and decline could be met through creative urban environments. Landry contended that creativity was underpinned by built and social contexts, and ‘conditions need to be created for people to think, plan and act with imagination in harnessing opportunities or solving seemingly intractable urban problems’ (Landry 2012, p. xxi). According to Landry, a creative city fostered an innovative ‘milieu’

involving the interplay between ‘hard’ (e.g. buildings and institutions) and ‘soft’ infrastructure (e.g. practices of networking and exchange) to facilitate ‘a flow of ideas and inventions’ (p. xxvii). Particular interest was paid to how cultural industries not only generated economic activity, but provided the opportunity for cities to harness place distinctiveness and in turn, repurpose disused infrastructure like old buildings through arts projects (Landry 2012, p. xxii). Landry’s ideas captured the attention of urban policy makers and planners through numerous international conferences that spread the creative city rhetoric ranging from major cities like Glasgow and Helsinki to the regional town of Huddersfield, England (Chatterton 2000).

Following Landry, another urban studies pundit, Richard Florida, arrived on the creative economy scene during the early 2000s. Florida, a US based academic with a disciplinary background in economics and urban planning, posited that a desirable mix of hard and soft infrastructure such as cultural facilities and social amenities like parks and cafes could attract a growing economic sector called the ‘creative class’ (Florida 2012). While Landry’s work largely focused on the capacity of creative cities to innovate and problem-solve, Florida promulgated a more explicit economic rationale using the creative class as a proxy for creative economies. Leading on from New Labour’s valorisation of creative workers as supporting a neoliberal policy agenda of entrepreneurship and economic growth, Florida’s creative class became recognised as agents of place regeneration more broadly (Peck 2011; Pratt 2008). Discourse of the creative city therefore became tethered to the creative class and the ability of urban environments to attract such identities (Comunian 2011).

Florida’s work moved focus beyond creative industry sectors to a broad range of occupations as set out in his publication *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002). Florida drew upon trends in US census data to track employment and spatial patterns, along with analysis of interviews and focus groups conducted during the late 1990s to early 2000s. The creative class was theorised as a new economic class whose core function was the application of cognitive skills and knowledge as opposed to the physical and ‘routine’ skills deployed by agricultural and service workers. Florida grouped the creative class around two heterogeneous subsets: the ‘super creative core’ (artists, architects, scientists and engineers, poets and novelists, university lecturers), and ‘creative professionals’ (in areas such as technology, financial services, legal and healthcare, business management). According to Florida, these diverse subsets share a skillset of independent decision-making, problem-solving and high levels of education or human capital, accompanied by a ‘common ethos that values creativity, individuality, difference, and merit’ (Florida 2012, pp. 8–9).

Florida's attempts to draw together heterogeneous occupations under a rubric of a singular class with shared ethics and values have faced widespread contestation. Florida uses a broad definition of major occupational groups ranging from artists to engineers which has been variously criticised as 'amorphous' (Reese 2012), 'fuzzy' (Markusen 2006), 'nebulous' (Krätke 2010) and a 'vague socio-occupational category' (Petrov 2008, p. 445). Krätke (2010, p. 837) posits that the term creative class lacks conceptual clarity and is 'highly stylised', based on the aggregation of unrelated occupational groups with disputed levels of creativity and highly varied characteristics. It is suggested that the grouping could be more simply recognised as a 'professional-managerial class', which incorporates artistic occupations (McGuigan 2009, p. 293). Hwang also points to the creative class focus on a metropolitan-based 'capitalist economic structure' (2013, p. 503). As a result of the broad definition of the creative class and grounding in disputed occupational categories, the concept's capacity for meaningful empirical analysis is questioned (Comunian, Faggian & Li 2010; Hansen & Niedomysl 2009; Markusen 2006). Nonetheless, the concept has sparked global interest in how places could address issues of decline by attracting the creative class.

For places enduring post-industrial challenges, the creative class theory postulates regenerative possibilities. Florida's principal argument was that given that creative class workers comprise around one third of the population in the US, economic and urban planning needs to shift from approaches based on 'smokestack chasing' heavy industries through incentives like tax breaks to providing the desirable urban environments for the creative class. As Florida and Mellander (2014, p. 310) state:

In sharp contrast to the older industrial model, where growth was powered by natural resources and physical labour, and took place around large factories, growth in the knowledge and creative age is powered by concentrations of creative people organized in and around creative cities.

According to Florida, contemporary economic development is underpinned by the 3 'T's: 'Talent' (knowledge workers who create new products and markets); 'Technology' (providing the infrastructure for capitalism to 'constantly revolutionise') and 'Tolerance' (environments that can attract talent by being considered welcoming using sexual and ethnic diversity as a proxy) (Florida 2014, p. 198). Attending to place specifically, Florida argued that this segment of talented or educated professionals are more likely to be mobile. Rather than choosing places to live predominantly by following a job or company, Florida argued that the creative class make settlement choices according to the presence of a fourth 'T' 'territorial assets' or quality of place

that comprise a physical built and natural setting conducive to creative life; alongside a diverse social setting and lively ‘street life’ embracing cafes, arts, music and outdoor activities (Florida 2014, p. 203).

Florida’s perspective on regional development sparked an outbreak of ‘creative city fever’ (Kunzmann 2010), as cities from Dublin to Wellington became part of Florida’s creative class consulting and conference circuit during the mid-late 2000s (McGuigan 2009; Peck 2010). The global reach of the creative class concept also infiltrates scholarly research through studies that have sought to explore the geographies of the creative class and their economic effects outside the United States, extending across Western Europe, Scandinavia, Australia, Japan and China (see Mellander et al. 2014). Indeed, the creative class is considered to have resonated more strongly in Australia than in most other countries (Stolarick 2014, p. 243). Atkinson and Easthope (2009) report on how Australian cities have been influenced directly, but also unevenly by Florida and Landry, through planning and policy aspirations that directly reference the creative class and creative cities toolkits. Other studies on the creative class outside the US context offer varied insights into the applicability of Florida’s theory. For instance, Denmark’s morphology of small cities debunks ideas that the creative class congregate in large cities along with downplaying the salience of tolerance and openness in attracting the creative class and contributing to economic development (Florida & Mellander 2014, p. 309). The varied results presented here suggest a greater need to attend to the specificities of place rather than applying a US model, an approach that is largely unheeded in urban governance.

The influence of the creative class theory on urban governance is widely recognised. Globally, the theory has inspired a suite of creativity policies that aspire towards Florida’s typology of creative people and places. As Peck observes (2011, p. 41):

this influential thesis has it that productive potential is carried by a creative *class* of individuals who will be attracted (only) to cities with “buzz”, cities, with a welcoming and sustaining “people climate”.

By using the creative class as a proxy for the creative economy, emphasis is ultimately placed on the ‘productive’ value of its members (mainly those in profitable knowledge economy sectors such as high-tech) and the places that are conducive to their lifestyles and values. The problem of this is how urban governance tailors economic policy and strategies around what a city needs in order to

become ‘creative’ (e.g. cultural amenities, social diversity and technology) rather than existing place attributes and contexts (Comunian 2011, p. 1157).

One popular diagnostic for assessing a city’s creative potential is through Florida’s aforementioned creativity index. The creativity index ranks cities according to their performance against the 3 T’s of technology, talent and tolerance. These measures are considered to encompass an ‘increasingly-pervasive urban-development script’ that prescribes the people-friendly climate desired by the creative class (Peck 2010, p. 192). Peck (2005) describes this script as part of a ‘fast policy’ market where cities compete against each other to attract the creative class through catering to their desired urban environments and amenities. Alongside promoting creative winners and losers (Florida 2002, p. 235), more sinister negative associations associated with urban renewal and gentrification are repackaged into the more positive sounding creativity ‘formula’ for urban growth (Peck 2011 p. 42). Creative class strategies therefore generate concerns not just for polarising effects between creative winners and losers, but also in widening socio-economic disparity within creative cities themselves, an issue that Florida (2017) has since sought to redress in his recent publication *The New Urban Crisis*. Despite these concerns, these ideas continue to reverberate in policy and research, with increasing focus on its relevance to rural economies as will be explored in the following section.

2.2.3 Conceptual carry-over: Rural creative economies and the creative class

A growing body of research has attempted to address the urban bias attached to the creative economy. Scholars in the UK and Ireland have demonstrated how nonmetropolitan areas also demonstrate a substantial and varied creative industries profile (as defined by the DCMS), embracing both traditional assumptions of rural creative economy sectors such as crafts, arts, music and antiques to contemporary creative industries classifications like architecture and digital media (Bell & Jayne 2010; Collins, Mahon & Murtagh 2018). The spread of UK based definitions have also manifested themselves in other Western economies such as Australia, with scholars exploring the dynamics of rural creative industries (Gibson & Robinson 2004; Luckman 2015), along with exhibiting majority world appeal in countries such as Indonesia (Fahmi, Koster & van Dijk 2016). What these studies show is not only the profile of creative industries in rural areas, but also the pervasiveness of creative industries tools and categories for locating creative economic activity.

Ongoing interest in creative economy measurements is evident in regional Australia. Gibson and Klocker (2005, p. 94) outline a regional policy turn towards: ‘statistical techniques that “measure” regional variations in creativity, and subsequent policy narratives that pressure ‘uncreative’ places to improve their economic performance’. The authors drew upon *The State of the Regions* (National Economics 2002) report commissioned by the Australian Local Government Association to guide cultural economic development planning. Gibson and Klocker (2005, p. 97) demonstrated the explicit ‘borrowing’ of Florida’s creativity index in this report and how it positioned ‘winning’ (largely inner cities) against ‘losing’ regions (mainly inland agricultural areas). More recently, this ranking-based approach has remanifested with influential think tank, the Regional Australia Institute focusing on benchmarking places according to their status as ‘creative hotspots’ based on their proportion of creative occupations in attempting to understand ‘whose town is the most creative’ and how to understand how regional ‘vibrancy’ is created (Regional Australia Institute 2018; Turnbull & Whitford 2018). At a state level, a group of rural Victorian local governments has undertaken research into identifying the economic importance of creative industries and benchmarking how rural areas are performing against metropolitan, regional and state variables (Essential Economics 2013). These studies attest to the ongoing interest in Australia mapping, measuring and benchmarking places through metro-centric and formal occupational datasets. This is also accompanied by interest in documenting the rural creative economy through exploring the idea of a rural creative class.

Attempts to extend Florida’s creative class theory to rural areas were initially shaped by quantitative techniques that sought to statistically map and model creative class presence. The work of US economists David McGranahan and Timothy Wojan (2007) offered formative insights into the applicability of Florida’s theory in rural America. Developing a ‘recast’ creative class definition that sought to more accurately depict creative occupations and confirm the validity of the construct in the rural context, the authors adjusted Florida’s model in two ways. Firstly, they excised occupations listed in government classifications as supposedly involving ‘low requirements for creative thinking’ such as science technicians, financial specialists and farmers. Secondly, the recast definition omitted a number of occupations that would seem to inflate results of a creative class presence due to their role in fulfilling essential services such as teachers and healthcare professionals (McGranahan & Wojan 2007, pp. 202–203). According to the authors, these occupations fulfil essential services in rural areas to existing residents, acting as a form of ‘economic reproduction’ rather than an indicator of a ‘footloose’ creative class such as college professors who are also catering to a non-resident population (p. 202). Results from these refined

and admittedly ‘imperfect’ (p. 202) quantitative measures intimated a link between the creative class and regional development and inspired a range of studies in search of understanding the relationship between the creative class and rural development.

Research into the applicability of conceptions of the rural creative class has particularly emphasised rural quality of place factors based on the presence of natural amenities to fulfil creative class recreational pursuits (in lieu of urban offerings). Statistical correlations between creative class presence and natural amenity environments were evident in places that demonstrated ‘climate, landscape and recreation appeal’ in the United States (McGranahan et al. 2011, p. 537) with similar findings in Australia (Argent et al. 2013). Other empirical work highlights a relationship between economic growth and creative class attraction to rural areas with ‘entrepreneurial’ climates based on proxies such as: human and financial capital, business support, patent numbers, and broadband infrastructure (Kline et al. 2014; Stephens, Partridge & Faggian, 2013; Whitacre, Gallardo and Strover 2014).

Building on Florida’s measurements in Northern Canada, geographer Andrey Petrov (2008) adds more locally relevant variables such as aboriginality to provide a sense of the connection between aboriginal population, heritage and creative class share. Petrov’s results provide a very different assessment of creative hotspots in the ‘cold’ that rely less on Florida’s emphasis on human capital through education and more on aboriginal leadership, employment in artistic occupations and entrepreneurship in many northern towns (p. 172). What these assorted studies demonstrate is not only the lure of applying Florida’s construct to rural settings, but the limitations of quantitative studies in providing more causal explanations and nuanced insights into rural creativity.

The emergence of qualitative studies offers some exploratory insights into understanding the profile and location preferences of a rural creative class. For instance, in a qualitative study of Launceston in Tasmania, Verdich (2010) contends that caution must be exercised in overstating the creative impetus behind pull factors such as ‘quality of life’. Results from her study of creative migrants in Launceston illustrated that more practical motivations such as ‘down-shifting’ and a shorter commute were prioritised over cultural infrastructure. Lifestyle factors were also reinforced in a Danish context by Herslund (2012) who lists primary motivations for creative class relocation as attractive housing, rural amenities and greater flexibility in everyday life. The rural creative class analysed in Herslund’s study were largely pre-retirees in contrast to Florida’s emphasis on young professionals, who are making the shift to the countryside in pursuit of a more flexible work-life

balance (Herslund 2012, p. 251). These studies provide a glimpse into how drivers of creative class migration are varied and extend across a range of circumstances, across life-courses and as part of broader lifestyle desires. Furthermore, these insights highlight the broader importance of community and place in attracting creative economic actors, beyond Florida's creative leaderboardism but also raise questions around the effects of creative class migration upon community and place.

A number of scholars draw explicitly upon the creative class theory to illustrate social tensions in rural economies associated with counter-urbanisation. Researching a rural creative class in a South African context, Ingle (2010) describes how in the Karoo region, on one side a clustering of 'creative human capital' offers regenerative potential for struggling towns, yet it is largely characterised by a white middle-class (2010, p. 417). Also drawing upon the Karoo region, Donaldson et al. (2012) raise concerns around the relationship between the rural creative class and gentrification through the influx of creative in-migrants. From a rural US perspective, Fleming (2009) argues that while attracting the creative class is seen to bring benefits in supporting the arts and protecting the environment, questions arise around creating arts spaces that can bring people together rather than exacerbate social divide (2009, p. 75). Similar issues arise in a review of the creative class theory's applicability to rural Scotland and how its emphasis on mobile incomers rather than existing residents clashes with rural development strategies underpinned by 'endogenous, bottom-up development and local community empowerment' (Slee, Hopkins & Vellinga 2015, p. 220). The positing of the rural creative class as heroic outside entrepreneurs thus suggests polarising effects on place.

Attempts to widen understandings of creative economies beyond the creative class and urban sectoral approaches are becoming increasingly prevalent. Expanding definitions of the creative economy are taking into account how other sectors are performing creative economic activity. Noting limitations with sectoral approaches to earlier definitions of cultural industries, Gibson and Kong (2005, p. 543) observe how:

Adopting the sectoral approach poses some difficulties, as many sectors (including industries such as furniture and industrial design, certain forms of niche food production and tourism) may now be viewed as part of the cultural economy because of their symbolic content, when they were at best only peripherally considered art of 'the arts' previously.

Building from this earlier recognition of cultural industries being much broader than the arts, discourse of the creative economy is spreading into the food, manufacturing and tourism sectors. Burgeoning scholarship is exploring the idea of a creative food economy based on small-scale, traditionally grown or produced food (i.e. non-industrial or mass produced) (Donald & Blay-Palmer 2006; Lee & Wall 2014), creative manufacturing using craft-based techniques (Grodach, O'Connor & Gibson 2017; Warren, Carr & Gibson 2015) and creative tourism emphasising participatory rather than passive encounters with place (OECD 2014; Richards 2011).

This conceptual carry-over of the creative economy into other economic sectors brings both opportunities and challenges for rural development. Of particular relevance for Booktowns and Slow Food, the nexus between place, food and tourism provides new opportunities for rural communities looking to revitalise local economies based on leveraging their distinct 'cultural markers' such as traditional foods, historic sites, or landscapes (Ray 1998, p. 3). While a focus on local cultural resources provides new opportunities in meeting consumer demand for a sense of place in response to globalisation, such opportunities appear to be shaped by creative class as key cultural consumers and producers (Stolarick, Denstedt, Donald & Spencer 2011). Indeed, Scott (2011, p. 858) argues that rural economic goods and practices such as 'traditional crafts, rural festivals, organic crops for discriminating markets, local culinary arts, and services for tourists in search of environmental or heritage-based experiences' are a form of what he describes as 'cognitive-cultural capitalism'. For Scott, this new type of capitalism is underpinned by the 'mental and behavioural powers of critical segments of the labor force' (i.e. the creative class) (p. 848), with their wealth and preference for authenticity and local encounters creating a demand for rural consumption. While these perspectives demonstrate opportunities for rural areas to regenerate based on local cultural assets and resources, such discourses reinforce the idea that they are to be leveraged for the benefit of the creative class or as a form of a capitalist economy.

2.2.4 Problems and Limitations

The picture of a creative economy discussed so far is one that presents it as a neoliberal entity that is 'known' through actors belonging to occupational datasets, largely endemic to urban environments, and with a productive value measured by a formal economic contribution. The widespread adoption of the creative class as a proxy for the creative economy and its assertions of not only *who* is creative but *where* has imprinted a seemingly dominant vision of an economy that is validated through creative leaderboards of winners and losers. This has led to the replication of the creative class inspired model based on a 'singular interpretation of creativity' that posits: private

sector solutions to regional problems, the idea of creative, independent, entrepreneurial subjects, and the primacy of place competition in global markets (Gibson & Klocker 2005, p. 100).

The valorising of certain people and places as creative ‘winners’ not only emphasises the market, individual entrepreneurs and competition as the hallmarks of a creative economy, it also works to ‘other’ different rural economic actors as noncreative. In their edited volume *Spaces of Vernacular Creativity* Edensor et al. (2009 p. 6), trouble the effects of ascribing creative economic agency to the creative class:

the implication persists that differently positioned social groups lack the necessary creative skills, cultural tastes and competencies to effectively operate within the creative economy, and even more, that there is a creative class—and that therefore other classes are not creative.

Creative economy strategies centred on attracting a creative class therefore have concerning effects for place. The creative winners approach not only risks marginalising local populations but also appropriating rural cultural resources as inputs for capitalistic consumption and production rather than as part of a landscape of diverse economic practices that sustain communities (as will be explored in the following section 2.3 and in discussion of the diverse and communities economies framework in section 2.4). At the same time, by perceiving others as ‘losers’ on creative leaderboards, such actions empty the possibilities of local people and their environments to play a role in how responses to decline are more collectively shaped.

Taken together, explorations of the rural creative economy through the lens of neoliberal policy categories and the identity of the creative class have provided a limited understanding of the rural creative economy. Although these studies attest to the presence of creative people and economic sectors in rural areas, a largely atomised vision of a creative economy is presented, based on the tenuous application of categories, with creative and economic agency and benefits largely ascribed to a privileged economic sector. Given these limitations, in the following section I turn to other literatures and theories that disrupt the neoliberal market logics of creative economies and point to the role of the creative economy in generating new possibilities in place.

2.3 Reconceptualising Rural Creative Economies

2.3.1 *Why reconceptualise?*

My interest in studying rural creative economies is largely motivated by the possibilities that new types of economic activities and relations bring to places that are experiencing decline. The rise of grassroots initiatives like Booktowns and Slow Food offer an entry point into understanding how rural creative economies are being constituted in place as response to decline, but sit uncomfortably with definitions and methods for locating creative economic actors and places outlined so far. In the formative stages of devising the research proposal for this project I experimented with designing a study that would draw upon census data to extend Florida's aforementioned indices into rural Victoria as a way to 'locate' creative economy actors in the guise of creative class as leading change agents. Soon doubts had formed as to the utility of this model in locating the interesting practices that I was aware were happening on the ground through my prior connections with Clunes Booktown. Clunes is a rural town where many of the participants involved in mobilising economic change did not fit neatly with Florida's creative class model (such as retirees and workers in the hospitality or service sector), but were at the same time generating a new vision of an economy around culture and creativity.

Responding to concerns with Florida's model requires an ontological questioning of how the economy is understood. Rather than being complicit in employing a singular reality of a creative class as 'fact' or accepting the creative economy as a sector that is valorised according to its contributions to GDP, could a more active stance be taken in foregrounding rural economic actors and activities? To explore how the disparate cultural networks of Booktowns and Slow Food offer a response to decline in the form of the creative economy, I need to find ways of locating a creative economy more broadly and ways to understand the effects of these activities on community and place. Shifting to a new approach requires finding ways to move beyond the essentialist framing of the creative economy that positions actors like the creative class as core leaders and beneficiaries of creative economic activities.

This section reviews a body of literature on rural creative economies that provides an alternative to dominant framings of the creative economy and the creative class. It also introduces the theoretical framework of diverse and community economies that will be used to explore the possibilities of rural creative economies being constituted through Booktowns and Slow Food. Rejecting neoliberal policy discourse and Florida's creative class incantations, a number of scholars are looking to the rural to decrypt it from its urban capitalist codification and to provide more nuanced

insights into the constitution of creative economies beyond urban ‘economically focused creative industries’ (Bell 2015, p. 224). For cultural geographer David Bell, the creative ‘hotspots’ that are emanating from this body of scholarship arise in more prosaic expressions of creativity such as traditional crafts (Thomas, Harvey & Hawkins 2013) or postcard production (Mayes 2010). Alongside these rich and nuanced accounts of rural creativity are insights into its effects on local communities beyond the individualised creative class. Following the review of this alternative thread of literature, I will discuss how this work intersects with feminist economic geographer J.K. Gibson-Graham’s ontological reframing of the economy as diverse or more-than-capitalist, and the work these activities do in building communities and enacting new possibilities in place.

2.3.2 Rethinking Rural Creative Economies

Rural researchers are showing how non-urban areas are instructive settings to disrupt the neoliberal economic logics of the creative economy. This alternative strand of research shifts away from empirical applications of creative industries and creative class models, to more locally situated explorations of the interplay between people, place and economy. Rural geographer Neil Argent (2018, pp. 2–3) assesses this bifurcation in a recent review on rural economic development:

A second wave of rural creativity scholarship has since emerged, concerned less with direct critiques or applications of Florida’s original ideas but focused more on the factors that facilitate artistic and cultural expression in rural settings, and the capacity of such expression to build local social capital and foster sustained economic development strategies.

This alternative approach to studying rural creative economies looks to wider understandings of the constitution of rural creative economies in place and what this means for understanding its contribution to local economies and societies. Instead of the dominant urban framing of the creative economy as enacted by a creative class, driven by markets and performing to a creative economy ‘script’ that emphasises replicable components of a creative place, authors are exploring how rural areas are projecting relational, nonmarket and place-specific insights. In this section I review this field with particular attention to: who, what and where ‘counts’ in rural creative economies along with issues in understanding the contribution of rural creative economies to communities.

(i) Rethinking who, what and where 'counts' as creative

The question of who enacts creative economies is responding to the limitations of creative industries approaches and creative class framings in locating actors. Reliance on occupational models to capture a reality of creative economy actors neglects a large proportion of workers who do not self-identify as having a creative occupation in the census. This could be attributed to a number of reasons such as having a different primary occupation, being retired or undertaking creative economic activities as part of a cash income or hobby. Locating creative economy actors through creative occupations or professions risks marginalising what a growing number of scholars are describing as 'alternative' (Gibson & Klocker 2005) or 'vernacular' creativities, prosaic forms of creative production such as gardening, photography, music and performance art that is locally embedded in community and place (Edensor et al. 2009).

Cultural scholar Susan Luckman uses the example of crafts to problematise neat definitions of creative industries. Crafts like sewing or jewellery making are creative activities that are often undertaken in the home on a part-time manner or hobby basis. Luckman (2015, p. 48) explains how these domestic craft practices are marginalised in government and policy approaches in favour of commercial and quantifiable creative industries:

there has been a strategic desire on the part of many creative industries spokespeople, policy analysts, and governmental agents to distance the larger, more 'big end of town'-friendly, contemporary and more easily scalable *digital* intellectual property generation and distribution businesses from the statistically messier, smaller-scale, frequently individualised and often part-time (and hence dismissed as amateur or naïve) production of the craft marketplace.

This tension speaks to the subsuming of cultural industries within the explicit economic bent of creative industries discourse. Alongside troubling 'who' is considered creative, it also highlights the issue of 'what' is considered creative economic activity if it cannot be measured by standardised techniques.

Research emanating from sites across rural Australia in particular has shown how creative economic activities are motivated beyond the 'market'. For instance, Gibson and Gordon's (2018) study of community music activities in the New South Wales Bega Valley (e.g. non-profit clubs, orchestras, ensembles, choirs and festivals) illustrates how groups are motivated beyond commercial aspirations (such as copyright and intellectual property) and instead driven to foster creative expression and social connection. Also in the Bega Valley, Waitt and Gibson (2013)

discuss how a cooperative art gallery brings into tension the dominant profit-driven logics underpinning the normative vision of a creative economy. Similarly, geographer Robin Mayes' (2010) study of postcard production in Ravensthorpe, Western Australia demonstrates how a community mobilised around meeting a need for representation through local postcards (not provided by a commercial market), and how the act of postcard production was a collective process inspired by place.

Beyond Australia, research from rural places around the world is provoking the idea of who and what counts as creative in the creative economy. From a UK perspective, Crawshaw and Gkartzios (2016) describe how artistic practices have worth beyond an arts market by fostering relations amongst community members as a 'diagnostic' for community problems rather than ready-made solution. Studies such as these offer important insights for my own project into broader understandings of who enacts creative economies and what 'counts' as creative. In particular, findings emphasise the constitutive role of community and place versus conceptions of the romanticised individual (Edensor et al. 2009; Gibson 2010; Hallam & Ingold 2007), or self-serving creative class. While creative activities like art, photography and music are of course not limited to the rural domain, their effects are amplified in rural settings when put into contrast with the urban capitalist framing of the creative economy. These studies therefore offer important insights into the possibilities that rural areas offer in reframing the creative economy as an open opportunity for rural places to look to forms of creative economic activity that are already being enacted in place, rather than being marginalised according to perceived deficits of rurality or market performance. For my own study of Booktowns and Slow Food, such insights bring attention to the multiple actors and motivations that drive creative economic activities beyond capitalist market imperatives or a creative class.

Rural areas provide broader insight into not only understanding the 'who' and 'what', but also the 'where' of creative economies. Popular focus on generic creativity scripts has obfuscated the specificity of place in creative economies, with Oakley and Ward (2018, p. 5) observing the noted 'lack of attention to social and spatial difference' evident through widespread application of the 'urban global north' model into incompatible contexts. Rather than conceiving of rural places as having a creativity deficit, attention is being paid to the vast stock of distinct place-based cultural resources that underpin cultural and creative economies. Rural Australia has provided a particularly fertile setting to explore the generative potential of rural and remoteness, whether it is through the inventiveness required in drawing together various talents and resources to create community

music in the Bega Valley (Gibson & Gordon 2018); or connections to the remote desert landscape and culture through film-making and art in Broken Hill (Andersen 2010). Place-based accounts such as these are showing how rural creative economies are being driven by communities in place, partly in response to geographic remoteness by way of isolation but also inspiration.

Research from other countries is also attesting to how rural assets are valorised as part of cultural and creative economic activity. Turning to New Zealand, Conradson and Pawson's (2009) study on the South Island's West Coast, shows how discourses surrounding inherited natural and cultural assets such as 'wild' landscapes and mining heritage, drive tourism activity to an area perceived as marginal. In England, Scott draws upon the Lake District in England to show how a complex cultural economy is generated by a mix of natural, symbolic and cultural values that interlace the natural landscape with numerous artistic and literary works by notable figures such as Byron, Keats, Shelley and Wordsworth (Scott 2010, p. 1571). Lysgård (2016, p. 8) looks to a range of cultural policies in Norway to show how rural cultural projects have been shaped by preserving cultural heritage such as local food, language and dialect, folk music and traditional crafts rather than standard creative economy prescription. These insights show how creative economies are shaped by histories, geographies and cultural assets distinct to place.

From a rural perspective, the spatiality of creative economies takes on new meaning beyond creative cities and creative class hotspots. The dense and bounded idea of creative clusters is less salient in rural areas where studies illustrate how creative economies are enacted by dispersed creative networks and collaborations (Edensor et al. 2009; Gibson & Robinson 2004; Harvey, Hawkins & Thomas 2012; Roberts & Townsend 2016). Rather than focusing on demarcating spaces as 'creative' versus 'ordinary', rural areas offer insights into how relations shape creative economies across sites and scales (Edensor et al. 2009, p. 15). This means that, while a creative rural 'cluster' might not be easily discernible, it does not mean that creative economies are not being fostered in place. Edensor et al. argue that the focus on 'networks' provides a more nuanced insights into the distribution of creativity versus clusters that situate creative practices as 'taking place in groups in hierarchical structures and bounded places' (2009, p. 15). Locating rural creative economies presents not only a statistical challenge through rejecting occupational data, but also a spatial one in looking beyond clusters for evidence of creative economies to understanding how creative economies might be distributed through networks more broadly.

(ii) Rethinking the contribution of rural creative economies: towards new understandings

Bell and Jayne (2010, p. 210) argue that ‘the countryside’ needs to be considered as: ‘a place where the creative economy is differently manifested and articulated from the now standard “creative script” based on cities’. From the studies detailed in this section, it is evident that scholars are adding to Bell and Jayne’s call to consider the creative economy in more nuanced and place specific ways. As this section has shown, creative economies are being relationally constituted by diffuse identities and networks, nonmarket activities and place resources that offer new economic potential and bring into disrepute the idea of rural areas as being devoid in creative assets. This not only disrupts the neoliberal framing of the creative economy that privileges largely urban capitalist actors, practices and sites of creative economies, but sits uneasily with attempts to assess the noneconomic contribution of creative economies to rural societies using capitalistic terminology like ‘social capital’ (Ingle 2010; Petrov & Cavin 2017) and ‘cognitive-cultural capitalism’ (Scott 2011). In this section I explore the challenges of assessing the contribution of rural creative economies, before moving into the diverse and community economies theoretical framework of this thesis.

Cultural geographer Chris Gibson (2010) suggests broadening creative industries beyond capitalistic language. He argues that ‘By not assuming capitalist-oriented language of firms, growth, employment and export’ and instead ‘valuing the communitarian purposes to which creativity can be put’, new insights are provided into how the creative economy is individually and collectively constituted (2010, pp. 7–8). Attempts to understand the contribution of rural creativity beyond economic growth however are predominantly concerned with its influence on local social capital (Argent 2018, pp. 2–3). Sociologist Alejandro Portes (1998, p. 3) traces the development of the concept of social capital to philosopher Pierre Bourdieu, with the term signifying ‘the benefits accrued to individuals by virtue of participation in groups’. The concept was popularised more broadly in the 1990s by Robert Putnam, a political scientist studying civic participation and defining social capital as ‘features of social organizations such as networks, norms and trust, that facilitate action and cooperation for mutual benefit’ (Portes 1998, p. 18). Social capital has become an influential concept in attempts to valorise noneconomic activities within communities, however it is downplayed by Florida in its contribution to creative economic development. According to Florida, strong bonds between the community can be seen as potentially ‘restricting and invasive’ and inhibiting the creativity that flourishes through weaker ties (Florida 2003, p. 6). Others contend however that close social relations may actually attract members of the creative class to regional

centres (Verdich 2010), encourage their retention (Andersen et al. 2010, p. 1606) and foster entrepreneurship (Freire-Gibb & Nielsen 2014; Ingle 2010; Petrov & Cavin 2017).

While social capital provides insights into the strength of community relations, it perpetuates a capitalist framing of the creative economy. The valorisation of rural creative economy actors through possessing other forms of capital e.g. ‘creative capital’ and ‘social capital’ (Petrov & Cavin 2017) could be considered as privileging capitalism as the standard of which noneconomic activities are measured against. As Gibson-Graham illustrates, this language of social capital favoured in development models positions social relations as “‘investments’ that can eventually monetized, exchanged and used to generate profitable returns’ (Gibson-Graham 2006b, p. 58). Emphasis on creative and social capital as ways to understand the worth of creative economic activities beyond economic growth is therefore in danger of obfuscating the alternative social and economic interactions that are decoupled from capitalism.

Moving beyond appraising the contribution of people, the language of capital also permeates into the valorisation of cultural resources. As discussed in section 2.2.3 Allen Scott (2011) describes how a new era of ‘cognitive-cultural capitalism’ characterised by workers in creative and knowledge-driven occupations (i.e. the creative class) is creating regenerative opportunities for rural areas based on their consumption tastes and disposable income. Scott argues (p. 859) that ‘many rural areas have found that otherwise dormant natural and symbolic resources can be turned into lucrative assets’, citing examples such as wine production landscapes like the Napa Valley and Burgundy region, the scenic landscapes of the English Lake District, archaeological sites across the Mediterranean and ecological tourist sites in Brazil and Costa Rica (pp. 858–859). Furthermore, Scott shows how a range of rural areas across the world are turning to local cultural assets such as culinary traditions or heritage to enact economic transformation—citing my project’s focus on Booktowns and the ‘Slow’ Movement as emblematic of ‘imaginative cognitive and cultural ventures’ which create new products and markets or foster a tourist trade (p. 859). The framing of these cultural assets as dormant resources awaiting capitalist activation raises questions around risk of exploitation of resources that Scott acknowledges are also ‘fragile regional endowments’ (p. 859). The development of rural resources for creative economies is therefore accompanied by important ethical considerations around ongoing care and protection.

2.3.3 Tensions and Opportunities

In this section I have introduced an alternative strand of literature that shows how rural creative economies can be relational, nonmarket, and underpinned by shared local assets and resources. This is in contrast to the dominant framings of the creative economy that emphasise how decline can be addressed through top down policy prescriptions targeting the creative class, prioritising the market and commercialising cultural resources. Despite the noncapitalistic logics of these alternative creative economies, understanding their contribution is generally viewed through a capitalistic lens. For my own project on Booktowns and Slow Food, these tensions raise important issues for understanding how these forms of creative economies might address the place-specific challenges of economic decline. On the one hand, the intertwining of Booktowns and Slow Food with discourse of ‘cognitive-cultural capitalism’ (Scott 2011, p. 859) presents such movements as serving capitalist desires, or as the preserve of the privileged creative class. On the other hand, as chapter 4 will outline, Booktowns and Slow Food were instigated by ethical rather than instrumental economic goals in response to concerns for community sustainability and wellbeing (Mayer & Knox 2010). This raises key questions such as how are Booktown and Slow Food activities contributing to the emergence of creative economies in place? Who is mobilising rural creative economies through these movements? How are cultural resources being used and what types of exchanges underpin these economies?

To explore how Booktowns and Slow Food are contributing to understandings of how rural creative economies are being constituted in place in response to decline, I therefore need a theoretical framework that offers ways to locate more-than-capitalist visions of creative economies outside of Florida’s creative class. Furthermore, I need a theoretical framework that helps to understand how rural creative economies might be potentiated and negotiated as part of ethical debates rather than policy prescriptions. In the following section I detail how J.K. Gibson-Graham’s diverse and community economies theoretical framework offers an entry point into this new realm of possibility.

2.4 Diverse and Community Economies Theoretical Framework

2.4.1 An anti-essentialist approach to economy

The work of J.K. Gibson-Graham offers a timely intervention into the dominant framing of the creative economy. Informed by poststructural approaches to economic geography, Gibson-Graham offers an alternative entry into exploring societies and economic issues beyond

predetermined structural forces or the use of master categories. Emerging in the 1960s, poststructuralism provided new ground to problematise modernist conceptions of ‘knowing, the knower and the known’ (Gibson-Graham 2003, p. 95). Poststructural enquiry looks to dissolve any core or predetermined essence and instead explores the relations that constitute a given phenomena, therefore taking an anti-essentialist approach to fixed meanings and identities (Harrison 2015). Anti-essentialism infers that ‘in order to say anything meaningful about the relationships between processes, one must be able to provide a complete account of all existing relationships relevant to the case at hand’ (Gregory et al. 2009, p. 210). Anti-essentialism has been an influential concept for poststructural economic scholars through anti-essentialist Marxism (also known as postmodern Marxism) that challenges traditional Marxian emphasis on determining events as resulting of underlying structural forces such as class (DeMartino 1999, p. 798). The concept is intellectually rooted in 20th century Marxist thought, namely the work of Louis Althusser, Antonio Gramsci and Georg Lukács alongside, non-Marxist poststructuralists Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. This branch of Marxism was developed further by economics staff and students in University of Massachusetts, led by Stephen Resnick and Richard Wolff (DeMartino 1999, p. 798).

Resnick and Wolff’s publication *Knowledge and Class: A Marxian Critique of Political Economy* challenged dominant Marxist theorisations of the economy as reduced to an essential cause such as historical forces (1987, p. 3). Instead, they draw upon Louis Althusser’s concept of overdetermination to emphasise how concepts and processes like the economy are shaped by a multitude of interconnecting determinants that are unique to each instance (p. 4). For Resnick and Wolff, the economy is a complex entity, constituted through shifting interrelations rather than a fixed totality or singular essence. This practice of anti-essentialist Marxism has provided a ‘theoretical strategy’ to unravel key areas of Marxian theory (Gibson-Graham 2006a, p. 29). Through the lens of overdetermination, capitalism can no longer be conceived as the dominant force in economic relations, it is but one of a variety of other determinants, all without fixed status (Gibson-Graham 2006a, p. 45). As Gibson-Graham, Resnick and Wolff state, overdetermination departs from a priori assumptions on causality:

overdetermination stands as an ontological presumption or starting point that does not assign causal or constitutive privilege to any social instance or process. Instead, causation and identity are complex unfoldings that yield themselves differently to every analysis and every analytical movement (Gibson-Graham, Resnick & Wolff 2000, pp. 6–7).

This means that rather than conceiving of identities and events as being determined by a leading force, a suite of political, economic, social, cultural and natural and other processes need to be taken into account for each distinct situation (p. 7). Overdetermination thereby acts to undo the certainty afforded to master categories like class.

For my project, overdetermination provides a significant rupture in understandings of creative economies as being led by a fixed identity of a creative class. Florida claims a Marxian approach in his justification of grouping heterogeneous occupations in a singular creative class based around their economic functions (2014, p. 37):

Creative Class identity runs much deeper than a set of changing affections and affectations; it is rooted in our changed economic circumstances. What binds it together is not just its values and attitudes but the place it occupies in the economic structure.

For Florida, membership of a creative class is therefore underpinned by economic functions with their social expression flowing on from this. He loosely explains this by maintaining the varied occupations of the creative class and their shared ‘creative labor’ demonstrates a similarity with the physical skills that have underpinned categorisations of the working class (p. 37). This ambitious attempt to reposition class in a post-industrial economy is met with intense scrutiny. Florida’s depiction of class essentialises creative economic activity to a certain group. The seemingly innocuous designation of a new class based on largely ‘professional’ occupations presents: ‘a strongly affirmative conception of contemporary class society, which promotes a self-idealisation of the “leading” occupational groups of today’s capitalism’ (Krätke 2010, p. 4). Krätke argues here that certain ‘dealer’ occupations incorporated under the creative class construct are evident in capitalistic sectors such as in finance and real estate with damaging effects on economies witnessed in the recent Global Financial crisis through the ‘finance-dominated and increasingly speculation driven capitalist model of development’ (2010, p. 4). Florida’s use of class to determine a new leading economic group is thus problematic and evokes strong arguments of elitism and the obfuscation of ‘creative’ occupations. Ougaard (2008) demonstrates that the creative class are likely to be ‘better paid, more powerful in relation to capital, subject to lower work intensity, and less exploited than average wage labour’ (2008, p. 350). This argument underpins much of the elitist discussion based on neoliberal strategies that privilege creative class needs over other groups like the service or working class (DeFazio 2002; Peck 2005).

Scholars have pointed out a number of flaws with Florida's use of class. Pratt (2008, p. 110) questions how such a heterogeneous grouping could indicate a shared position 'in relation to the means of production, or that it is in any way is it conscious of itself'. These concerns are echoed by Peck (2005, p. 756) who challenges the scant regard paid to the depth and breadth of the 'divisions of labour' within these broad professions. Using the example of photographers as a creative class subset, Mo explicates (2012, p. 10) how a shared class position is unlikely in a Marxist sense due to: the heterogeneous nature of the profession (ranging from amateur to celebrity photographers); their various positions of wealth and social status; and difficulties in discerning a lack of common interests which underpin group formation (Mo 2012, p. 10). This lack of common association comes into tension with the Marxist core tenet of class consciousness (Pratt 2008, p. 110), a concept that recognises that ability of a class to mobilise around collective issues, what Marx and Engles (1970) describe as a move from being a class 'in-itself' to a class 'for itself' (quoted in Hunt & Benford 2004, p. 434). Instead Pratt (2008, p. 110) argues that the creative class are more loosely grouped together by assumptions of shared attitudes towards consumption, bohemian culture and diversity and tolerance. Florida's use of class therefore bundles together a broad range of members according to their economic function along with allegedly shared social attitudes and values.

Through the lens of overdetermination, Gibson-Graham, Resnick and Wolff (2000, p. 7) offer new insights into class that starts from a position of 'theoretical emptiness'. To do this, the authors conceive of class as a *process* of 'producing, appropriating and distributing surplus labour' (p. 7). Focus is instead placed on the production of surplus labour, rather than a predetermined social or economic class position. Gibson-Graham, Resnick and Wolff illustrate a number of examples where focusing on class as a process provides a fluidity of class narratives rather than a singular dominant force. This can range from independent class processes where self-employed business owners appropriate their own surplus labour to communal class forms where surplus labour is 'collectively produced and appropriated' by workers (Gibson-Graham, Resnick & Wolff 2001, p. 9). Multiple class positions may be evident in any one person or society (Gibson-Graham 2006a; Gibson-Graham, Resnick & Wolff 2001). For instance, a small business owner may appropriate her own surplus labour in an independent class process while also appropriating the surplus value of her employees (Gibson-Graham, Resnick & Wolff 2001, p. 18).

Building on the multiple and shifting class identities raised through conceiving of class as a process, Kenneth Levin, a former student of Resnick, Wolff and Julie Graham at the University of

Massachusetts Amherst, proposes the idea of a ‘class hybrid’, comprising ‘combinations of different kinds of class structures at the same site [and are] constituted by different kinds of class processes’ (2014, p. 105). Focusing on the high-tech industry in Silicon Valley, an exemplar of Florida’s creative class focus on capitalistic driven economic actors, Levin applies the hybrid class concept to the high-tech industry in Silicon Valley to examine the interplay between capitalist and communal class structures. He demonstrates how start-up companies can draw upon each of these distinct class features such as where a ‘collective of engineers serve as their own board of directors’. In this setting, the group appropriates their own labour, makes decisions about how wages should be set and how enterprise surplus is distributed. The group may become hybrid if additional engineers are hired to produce profits in a capitalist class formation (p. 109). Through a study of class processes Levin argues how this troubles Marx’s assertion of ‘modern industry as synonymous with a capitalist structure’ (p. 110). Levin’s discussion on the co-existence of communal and capitalist class process in high tech industries therefore provides broader insights into the variety of class processes underpinning this creative economy subset beyond a singular capitalistic view as espoused by Florida.

2.4.2 Enlarging economic diversity: Feminist economic perspectives

The act of extricating the economy from a singular capitalist position interconnects with feminist economic analyses. For instance, Duncan Ironmonger’s (1996) findings on how the noncapitalist activities of unpaid household work and nonmarket transactions comprised 30-50% of economic activities brought to attention the totalising effects of capitalist discourse, discounting ‘the economic activity that engages more people, for more hours of the day over more years of their lives than any other’ (Gibson-Graham, Resnick & Wolff 2001, p. 14). Other influential scholarship such as the work of Marilyn Waring on unpaid household labour (1988) also prompted Gibson-Graham’s troubling of the ‘discursive violence’ being enacted on other forms of economy through enacting a capitalist-noncapitalist binary (Gibson-Graham 2006a, p. 12).

Gibson-Graham’s pathbreaking publication *The End of Capitalism: As we knew it* (2006a) incisively detailed how capitalism exerts discursive power through the concept of ‘capitalocentrism’. The term draws upon feminist critiques of patriarchal society, particularly Irigaray’s concept of ‘phallocentrism’ (1985) or the positing of male knowledge as the ‘norm’ (McKinnon, Dombroski & Morrow 2018, p. 336). Capitalocentrism therefore portrays the privileging of capitalism as standard, the reference point to which all types of noncapitalist economic activities are measured against (Gibson-Graham 2006a, p. 6). A capitalocentric view of other forms of economic activities

(e.g. household labour, traditional economies or alternative resistance movements) sees them as inconsequential and subservient to capitalism (McKinnon, Dombroski & Morrow 2018, pp. 336–337). For Gibson-Graham and colleagues, the task of reframing the economy is more than just recognising capitalism's hegemonic effects, but as will be explored in the following section, it is about enacting an alternative.

Building on the broadened economic landscape introduced in *The End of Capitalism*, Gibson-Graham developed 'a new economic ontology that could contribute to novel economic performances' (Gibson-Graham 2008, p. 615). Performativity is a complex concept that is used variously across sociology, economics and science and broadly refers to how reality is 'provoked' by actions (Muniesa 2014, p. 7). Gibson-Graham draws upon the work of gender studies scholar Judith Butler (1990), who showed how gender identity was not a fixed biological or cultural marker of male and female, but constantly 'performed' through actions and susceptible to subversion. Similar to the way that multiple gender identities can be performed, different economic identities can also be performed. Performativity, along with poststructural theory more broadly is thus a 'political intervention' that 'actively shapes "reality" rather than passively reflecting on it' (Gibson-Graham 2003, p. 101). Research is thus implicated in creating the worlds it is seeking to describe (Gibson-Graham 2008 p. 614). This means that for my own project, rejecting the dominant framing of the creative economy in policy and reconceptualising how it is constituted in place is a performative act of bringing a more diverse understanding of the creative economy into being, an issue that will be returned to in chapter 3 (methodology).

2.4.3 *Diverse Economies*

A key way that Gibson-Graham is 'bringing new economies into being' (2008, p. 616) is through a diverse economy framing. The diverse economy framing is a theoretical tool for tracing the contours of the economy beyond capitalocentrism. The language of the diverse economy is informed by 'weak theory' (Gibson-Graham 2006, p. 60), a concept used by gender studies academic Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003) to provide a counterpoint to 'strong theory' that deduces what is already known. As Gibson-Graham reflects, 'weak theory does not elaborate and confirm what we already know; it observes, interprets and yields to emerging knowledge' (Gibson-Graham 2014, p. 149). The diverse economies framework is inspired by feminist representations of economic sites and activities, along with anthropologist Stephen Gudeman's (2001) work on informal, Indigenous or non-Western economic practices of resource use and economic transaction (Gibson-Graham 2006b, p. 58). Building on this work, the diverse economy uses weak

theory to broaden the identity of economy and embrace all practices that are peripheral to capitalism (2006b, p. 60). For my project, weak theory provides an entry point into exploring how creative economies are constituted outside of the dominant or 'strong' vision of the creative economy derived from neoliberal policy.

The diverse economies framing is a technique that employs a strategy of 'reading for difference rather than dominance' (Gibson-Graham 2006b, p. 54). This involves conducting an inventory of an economic landscape that is comprised of a variety of capitalist and noncapitalist practices and enterprises (p. 54). The diverse economies iceberg is a pedagogical device used to represent the broad range of economic activities and enterprises that might form part of (but not limited to) this extensive economic landscape (Figure 2.1). This figure represents 'the economy' as it is typically understood as constituted by wage labour, commodity exchange and capitalist enterprise on the surface (Gibson-Graham 2006b, p. 69). Under the surface however, exists a multitude of economic actors, practices and places that challenge a unitary idea of economy (Gibson-Graham 2006b, p. 69).

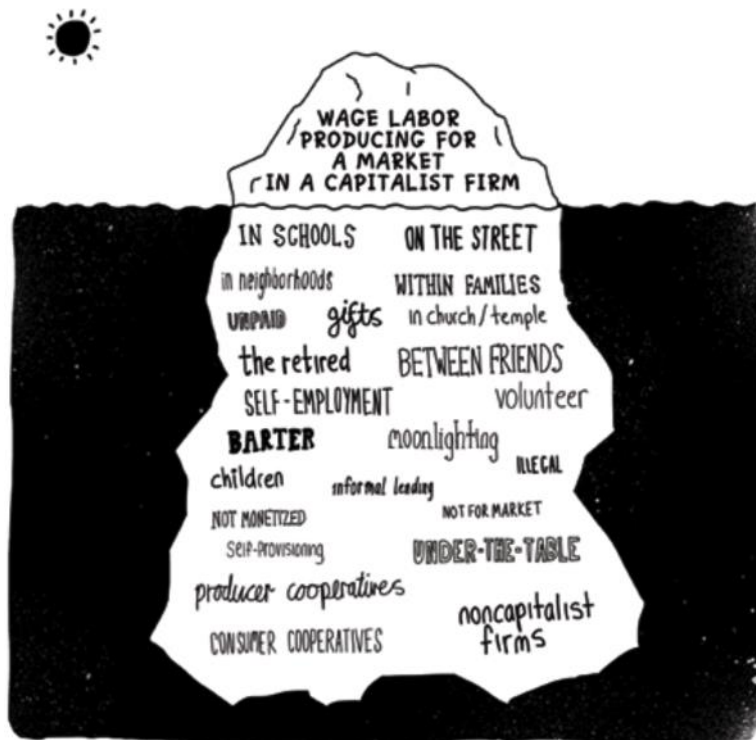


Figure 2.1 Diverse Economies Iceberg (Source: Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013, p. 11)

The grouping of these activities is exemplified in (but not limited to) the diverse economy summary table (Figure 2.2). Carried over from the iceberg, the top row of cells represents the dominant capitalist representation of economy with the middle and bottom cells reflecting those activities submerged under the capitalist waterline (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013, p. 13, Figure 2.2). The columns show a deconstructive representation of the economy that ‘displaces the binary hierarchies of market/nonmarket and capitalism/noncapitalism’ (Gibson-Graham 2006a, p. xiv). These orderings are importantly open-ended and contingent upon the relations of place.

THE DIVERSE ECONOMY				
LABOUR	ENTERPRISE	TRANSACTIONS	PROPERTY	FINANCE
Wage	Capitalist	Market	Private Alternative	Mainstream Market
Alternative Paid	Alternative Capitalist	Alternative	Private	Alternative Market
Unpaid	Noncapitalist	Nonmarket	Open Access	Nonmarket

Figure 2.2 Diverse economy table (Source: Adapted from Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013, p. 13)

From a creative economy perspective specifically, the diverse economies framework offers an important intervention into its reconceptualisation by delinking it from capitalism. Members of the Community Economies Collective Leo Hwang (2013) and Abby Templer Rodrigues (2018) share key insights on a participatory action research project ‘Rethinking the Creative Economy’ in the Pioneer Valley, Massachusetts. The project demonstrated how the creative economy in this region comprised of artists and artisans drew upon a rich stock of noncapitalist subjects, assets and relations. Exploring the assets in place revealed a prolific diverse creative economy underpinned by alternative market exchanges such as bartering and nonmarket exchanges such as the exchange of knowledge to nurture creative enterprise and artistic practice (Hwang 2013). For Templer Rodrigues, the diverse economies framing provided an opportunity to understand the motivations of such actors beyond market logics. Insights from these authors help to address weaknesses in Florida’s model by redirecting focus from the capitalistic identity of the creative class and paying broader attention to how diverse economic subjects, resources and practices are constituting creative economies in place. While the theoretical framework of diverse economies is instructive in enlarging what constitutes creative economic activity, I also need to find a theoretical lens that offers insights into the relations that are underpinning these actions in order to understand how

rural decline is being addressed through the aspirations of the Booktown and Slow Food movements. This leads me to the theoretical concerns of community economies.

2.4.4 Community Economies

Following the anti-essentialist and anti-capitalocentric reading of economy provided through diverse economies, Gibson-Graham brought attention to the relationship between diverse economic practices and their ethical and political effects (Gibson-Graham 2006b, p. 80). Rather than seeing diverse economic practices as ad hoc or acting in isolation, Gibson-Graham is concerned with how this more expansive economic terrain might generate insights into understanding ethical and political interventions, along with new possibilities. To explore the dynamics of these economic relations, a discourse of a ‘community economy’ was introduced to ‘resignify all economic transactions and relations in their sociality and interdependence, and their ethical participation in being-in-common as part of a “community economy” (Gibson-Graham 2006b, p. 97). From this perspective, community, like economy, should not be essentialised as a predetermined or fixed entity.

Drawing on the work of philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy, Gibson-Graham argues ‘to liberate economic difference, we need to also liberate community from its traditional recourse to common being’ (2006b, p. 85). This means recognising how communities are heterogeneous and fluid entities. For Nancy, emphasis on the ‘community of being’ and not the ‘being of the community’ brings attention to the composition of community rather than an assumed essence (Nancy 2000, p. 1). The fluidity rather than fixity of ‘Being’ provokes ethical considerations around how communities negotiate their coexistence. Miller (2013) proposes that the concept of community economies is comprised of three distinct but interconnected ‘moments’—an ontological moment that recognises the fluidity of being in (or out of) a community; an ethical moment that appreciates the fragile sociality of interdependencies; and a moment of politics that demonstrates the possibilities and struggles emergent through collective ethical negotiation. Taken together, these distinct perspectives demonstrate how community economies bring into tension the prefiguring of communities, instead looking to understanding dynamic forms of ethical relations and politics that are entangled in economic actions.

Rather than conceiving the creative economy as something that is enacted by a discrete group like the creative class to solve problems of decline, a community economies approach recognises how the economy can offer an entry point for communities to collectively grapple with local challenges

and mobilise new possibilities. As Gibson-Graham, Cameron and Healy explain, a community economy is:

a space of decision making where we recognize our interdependence with other humans, other species, and our environment. In the process of recognizing and negotiating, we become a community (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013, p. xix).

A community economies approach involves considering the complexities of how interdependencies are ethically negotiated across ‘*economic* subjects, sites and practices’ (Gibson-Graham 2006b, p. 81). Key ethical coordinates assist navigating the contours of community economies. These are:

- *surviving* together well and equitably;
- *distributing surplus* to enrich social and environmental health;
- *encountering others* in ways that support their well-being as well as ours;
- *consuming* sustainably;
- *caring for*—maintaining, replenishing, and growing—our natural and cultural *commons*; and
- *investing our wealth in future generations* so they can live well (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013, pp. xviii–xix).

These ethical coordinates help to bring into focus how economic actions in a rural creative economy might offer more than contributions to the self-serving ideals of a creative class or a bolstering of GDP. If we recognise creative economies as diverse, we are also afforded opportunities to explore ethical decisions and dilemmas around how people and place might actively shape responses to decline, rather than importing generic creative economy scripts or a heroic creative class.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has traced shifting discourses of the creative economy, discussed the implications of how rural creative economies might be conceptualised and explored, and described the diverse and community economies theoretical framework of the thesis in response to issues raised through the literature. The roots of the creative economy within New Labour’s neoliberal policy agenda and

Florida's creative class thesis has presented a vision of a creative economy that valorises the creative individual and their regenerative potential through boosting GDP. Government focus largely remains on validating the creative economy through creative occupations as the way to make the creative economy 'knowable' and 'measurable' that are inspired by influential policy documents like New Labour's 'Creative Industries Mapping' document that set the common usage of creative industries categories. This approach has been extended from urban into rural areas with limited and conflicting results as to its merits in locating creative places, creative economy actors and measuring their contribution to local economics and societies. Furthermore, qualitative studies highlight tensions around the idea of a creative 'class' that creates a divisive image of creative economies as the preserve of privileged people and places. These insights provide warnings around creative leaderboards and rankings around such a cohort and the damaging effects this can have on place.

An alternative body of scholarship is providing new insights into rural creative economies beyond ideas of a metro-centred and capitalistic creative economy and creative class. These studies are showing rural creative economies can be relational, nonmarket, draw upon distinct local assets and resources and attend to community and place rather than capitalistic ends. This body of scholarship also raised tensions around how noncapitalistic practices are largely still valorised through capitalistic language and concepts such as 'social capital', and how cultural resources are at risk of being subsumed as a form of 'cognitive cultural capital' in meeting the consumption preferences of a creative class. For my project on Booktowns and Slow Food, these tensions raise questions around how are such activities contributing to the emergence of creative economies in place? Who is enacting rural creative economies? How are cultural resources being used and what types of market exchanges are occurring? To explore these questions, I turned to the diverse and community economies theoretical framework developed by J.K. Gibson-Graham as a way to understand how rural creative economies are constituted more broadly and the effects they create in responding to decline.

Gibson-Graham's anti-essentialist theorisation of economy challenges a priori assumptions of the creative economy as a neoliberal capitalist economy located in certain occupations or industries. This approach involves looking to what is already *in place* and focusing on how diverse economic subjects, sites and practices become entangled in response to decline and lead to a creative economy, in contrast to approaches that infer a creative economy through a creative class statistical presence. This means considering how a creative economy might emerge through ethical debates

and negotiations around how local actors and resources can be mobilised to generate alternative economic activity through what Gibson-Graham describe as a community economy (Gibson-Graham 2006b). This vision of a creative economy is part of a performative ontology that looks for a ‘politics of possibility’ (Gibson-Graham 2006b) in generating a more expansive and ethically negotiated economy that foregrounds care of people and place, rather than climbing creative leaderboards and capitulating to capitalist markets. With this performative ontological approach in mind, the following chapter turns to the methodological interventions required in reconceptualising the rural creative economy by looking to its constitution in place.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

If we want to think about the messes of reality at all then we're going to have to teach ourselves to think, to practice, to relate, and to know in new ways (Law 2004a, p. 2).

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the methodological framing and research design of the thesis in response to the aim of understanding how rural creative economies are constituted in place in response to decline. The choice of methodology reflects the researcher's stance on the world and shapes their approach to it. As outlined over the preceding chapters, this thesis is motivated by a shift to extending the creative economy outside its normative neoliberal framing by turning to a diverse and community economies ontology (Gibson-Graham 2006b). This shift is driven by curiosity in creative economies as opportunities for new possibilities in response to concerns around rural futures. The choice of methodology therefore does important work in positioning research tools away from positivist techniques that capture a fixed reality of the creative class as the leading creative economy actors and into an ontological framework that allows for multiple perspectives on who and what constitute creative economies.

To design a study that considers the role of the creative economy in responding to decline outside narrow, normative framings around a creative class requires consideration of economic action occurring on the ground. As the opening quote from John Law demonstrates, the complexity of reality challenges conventional approaches to social research and the limits of what can be 'known' by the researcher. Instead, Law calls for an openness to 'heterogeneity and variation' in understanding the world as 'an unformed but generative flux of forces and relations that work to produce particular realities' (2004a, pp. 6–7). To put this strategy into practice I turn to the methodological framework of actor-network theory (ANT) in providing a complimentary set of

concepts to think through in conjunction with diverse and community economies to explore the constitution of rural creative economies in place.

The chapter is structured as follows: first, I outline the ontological framing that shapes my approach to the research drawing upon diverse and community economies and actor-network theory; second, I detail the ethnographic research design of the thesis; third, I reflect on researcher positionality and ethical considerations; and finally I detail data analysis and implications for how the thesis findings will be ordered.

3.2 Ontological considerations

3.2.1 *Who and What to Study?*

In chapter 2 I detailed how the thesis takes a diverse and community economies approach to the rural creative economy. This has important ontological implications for shaping how the research is undertaken. Diverse and community economies scholars St. Martin, Roelvink and Gibson-Graham (2015, p. 1) emphasise:

“Diverse economies” is the ontological ground upon which we can begin to ethically explore the choices we make to perform the economy and its future as either a singular inevitability or a field with a variety of potentials that is open to experimentation.

To view the economy and its subjects as diverse involves a ‘performative ontological politics’ in making new worlds (St. Martin, Roelvink & Gibson-Graham 2015, p. 7). To this end, I enact a deliberate subversion in creative economy discourse and praxis by participating in the ontological reframing of the creative economy. The act of reframing the creative economy disrupts tidy sectoral and creative class categorisation and positivist techniques that reproduce the strong vision of a creative economy favoured by policy makers. Instead of relying on census data or GDP contributions, the act of reframing calls for embracing messier ways of studying how rural creative economies are being constituted by communities in place.

In addressing the aim of understanding how rural creative economies are being constituted in place I draw upon actor-network theory. Actor-network is a methodological framework developed by Science, Technology and Society (STS) scholars and increasingly engaged by members of the Community Economies Collective as a way to trace ‘the material assemblages that perform diverse

economies' (St. Martin, Roelvink & Gibson-Graham 2015, p. 10). As will be explored in greater detail below, this more expansive perspective on agency effects how actors are located in creative economy, extending enquiry from the singular identity of individualistic and humanistic economic actors like the creative class to more collective and nonhuman understandings. Through its widened stance on who can perform economic action, ANT is recognised as an instructive methodology for community economies research to locate 'other economic subject positions that allow for a wider range of identities within community economies' (St. Martin, Roelvink & Gibson-Graham 2015, p. 11). For my project on rural creative economies this means taking a broad approach to understanding how rural creative economies are being constituted beyond a creative class and understanding how a variety of entities are being enrolled into the Booktown and Slow Food movements (e.g. buildings, books, plants and animals) in becoming part of the response to decline.

3.2.2 Actor-Network Theory

Actor-network theory is a poststructural methodology that originated during the 1980s through the work of Michel Callon, Bruno Latour, John Law (and later by Annemarie Mol). ANT developed from the discipline of Science, Technology and Society, which is concerned with researching the social context of science and technology (Law 2004a, p. 12). STS provokes enquiry into the production of scientific knowledge, challenging 'heroic accounts or innovation models' (Crawford 2004, p. 1). As Law remarks, scientific knowledge does not evolve from pure separation from the social world, it simultaneously shapes it and is shaped by it (Law 2004a). ANT poses a challenge to conventional 'social science wisdom' (Law 2004a, p. 13), moving from seemingly neutral and generalised explanatory analyses to exploratory studies of how action unfolds and is shaped by a variety of interactions. As a result, ANT is characterised by a rich descriptive vocabulary, drawing upon terms such as actors and hybrids (described in further detail below). Rather than master explanations of social phenomena, these descriptors are conceived as abstract ways to examine the constitution of networks, acting as 'vessels' in 'tracing out the complexity and detail of network-building' (Michael 2017, p. 26). This means that ANT studies are strongly situated in context and reject any pre-conceived assumptions around who and what is involved in network building.

Despite the premise of theory, ANT resists theoretical characteristics. By Latour's admission, ANT pushes theoretical abstraction 'it is a negative, empty, relativistic grid that allows us *not* to synthesize the ingredients of the social in the actor's place' (Latour 2005, p. 221). Law instructs that ANT is better understood as 'an empirical version of post-structuralism' (Law 2009, p. 145). ANT's

theoretical thinness provides methodological strength however through emphasising ‘adaptability and sensitivity’ across a variety of contexts (Mol 2010, p. 262). It is therefore described as a set of ‘intellectual tools, sensibilities, questions and versions of politics’ (Law 2009, p. 150) or an ‘adaptable open repository’ rather than fixed framework (Mol 2010, p. 265). Focusing on fluid and contingent associations, ANT can be instructive for understanding complex processes such as ‘situations where innovations proliferate, where group boundaries proliferate, where group boundaries are uncertain, when the range of entities taken into account fluctuates’ (Latour 2005, p. 11). Therefore, a key strength of ANT is the exploratory lens it offers into understanding social complexities, particularly in times of change, in contrast to what Latour critiques in conventional social science accounts that ‘limit actors to the role of informers offering cases of well-known types’ (p. 11). ANT informed studies therefore involve rejecting prior assumptions around who or what constitutes the social. As Latour argues, ‘Relating to one group or another is an on-going process made up of uncertain, fragile, controversial, and ever-shifting ties’ (p. 28). In other words, rather than searching for generalisable patterns or macro categories, attending to relations that are in flux can provide important insights into worlds that are not fixed or stable.

From an ANT perspective, the question of who or what acts is much broader than conventional social science approaches. This question is deliberately open and pushes focus beyond ideas of the intentional human agent to investigating the relations that constitute action. For my own project, this means avoiding ascribing prior agency to actors such as a creative class. Attributing prior agency to humans as the sole force of action is also contestable—according to ANT, actors are understood as ‘any entity (human or nonhuman) within a network’ (Michael 2017, p. 153). Taking an ANT approach points the researcher away from social science emphasis on human subjects by proposing that social relations cannot be solely ascribed to humans and need to consider relations between humans and nonhumans. Nimmo (2011, p. 109) surmises:

For ANT there is no ‘society’ as such, in the sense of a domain consisting exclusively of relations between human subjects, as these relations are always mediated and transformed and even enabled by nonhumans of diverse kinds, whether objects, materials, technologies, animals or eco-systems.

ANT studies offer rich accounts on the influence of nonhumans. For instance, Michel Callon’s (1984) investigation into a research project on sustainable scallop farming in St Brieuc Bay in France showed how in this case, the social was constituted of researchers, fishermen, and a wider scientific community, along with the nonhuman scallops at the centre of the trial. These actors all

exerted different influences in the project, however, the project failed due to refusal of fishermen and scallops to ‘enrol’ into the network or in other words play a designated function (Callon 1984).

The question of agency, or the capacity to act, is more expansively traced through ANT. From an ANT perspective, the ‘actor’ is not a singular identity acting in isolation (Mol 2010, pp. 255–256). For Latour (2005, p. 71), dominant focus on what “‘intentional”, “meaningful” humans do’ obfuscates understandings of the agency of nonhumans. More broadly, an actor is any ‘thing’ that modifies ‘a state of affairs by making a difference’ (p. 71). Instead, material agency is emphasised through a framing of ‘generalized symmetry’ between humans and nonhumans (Latour 1993, pp. 94–96). This more expansive view of agency is operationalised through the conjoining of the terms actor and network, where classic binaries like agency and structure are dissolved in favour a ‘semiotics of materiality’ whereby entities are instead produced through their relations (Law 1999, p. 4). ANT is therefore about paying attention to associations or links between actors and networks (Latour 2005). By doing so, it shifts the focus of agency from human action to the dynamics of things coming together, ‘it is the network as a whole and the relationships through which it is constituted that enable performative action, including collective vision making’ (Roelvink 2016, p. 90). For my own project, this shift directs attention to how a relational network of people and things in place might mobilise action rather than privileging agency to an outside or heroic creative class.

ANTs pluralistic account of agency offers a dynamic entry into how economic change is enacted in (and through) place, yet brings methodological challenges. For instance, Collins and Yearley’s (1992) scathing critique of ANT’s principle of symmetry disputes how nonhumans can authentically speak in a way that is unmediated by human accounts. Another prominent critique of ANT is its exhaustive approach to network constitution (Lee & Brown 1994) or as Mike Michael summarises ‘ANT is apparently so all-encompassing, that it seems to cover everything, it has no “Other”’ (Michael 2017 p. 66). In response, however, Michael (p. 66) also draws attention to John Law’s emphasis on the performativity of methods in reminding that ‘method is productive of realities rather than merely reflecting them...parts of the out-there are made visible while other parts, though necessary, are pushed into invisibility’ (Law 2004a, p. 70).

Latour describes a key insight into becoming sensitive to the nonhuman world. He demonstrates how the body offers a sensory guide in attuning to a nonhuman world, an approach that can be developed through a process called ‘learning to be affected’ (Latour 2004a). Using the example of

the perfume industry, Latour describes how a specialist instructor uses a perfume kit to attune participants to different fragrance notes and in doing so, participants learn to use their nose to inhabit a ‘richer odiferous world’ (p. 207). Latour’s point here is that the body is not inferior to the ‘mind’, it unlocks possibilities to sense new worlds. By acknowledging the agency of nonhumans, an ANT approach ‘opens up the possibility of seeing, hearing, sensing and then analysing the social life of things—and thus caring about rather than neglecting them’ (Mol 2010, p. 255). Given my project’s focus on how rural creative economies are being constituted in place in response to decline, ANT offers an instructive lens into understanding how the objects of decline are playing a role in realising new economic futures.

The concept of the hybrid collective is increasingly used to describe actor-networks. Conceptualised by ANT proponents Michel Callon & John Law (1995; 1997) to explore how action derives from a ‘collectif’ (using the French term for collective), the authors posit that agency emerges from the interaction of people and things. This offers a distributive understanding of agency (Michael 2017, p. 68), by challenging conceptions of the social as relations between human actors and nonhumans as mere resources (Callon & Law 1997). Instead, hybrid collectives denote how ‘action is equivalent to specific and materially heterogeneous relations...These relations, human and non-human, carry action, they exert it and they modify it’ (Callon & Law 1997, p. 8). From this perspective, a break with conventional social theory’s focus on pre-determined structures and generalisable patterns is offered through focus on exploring how agency is distributed through the specificities of relations between entities within the network (Michael 2017, p. 68).

A prominent empirical example of a hybrid collective is a study of the muscular dystrophy disease (MD) in France in the 1990s. Callon and Rabearisoa (2003) show how new knowledge of this under-recognised disease was created through a heterogeneous combination of ‘researchers in the wild’ including scientific experts, patients, carers, written testimonies and technologies generating data about the disease such as photos and film, DNA banks and a worm providing a genome model for patients to relate to. This form of co-productive research not only broadened social knowledge about the lived experience of the disease for scientists, but patients’ own scientific understanding is ‘enriched with an array of new human and non-human entities that they learn to describe and with which they become accustomed to sharing their existence’ (Callon & Rabearisoa 2003, pp. 199–200). This expansion of knowledge and relations results in individual experiences of the disease being transformed with new ways to treat the disease and fund research.

The drawing together of multiple actors therefore broadened opportunities to learn from each other and enable new possibilities for treating the disease.

The concept of hybrid collectives is instructive for diverse and community economies scholarship. A range of diverse and community economies scholars are drawing upon the concept to explore the ways that humans and nonhumans are relating in processes of economic experimentation. For example, Gibson-Graham and Roelvink (2010) describe how hybrid research collectives are forming across rural Australia in addressing anthropocentric challenges, drawing upon different knowledges and nonhuman agencies—academic, Indigenous, farmer and nonhuman species. Turning to the site of community gardens in Newcastle, Cameron, Manhood and Pomfrett (2011) show how a hybrid collective of gardeners, plants and a bus were assembled together on a fieldtrip to visit each other's plots, acting to generate new knowledge around responding to challenges such as climate change (p. 505). Cameron, Gibson and Hill (2014) expand on the Newcastle community garden study and provide another example of the gathering together of a hybrid collective to explore community food economies in the Philippines that included university researchers, NGO and government projects, gardens, gardeners along with weather events such as typhoons. Reflecting on these disparate sites, the authors observe how heterogeneous entities come together to act and how this has important ethical and political implications in the Anthropocene:

Rather than seeing action research as producing “human fixers” of economic crises we become hybrid collective “co-creators” and “co-participants” alongside others, part of ever-lengthening chains of things, people and resources and experimental ideas in association (Cameron, Gibson & Hill 2014, p. 130).

The political implications of hybrid collectives are raised by Gerda Roelvink (2016; 2018), who argues for the role of such groups in constituting new forms of collective action. Roelvink (2018, p. 129) proposes that hybrid collectives are shedding new light onto how groups are merging around common concerns (such as climate change) in contrast to the common identity espoused by social movements or traditional Marxist politics underpinned by working-class revolt. By paying attention to how groups are gathering around concerns rather than singular issues or heroic identities, a more expansive view of how creative economies are being constituted in place in response to decline is offered. In chapter 5 the concept of hybrid collectives is brought into the frame of my empirical analysis on who is enacting change through Booktowns and Slow Food.

3.3 Research design

This section details the research design and materials generated through the fieldwork process. Fieldwork took place from September 2015–July 2016, comprising of 25 interviews (14 in Clunes; 11 in Mildura), participant observation and a session on diverse and community economy mapping in each site. An ethnographic research design was used to address the research aims of exploring how rural creative economies might be constituted in place in response to decline. This involves a rejection of conventional approaches to the creative economy that use statistical indicators to ‘locate’ a rural creative class (as discussed in chapter 2) and turning to how creative economy activity is practised on the ground. An ethnographic approach is compatible with this aim, based on its underlying premise that ‘knowledge of the social world is acquired from intimate familiarity with it’ (Brewer 2000, p. 11). Furthermore, ethnography is often tied to studies around shifting social relations concerning the impacts of economic change such as globalisation (Gibson-Graham 2014), a theme that was pertinent to the establishment of Booktowns and Slow Food as discussed in Chapter 1.

Ethnography has its roots in anthropology and is traditionally associated with extended and immersive periods of fieldwork. This understanding has changed in recent times, to involve shorter and multi-sited studies—including that of organisations which are often shorter in length and work around the timetable of the group. Ethnography broadens qualitative inquiry beyond talk to studying action through situating the researcher within the social context under analysis (Madden 2010). As Sarah Whatmore observes ‘Ethnography is distinctive in its approach to what constitutes ‘data’, paying as close attention to social practices (what people do) as to social discourses (what people say)’ (2003, p. 93). Ethnography is compatible with ANT given a shared focus on practices (Nimmo 2011, p. 113). Indeed, ANT has influenced how ethnography is practiced, particularly the ‘what’ and ‘where’ of the study (Whatmore 2003). While ethnography is typically associated with the study of human groups, societies, cultures or institutions (Madden 2010), its deployment in ANT through the principle of symmetry as explored above, extends its focus on what (or who) to study to nonhumans (Whatmore 2003 p. 93). As Whatmore explains, ANT’s principle of symmetry shifts focus from human actors (such as the scientist) to ‘the host of non-human devices, codes, bodies, and instruments that are active parties that are “doing” or practising science’ (Whatmore 2003, p. 93). Taking ANT and ethnographic principles seriously in this research therefore involves a genuine openness to nonhuman agency in constituting rural creative economies including the material properties of Booktowns and Slow Food.

For the ‘where’, ethnography traditionally focussed on the study of social groups in a single site. ANT has influenced where to study social practices, shifting focus from a core location like the laboratory, to tracing associations across multiple sites (Whatmore 2003, p. 93). This is particularly pertinent for ethnographic studies of organisations where Yanow et al. suggest multi-sitedness is common, ‘as organizational ethnographers typically follow actors, actions, artefacts and the ideas they embody and reflect’ (2012, p. 342). Often these activities focus on the everyday aspects of organisational life such as shadowing managers or ‘hanging out’ and attending ‘(un)eventful meetings’ (Ybema et al. 2009, p. 1). Arguably, the work of grassroots networks like Booktowns and Slow Food follow organisational principles through their structure (boards and committees) and activities (strategic planning and delivery of events). In the following section I elaborate on how an ethnographic research design and approach to ‘follow the actors’ unfolded through the fieldwork process.

3.3.1 Selecting the Sites

Establishing the ‘field’ is a foundational step in ethnography (Madden 2010; O’Reilly 2012). In line with the research aims of exploring how rural creative economies might be constituted in place, sites were selected based on where practices of creative economy activity appeared to be unfolding through the repurposing of local resources and creation of new markets.

Figure 3.1 presents the field sites. The first site that was selected was Clunes Booktown due to my familiarity of its activities based on previous research. As discussed in chapter 1, in 2010 I conducted research on the Booktown Festival as part of my Master’s minor thesis. This involved enquiry into the event’s effects on local social sustainability (Kennedy 2011) alongside a commissioned research audit on the festival (Kennedy 2010). This report sought to document the economic benefits derived from the event, alongside stakeholder satisfaction. During 2013 I was introduced to the language of the creative economy through an invitation to collaborate with Creative Clunes on a Booktown case study for the OECD report on ‘Tourism and the Creative Economy’ (Creative Clunes & Kennedy 2013; OECD 2014). The premise of this report was to ‘explore the emerging relationship between tourism and the creative industries to support the development of effective policies in this area’ (p. 14).

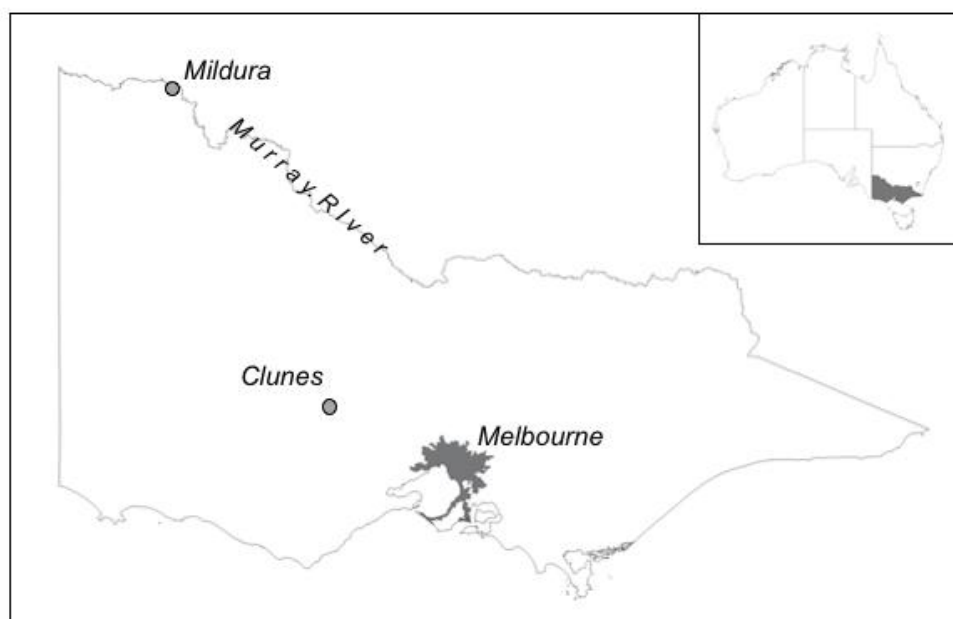


Figure 3.1 Map of study sites (Source: Dr Andrew Butt)

Working with Creative Clunes, we researched and prepared a report that positioned Booktown's emphasis on writing, publishing and print media within creative economy discourse and how this contributed to innovative tourism experiences in a rural setting (Creative Clunes and Kennedy 2013). Although the twenty-page document submitted to the OECD amounted to a small text box in the final report, the process of co-writing the report with Creative Clunes and documenting a wide range of activities and relations evoked through Booktown provoked a curiosity into the merits of situating such activities under a creative economy. It was evident that Booktown offered important support to the creative sector, fostered creative 'experiences' for tourists and linked to policy instruments around strengthening participation in creativity and culture in rural areas, but also suggested how new possibilities were emerging in place in ways beyond the language of creative economies through the mobilisation of local assets, skills and resources.

Selecting Slow Food Mildura as a second site progressed out of interest to extend to other forms of creative economy activity associated with global grassroots networks. The study was limited geographically to the state of Victoria to allow for ongoing visits over a period of ten months. At

the time of site selection (2015) there were two options of rural Slow Food convivia in Victoria—the Central Highlands region or Mildura. While the Central Highlands region incorporated Clunes and would have provided a similar geographic context, it is a region that already enjoys a strong culinary reputation, particularly driven by the gastronomic reputation of the nearby town of Daylesford (White 2015). Mildura on the other hand, while also boasting a strong food profile, provided a compelling contrast due to its isolated location (over 500 km from the state capital of Melbourne) and situation in an agribusiness food bowl. The situation of Slow Food activities against this corporate farming backdrop offered a potentially amplified setting for studying practices of diverse and creative economic activity.

3.3.2 Following the actors

In attending to the ANT sensibility to ‘follow the actors’ (Latour 1987), fieldwork was designed to trace the relevant chains of association that extended out from each network (Callon & Law 1995). Engagement in the field began with identifying a leader of each network and emailing an invitation to discuss the research project. In these initial meetings I detailed the project and negotiated opportunities for conversational interviews and participant observation. This led to a snowballing of participants based on recommendations from the leaders and immersion of activities in the network as elaborated in the next section.

Fieldwork took place over a ten-month period, commencing in September 2015 and culminating in July 2016. Interestingly, the timing of this research marked pivotal moments of change within each network, with implications for how the study would unfold. Michael (2017, p. 49) identifies that a methodological tactic in the study of actor-networks is offered when the network is ‘relatively weak’ such as during its formative phase or in a period of reordering following a breakdown. This is elaborated through Latour’s approach to the study of technoscientific networks:

We study science in action and not ready made science or technology; to do so, we either arrive before the facts and machines are blackboxed or we follow the controversies that reopen them (Latour 1987, p. 258 quoted in Michael 2017, p. 49).

Following how action unfolds therefore offers an open rather than predetermined view into the intricacies of how networks are constituted. This methodological entry point into the Clunes Booktown network occurred in an unanticipated way during my reintroduction when I learned the network was in flux. Upon contacting Tess Brady, a founding member of Creative Clunes, I

learned that she and the other founding members had retired as core organisers, leading to an extensive restructure of the Board and introduction of permanent staff including a CEO position. I had not anticipated this change which not only led to a change in Booktown structure and activities but required my own negotiating and building of new relations with an extended organising committee and board. While this was a challenge, it also offered an important opportunity to trace these new chains of association from a less familiar perspective.

In the case of Slow Food Mildura, September 2015 also marked a point of transition for the movement. My initial meeting took place the same week as Slow Food Mildura were hosting a Fair Food documentary screening to promote the work of another food network, the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance. This would be followed by a sustainability themed menu prepared by TAFE students as part of a subject assessment linked to Slow Food. Over my meeting with the co-leader and students in the TAFE hospitality kitchen, I was able to witness the new opportunities this event afforded the movement through entanglements with new networks, including an increasing emphasis on 'Fair Food'. Reflective discussions with the co-leader Deb in the following May pointed to this moment as pivotal in Slow Food Mildura's new direction, where the emphasis on fair food mobilised new community members to attend and get involved in supporting a local food system outside the label of 'Slow Food'.

Attending to the ANT principle of symmetry requires following the nonhuman actors that work to enact economic change. The role of books, buildings, or 'Slow Food' (such as Indigenous food) must also be traced in the coming together of the collective. In chapter 5 I elaborate on this through the concept of the hybrid collective and discuss over chapters 6 and 7 the ways that the collective attempts to get such actors to relate to each other through this alternative economy.

Following the actors led me to a vast range of interesting and often surprising places, highlighting the multi-sited approach to this study: private homes, cafes, breweries, olive groves, rose gardens, bookshops, vineyards, orchards, railway stations, industrial training kitchens, airplanes and a convention centre in the state capital of Melbourne. In the following section I explore in more depth the methods employed in following the actors and generating research materials.

3.3.3 Participant Observation

As a key ethnographic method, participant observation situates the researcher within the group to experience and/or partake in routine activities (Madden 2010). Participant observation is

traditionally associated with long immersive periods in ‘the field’ involving focus on group interactions, where adaptability to the social context is necessary. Reflecting on the study of organisations, Kees van der Wall (2009, pp. 34–35) states that a participant observation approach:

often means using fragmented bits of immersion wherever this seems viable, for instance, attending a meeting, having lunch with someone involved in the everyday running of an organisation, and attending to small talk.

Given that the running of Booktowns and Slow Food occurred outside of most people’s ‘day jobs’, this type of ethnography required timing the research around key activities and events. Through several visits to each site over the course of ten months, I undertook participant observation in key activities of the networks such as meetings and events as detailed in full in Figure 3.2.

Clunes Booktown			Slow Food Mildura		
Event	Role	Materials generated	Event	Role	Materials generated
Booktown on Sunday (15/11/15)	Observer at Joshua Funder Author Talk	Fieldnotes, Photos	Fair Food Picnic Conversation (18/10/15)	Participant Observer, Note-taker for ‘Picnic Conversation’	Fieldnotes, Photos
Pre Festival Set-up (29/04/16)	Participant Observer joining volunteers to set up festival marquees	Fieldnotes, Photos	Slow Food National Conference Planning (14/11/15)	Observer at Slow Food Mildura conference planning meeting	Fieldnotes, Photos
Booktown Festival (01/05/16)	Observer at 2016 Festival	Fieldnotes, Photos	Slow Food River Soiree (10/12/15)	Participant Observer assisting with event set-up	Fieldnotes, Photos
Booktown on Sunday (17/7/15)	Observer at Tim Fischer Author Talk	Fieldnotes, Photos	Slow Food Festa Della Vendemmia (12/3/16)	Participant Observer assisting with event set-up	Fieldnotes, Photos

Figure 3.2 Participant Observation at Meetings and Events

In devising the research, I had envisaged parity in participant observation activity, but in practice this unfolded differently in each site. Part of the more immersive ethnographic engagement with Slow Food was due to the long distances involved in travelling to Mildura, providing expanded ethnographic engagement outside of meetings and events. Trips to Mildura generally entailed 2–3 night stays (hosted by members of Slow Food on two occasions), along with accompanying a Slow Food member on a trip to Melbourne to attend the food conference ‘Festival 21’ in December 2015, involving a screening of a food documentary featuring Mildura and a session by Stefano de Pieri on the relationship between food and water. The longer distances therefore generated

additional immersion and fieldnotes through conversations over dinner and travelling. In contrast, the proximity of Clunes (1.5 hours) enabled shorter but more frequent visits organised around the availability of interviewees. This resulted in ‘fragmented bits of immersion’ (van der Wall 2009, p. 34) that often characterise organisational ethnography and is demonstrative of the adaptability required. A key benefit in Clunes was that conducting many of the interviews in Booktown headquarters at the Railway Station provided some opportunities for ‘hanging out’ and observing the interactions taking place. Conducting participant observation during key events allowed insights into how such activities play a role in contributing to diverse and community economy activity such as volunteering at the events or transactions like gifting surplus produce or skills. Partaking in events also facilitated engagement with a broader ensemble of network members, allowing an opportunity to observe how agency is distributed collectively and often outside the inner core of the network. Fieldnotes were written up during and after participant observation in order to generate rich or ‘thick description’ (Geertz 1973) of my observations and the context in which activities unfolded (see section 3.5.1 for examples).

3.3.4 Interviews

Interviews provided the major source of material generated. Although more formal than conversations that occurred during participant observation, the interviews were conversational in line with the ethnographic approach (Madden 2010). An unstructured interview style has particular strengths in eliciting the participants’ own perspective rather than the interviewer’s view (O’Reilly 2012, p. 117). Instead of set questions, the interviews were guided by themes such as personal background, involvement in the network, creative and diverse economic activities and conceptions of key actors or ‘change agents’ in the network including nonhuman (such as the Murray River in Mildura or books in Clunes). Accompanying talk, attunement to nonhuman actors was developed through introduction to materials like quandongs (an Indigenous fruit) in Mildura, where during my first meeting with Slow Food Mildura at TAFE, Deb and Gio provided me with a lesson on their various culinary uses, presenting some seeds which we rolled around in our hands. From this introduction, the quandong appeared as an important material to trace and led me later to its producer for further insights on its role in the network. At my first meeting with Creative Clunes, Tess and Richard showed me plans for a new Booktown office in the renovated Railway Station building, highlighting this building as a key site in shifting the newly reconfigured network in a new direction and a key site for later research.

On average, interviews lasted between 45 mins to 1.5 hours. Following a mid-fieldwork supervision review in February 2016, it was decided that further interviews should be conducted in following actors more broadly across more lengthened chains of association in response to themes arising in the research. This involved a snowball method of asking leaders of each network to nominate participants, as well as directly inviting actors encountered during participant observation to partake in an interview. Overall 14 interviews were conducted with participants associated with Clunes Booktown and 11 with Slow Food Mildura (see Figure 3.3).

Name	Date(s)	Clunes Booktown Role	Name	Date(s)	Slow Food Mildura Role
Tess	21/9/15	Creative Clunes Co-Founder / Writer	Deb	14/9/15 14/11/15 28/5/16	Slow Food co-leader/ Fresh Water Ecologist
Tim H	29/9/15	Creative Clunes Co-Founder /Local Business Owner	Brad	13/11/15	Slow Food co-leader/ Chef
Graeme	29/9/15	Creative Clunes Co-Founder / Local Business Owner	Giov	11/12/15 28/5/16	Slow Food member / Slow Food Youth member /Chef
Richard G	26/7/16	Creative Clunes Chair/ Local Business Owner	Elina	10/12/15	Slow Food member/ Producer
Angela	17/7/16	Creative Clunes Board Member /Readings staff member	Poh	15/4/2016	Slow Food member / Chef
Name withheld	26/7/16	Local business owner	Jon	13/11/15	Slow Food member / Slow Food Youth member
Tim N	19/1/16	Booktown on Sunday Chair / Wesley College Staff	Tennille	14/4/16	Producer
Name withheld	4/12/16	Bookshop Owner	Ian	15/5/16	Producer
David	8/4/16	Festival volunteer / Professional	Stefano	11/12/15	Slow Food member / Chef
Christine	8/4/16	Clunes artist/creative/farmer	Judi	14/4/16	Local Government councillor
Neil	4/12/15	Clunes artist/creative and Local Government councillor	Reece	16/4/2016	Local food movement / Producer
Ailsa	12/2/16	Booktown Festival Artistic Director			
Richard M	4/11/15	Creative Clunes CEO			
Lily	4/12/15	Creative Clunes Staff member			

Figure 3.3 Interview participants

During the interviews the diverse economy iceberg was introduced to participants to elicit potential examples of such activity. As detailed in chapter 2, the diverse economies framing presented in the iceberg and table is a key method in ‘reading for economic difference’ through identifying the alternative and noncapitalist forms of labour, enterprise, exchange, property and finance that may constitute an economy but are often hidden (Gibson-Graham & Roelvink 2011, p. 32). My intention in introducing the iceberg into the conversation was part of an inventory of diverse and

community economy activity as a precursor to a mapping exercise conducted towards the end of the fieldwork period.

3.3.5 *Diverse and Community Economy Mapping*

Diverse and community economy mapping was the final research method employed in fieldwork. I sought to explore where and how diverse and community economies are assembled through the Booktown and Slow Food movements using participatory mapping methods. The aim of the mapping activity was to inventory the diverse and community economy of each network by asking participants to nominate on a base map of the area the various sites where such activities were occurring; e.g. sites of paid or alternative forms of labour, sites where surplus was distributed to or sites of open-access or alternative forms of property. Once the sites were marked on the map, discussion was prompted around key community economy concerns outlined in *Take Back the Economy: An ethical guide for transforming our communities* (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013) such as surviving well, surplus, encountering others and commoning. Details of how the procedures were undertaken are outlined in the context of each site below.

Diverse economy mapping practice has been undertaken in a wide range of studies to identify local community assets and economies ranging from the rural Philippines (Gibson-Graham, Cahill & McKay 2015; Hill 2015), rural Victoria (Cameron & Gibson 2005) and Brazil and the USA (Safri 2015). As Gibson-Graham observes, mapping provides ‘a sense of the mass, spread and power of “other” economic relationships that sustain our lives’ (2011 p. 14), with mapping an instructive mechanism in attending to the nonhuman—such as including geographical and morphological systems that coexist alongside traditional regional development inputs and assets (2011, p. 15). The decision to ‘map’ these activities provided another way to also elucidate the nonhuman actors that constituted the material components of Booktowns and Slow Food, such as the buildings, land and other resources that were enrolled into this network.

Counter mapping is usually participatory. It is a process that seeks to ‘express, present and assert other realities, perceptions and claims’ (Chambers 2008, p. 141), an approach that is compatible with challenging capitalocentric representations of economy. Counter mapping draws upon sketch mapping techniques of ‘cartographic representations of individual or group spatial experiences, commonly produced by placing locational markings onto geographically referenced base maps’ (Boschmann & Cubbon 2014, p. 237). This technique is increasingly adopted in ethnographic qualitative interviews to elicit spatially referenced data in conjunction with GIS (Brennan-Horley

2010). Safri's study of the solidarity economy in Brazil and the USA was particularly instructive through the techniques of conceptual mapping of diverse economy geographies 'uncovering 'the multiplicity of transactions, labour relations, and enterprises hidden in mainstream economic discourses' (Safri 2015, p. 304), followed by concrete mapping of solidarity economy entities using the Google maps platform. While Google maps offer a visualisation of the spread of economic sites, Safri (p. 308) notes that the production of concrete maps (i.e. Google maps) are limited in their ability to convey the richness of economic practices like household labour or informal networks due to the platform's focus on formal institutions such as businesses. Given these limitations, I drew upon a mixture of these techniques and will now detail how this process unfolded in each site.

(i) Slow Food Mildura Mapping

Counter mapping was conducted with nine participants on 28 May 2016 in Deb's garden (see Figure 3.4). The participants comprised of some members of Slow Food, along with others from a newly formed group called Sunraysia Local Food Futures. A base plan of Mildura was used in order to understand how diverse and community economies 'map onto' and interact with existing sites and nonhuman actors such as the river. A base map was also selected to facilitate later integration with Google Maps rather than a blank map.



Figure 3.4 Slow Food Mildura Mapping Session (28 May 2016)

The participatory mapping exercise consisted of a brief account of preliminary insights from the research to date. I introduced the concept of the diverse economy iceberg and definitional distinction between diverse and community economies, explaining that we would look at four types of diverse economies—work, enterprise, transactions and property through the activities of Slow Food Mildura. The fifth diverse economy category of finance was not considered as an explicit

coordinate due to time constraints, but it was anticipated it would overlap with the other categories (such as surplus) during the mapping activity and discussion. Diverse economy mapping would be coupled with discussion on community economy considerations: surviving well; distributing surplus; encountering others; and commoning as outlined Figure 3.5.

Topic	Questions		
Work and Surviving Well	What types of work do you do for Slow Food Mildura Identify on map	Where do you do it? Identify on map	How does this work contribute to individual or community wellbeing?
Enterprise and Distributing Surplus	Where does Slow Food distribute its surplus? Identify on map Who benefits from Slow Food's surplus distribution?	What businesses are involved with/support Slow Food? Identify on map	How does Slow Food encourage these businesses to invest surplus in the community or environment? (e.g. donating goods or services)
Transactions and Encountering others	What types of market transactions is Slow Food Mildura involved in?	How are these markets ethical (consider other people/planet)?	How do these markets foster wellbeing?
Property and Commons	What resources (e.g. land, natural resources, cultural practices) does Slow Food depend on? Identify on map	What benefits do these resources bring to the community?	How are these resources cared for and shared?

Figure 3.5 Slow Food Mildura Mapping questions

Commencing with the category of 'work', participants marked on the map the sites where Slow Food work was carried out using different coloured pens (e.g. red for Slow Food Mildura activities, green for Slow Food Youth and blue for an ancillary local food project (Sunraysia Local Food Futures) that intersected with Slow Food (Figure 3.6). Discussion centred on what work was undertaken in these sites and how it contributed to various forms of wellbeing. Diverse economy examples such as self-employed labour or unpaid labour were provided as a prompt. This process was repeated for the other categories to elicit the types of benefits and that flowed from these activities, along with ethical negotiations involved in community economy building such as how surplus was invested or how properties were cared for and shared. Discussion points and examples were written up on butcher's paper and audio-recorded for transcription with data analysis detailed below. At the end of the session, a prolific map of a diverse economy was generated, clustered around the Murray River, the region's environmental, cultural, economic and social lifeblood. Insights from the mapping activity are further elaborated in Chapter 6.



Figure 3.6 *Slow Food Mildura Diverse Economy Sketch Map (28 May 2016)*

Slow Food Mildura - Diverse Economy (sample)

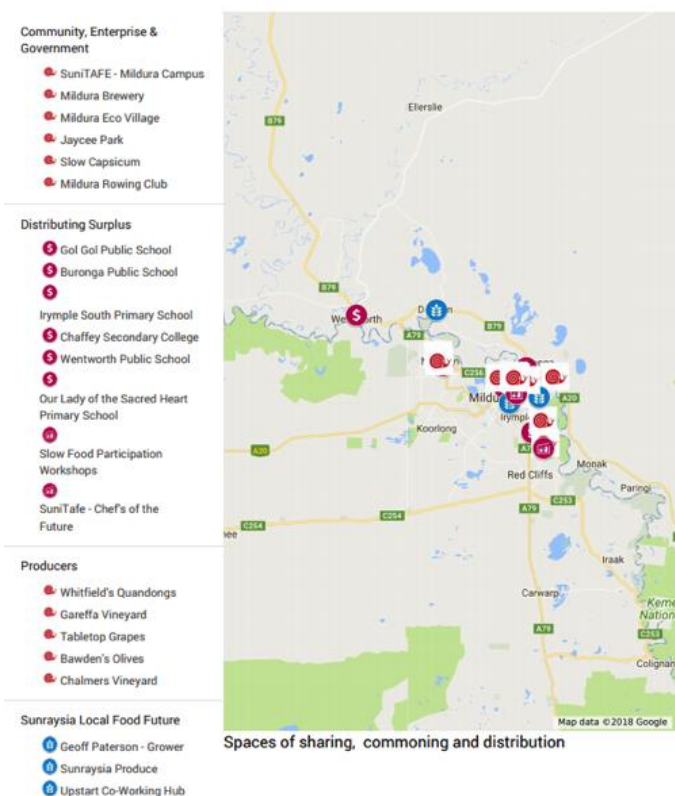


Figure 3.7 *Slow Food Google Map Sample*

Following this counter mapping exercise, I used this data to prepare a Google map (Figure 3.7). This map was created to share with the group as a way to bring together the data and highlight key

sites of Slow Food Mildura activities such as schools and the TAFE college, private homes and enterprises and public land. Insights from these maps will be discussed in Chapter 6 on the topic of commons.

(ii) Clunes Booktown Mapping

The Clunes mapping exercise was a reversal of the Slow Food process due to participant time restrictions. Instead of replicating the counter mapping undertaken with Slow Food Mildura, I prepared both a conceptual (Figure 3.8) and Google map (Figure 3.9) of my understandings of the diverse and community economy activities from interviews and observations up to that point. I then presented it back to Creative Clunes for checking during a 45-minute time slot provided during their July 2016 board meeting. While this divergent approach was not envisaged as part of the research design, adaptability to group time constraints was required. These maps therefore acted as a prompt for checking my interpretation of activities and benefits as well as locating missing information. Figure 3.8 shows the key themes that were emerging from research findings according to the same diverse and community economy categories used in Mildura: Work and Surviving Well; Enterprise and Distributing Surplus; Transactions and Encountering Others; Property and Commoning.

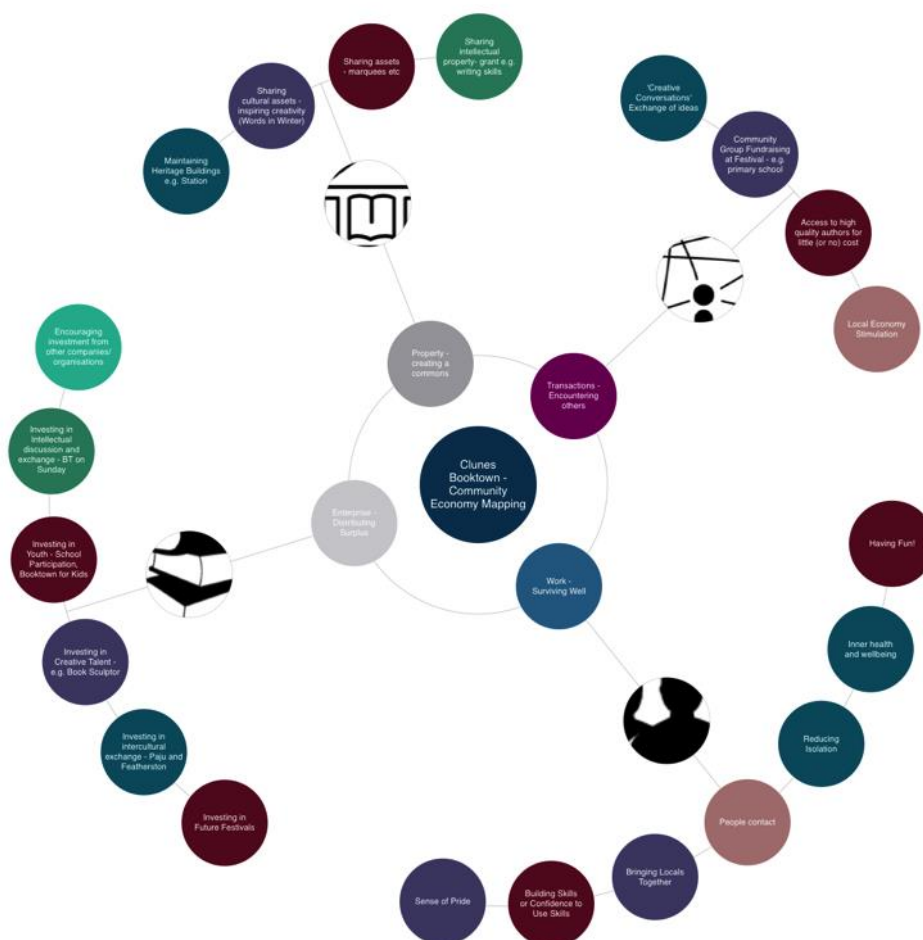


Figure 3.8 Conceptual mapping of Clunes Booktown Diverse and Community Economy activities

Discussion of the conceptual mapping prompted further elaboration on diverse economy themes that were emerging from the research. For instance, on the theme of property, participants described how Creative Clunes was sharing their intellectual property in assisting other groups to make grant applications. Discussions also highlighted how property was cared for, such as the restoration and return of the Railway Station building to the community as Booktown Headquarters (where our meeting was being held). Missing forms of surplus distribution such as Creative Clunes support of the Clunes Ceramics Award, were also noted. The presentation I made to the Creative Clunes Board was then revised and resent to two of the members who were preparing for attending an international Booktown conference in Switzerland.

Clunes Booktown - Diverse Economy (Sample)

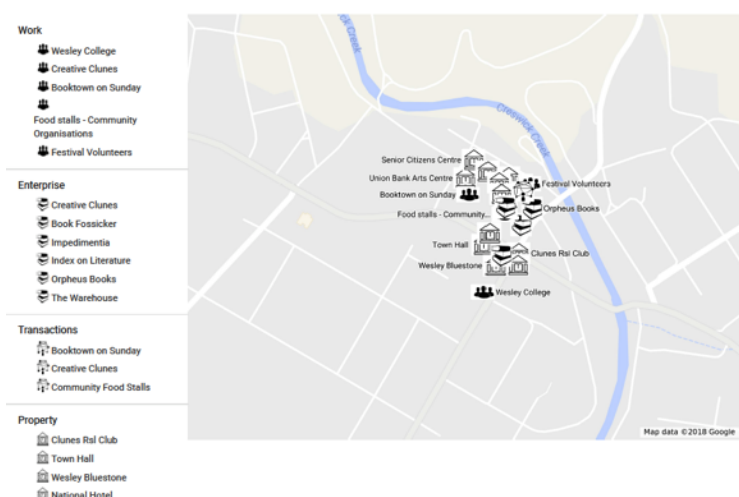


Figure 3.9 Clunes Booktown Google Map Sample

During the session we discussed my interpretation of Booktown diverse economic sites as presented on the Google Map (Figure 3.9). Participants pointed out missing sites that are enrolled into the Booktown Festival, along with questions on whether supporting businesses such as the local supermarket and accommodation providers should be included. Insights from these maps will be elaborated in Chapter 6 on the topic of commons.

3.4 Positionality and Ethics

3.4.1 Researcher Positionality

To embark upon ethnographic research involves establishing relations, typically in an unfamiliar setting and social context. Thrift (2003, p. 106) reflects on fieldwork as ‘...a curious mixture of humiliations and intimidations mixed with moments of insight and even enjoyment as you begin to imagine the world you have chosen to try and inhabit’. These wide range of emotions and encounters were certainly experienced during this research. Researcher positionality cannot be ignored in how ethnographic research is produced and represented. While my presence as a female, white and tertiary educated participant was not at odds with the general composition of the Booktown and Slow Food networks, my position was one of an outsider looking in. While I had established a positive relationship with Creative Clunes over previous years of research linked to my Masters project, I was intimidated at the prospect of negotiating how to reposition myself within the restructured network and build more expansive relations. I soon realised however that this new positioning was offered an advantage by approaching the field without a priori assumptions as to

how the Clunes Booktown network was being constituted in this new phase. This involved both moments of humiliation and enjoyment that Thrift speaks of. For instance, my role in festival volunteering as part of the ‘logistics team’ involved setting up the marquees the day before the event. The following field note reflects upon my self-awareness in hindering the work of the volunteers during marquee construction but also the immense enjoyment that flowed from completing the task as a group (see also Figure 3.10).

Phil gives me a bright orange high vis vest and pokes fun at my ill choice of white trainers for the muddy conditions David shows up with a friendly greeting and I’m introduced to a young resident who buddies up with me straight away with my Irish accent serving as a good icebreaker. I hesitate with putting the high vis on, feeling a bit silly as I feel dubious as to the strength and skill I can provide for the task. I quickly realise it’s a small team and any input is a contribution...In the afternoon, a community member takes charge with setting out the poles and frame for the large Readings bookstore tent in a methodical manner. I promptly muck this careful planning up by taking poles from the wrong area, throwing the frame out of whack and testing his patience no doubt. We crouch in the light rain and mud to join the pieces and bolts under patient instruction. I feel like at this point I am more of a hindrance than a help but the group is very warm and gracious. Staff from Readings arrive (including the CEO!) to set up and help fit the poles for the tent. Trepidation was building as to whether the cover would fit over the poles due to previous mishaps but to everyone’s relief it fit snugly. As the sun broke out at that the exact point I snapped a photo symbolic of the coming together of a community in that moment—old, new, temporal.



Figure 3.10 Assembling the marquees (29 April 2016)

Similar dilemmas involving positionality were encountered in Mildura. On my second visit to Mildura, I attended a picnic conversation event in a local olive grove as part of Fair Food week. The purpose of the picnic was to continue the conversation initiated by a showing of the Fair Food documentary screened the previous month and to establish ways to connect growers and producers who wanted to sell or buy outside of corporate farming and supermarket models. This was an opportune moment to meet other members of the Slow Food movement and learn about the issues the group were addressing. It was a pleasant gathering attended by around twenty people involving local producers and consumers. I offered to take notes for Deb as she facilitated the session. After the session the group chatted and shared each other's homemade contributions to the picnic table. The following fieldnote reflects upon another moment of uncomfortableness around my positionality as a researcher. In a lively conversation with a Slow Food member, a question was raised about what I would be giving back to Slow Food as a result of the study.

The question of what I would be giving back to Slow Food caught me off guard. He described the philosophy of an NGO that declares 'no surveys without service'. I replied that I would do a report based on my research but he said 'this is still a survey'! He elaborated that to really understand a group you have to participate and not impose recommendations from the outside...to instead 'act as a minstrel' for the movement's message. He mentioned that my taking of notes for Deb at the picnic as one example of contributing and trying to understand. This exchange raised questions about the role and extent of my participation—how do I represent the group when it is shaped by my own perceptions and interests? These thoughts played heavily on my mind back in the hotel that evening. Tired after this enjoyable but long morning in the sun I angsted over whether I was acting as an external 'surveyor' and if the research project may be perceived as exploiting or taking from a community. I typed up the notes as quickly as possible and sent them off to Deb hoping it reflected my genuine interest to participate and learn from the inside.



Figure 3.11 Picnic Conversation Mildura (18 October 2015)

Soon after this encounter I joined as a Slow Food member as a desire to be part of the phenomena I was trying to understand. Thus, over time, my position between outsider and insider has been in flux, providing opportunities to trace the networks in an open manner as an outsider, but also recognising how I inserted myself within the network as a researcher and the performative role this plays in reconceptualising ideas of rural creative economies. Researcher positionality in qualitative research also requires reflexivity on how the research process unfolded. My positioning as an insider within each of the networks provided deep understandings into the practices of the network, however my insider role meant that these insights were shaped by network viewpoints and local politics that allowed certain insights to be foregrounded. This research approach meant the precluding of broader (but less deep) perspectives afforded through other methods such as surveys.

3.4.2 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was provided by La Trobe University's Human Ethics Committee (E15/70). Ethical implications often extend past the life of the project itself and must be considered as part of this process (Thrift 2003). While the research was deemed to be low risk, the question of participant identification was one that pervaded ethical consideration throughout the design, delivery and write up. I had deliberated on the issue of anonymity given that key actors could be easily identifiable in the community given their involvement with the high profile Booktown and Slow Food activities in the community. It had also occurred to me that participants may even wish to do be attributed to their statements. Participants were therefore given the option of consenting to being identified or using a synonym and these preferences were adhered to in the thesis.

3.5 Data Analysis

From the fieldwork I generated a large range of materials involving twenty-five transcripts (interviews), 1 counter mapping transcript from Slow Food Mildura, notes on my presentation of the maps to Clunes Booktown, diverse economies inventory tables, sketch and Google maps and extensive fieldnotes providing a rich description of fieldwork.

In order to build familiarity with the data I transcribed the interviews using NVivo (version 11). This process was undertaken alongside the interviewing, providing emerging themes to be identified and followed up on during subsequent interviews and observations. The interview data

were coded in NVivo using a mix of open coding and coding across diverse and community economy themes as outlined in Figure 3.12.

Open Codes	Work	Enterprise	Transactions	Property	Finance
Actors/Agents	Unpaid	Noncapitalist	Nonmarket	Open Access	Nonmarket
Creative Economy	Alternative Paid	Alternative	Alternative Market	Alternative Private	Alternative Market
Local-Global	Surviving Well	Distributing Surplus	Encountering Others	Commoning	Investing in futures
Tensions					

Figure 3.12 Coding themes

From the coding, I created a table that depicted diverse and community economies activities associated with Clunes Booktown and Slow Food Mildura. This was accompanied by a listing of representative quotes for each cell. I also generated a thick description of fieldwork encounters drawing upon fieldnotes and interview transcripts (as exemplified in fieldnotes accompanying figures 3.10 and 3.11). Using thick description alongside weak theory offers a challenge to the ‘large issues’ that often speak for change (Gibson-Graham 2014). As Gibson-Graham (2014, p. S148) recognises, ‘in “reading” change it is difficult to resist the influence of ‘strong theory’—that is, powerful discourses that organize events into understandable and seemingly predictable trajectories’. As a counterpoint to strong theory, coupling thick description with weak theory has provided an insightful method of data gathering and analysis for diverse and community economies researchers, by making visible economic activities that tend to be obfuscated by capitalist visions of the economy (Gibson-Graham 2014). This approach was instructive for my study as thick descriptions of fieldwork, alongside thematic codes, were used to read Booktown and Slow Food activities for economic difference against dominant framings of the creative economy. Following this approach also allowed me to trace how rural creative economies are being constituted in place through these networks and what types of diverse and community economies practices are being foregrounded.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented the methodological framework and research design of the thesis. The choice of actor-network theory as a methodological approach has implications for addressing the research aims of understanding how rural creative economies are being constituted in place in response to decline. Rather than prefiguring who and what constitutes creative economic actors as

reified in concepts such as the creative class, an ANT approach involves following actors as they build networks and create effects. Through ANT's focus on generalised symmetry, the material properties of Booktowns and Slow Food must also be taken into consideration in understanding what actors constitute the network and generate effects. Coupled with a diverse and community economies theoretical framework, this allows for a performative ontological reframing of the rural creative economy as constituted by fluid and heterogeneous economic relations and activities.

Following on from the ontological implications of who and what to study using an ANT approach, I outlined how these implications would be addressed through an ethnographic research design. This involved methods of interviewing, participant-observation and diverse and community economies mapping. The interviews offered important insights into who was mobilising rural creative economic activity through the Booktown and Slow Food networks, guiding me to trace how the networks were constituted beyond leading heroic figures such as a creative class and the role of nonhumans. The interviews also generated rich information on practices of diverse economic activity that fall outside strong conceptions of a creative economy such as the sharing of cultural resources and the exchange of 'goods' in alternative or nonmarket transactions. Participant-observation at meetings and events provided opportunities to locate economic actors beyond the core groups, further identify diverse economic practices (such as volunteering or gifting) and the material 'things' that were also creating effects such as buildings and plant species. Diverse economies mapping demonstrated the spread of economic subjects, sites and practices throughout these networks and provided deeper insights into challenges and effects of building community economic interdependencies. Taken together these research methods provided an instructive tool to understand how rural creative economies are being constituted through these networks and the effects generated in response to decline.

Over the following four chapters I present the research. Each of these chapters focuses on specific aspects of how rural creative economies are being constituted—place (chapter 4), actors (chapter 5), commons (chapter 6) and markets (chapter 7).

CHAPTER FOUR

The Emergence of Creative Economies in Place

4.1 Introduction

The idea of the creative economy and the creative class as solutions to decline offers a new fix for rural areas needing to adapt to shifting economic conditions. Narratives of decline have reverberated across much of inland Australia, as foundational colonial economies such as mining and agriculture are relocated or restructured. Changes to the economic base of rural towns have not only unsettled founding modernist narratives around economic progress but have bequeathed in many cases a landscape of decline through degraded natural and built assets, sparking concerns around local vibrancy and economic productivity. By looking to the neoliberal-inspired creative economy and creative class as a way to generate innovative economic forms, capitalistic solutions to capitalistic problems are foregrounded, but how does this address the problems that capitalistic activities have imparted upon place more broadly?

Place offers an important insight into the conditions that foster creative economies outside of generic policy prescriptions. A key critique of the policy prescription approach inspired by Richard Florida and Charles Landry is how it ‘ignores the specific challenges facing particular places’ (Jones & Warren 2016, p. 190). The idea of an urban creative class as rural economic saviours posits a friction-less and place-less way of depicting how rural places are responding to change, despite rural areas in Australia demonstrating a long history of adapting to shifting conditions (Sorensen 2009). Clunes and Mildura are two sites that experienced significant change, occupying a pivotal place in foundational narratives extolling the exploitation of local endowments for economic productivity and now experimenting with creative ways of reconfiguring the use of place resources that challenge a growth/decline binary.

This chapter explores how place resources such as land, water, food and buildings have been valorised in Clunes and Mildura and what this means for how rural creative economies might emerge from possibilities in place. To understand how narratives of decline are shaped, I first look to historical processes. In section 4.2, I document how place resources were historically appraised

against modernist ideals of productivity and decline in Clunes and Mildura. I then outline the relational complexity of rural space and implications for rural resource use and valorisation through the broadening of rural stakeholders (including place itself) and how this affects place-based responses to decline. Finally, in section 4.3, I look to how concerns over resource use and possibility come together through Booktown and Slow Food movements in laying the foundations for creative economies in Clunes and Mildura.

4.2 Shifting valorisations of place resources in Victoria

The state of Victoria is situated in southeast Australia covering a land area of 237, 629 km². Victoria is the second most populous state, with an estimated population of 6 million residents (following New South Wales at almost 8 million) (ABS 2018). Population distribution is skewed heavily towards the state capital of Melbourne (pop. 4.7 million), a city that is rapidly growing through immigration and projected to overtake Sydney as Australia's largest city by 2030 (Dosen & Graham 2018, p. 12). The state's traditional economic base in manufacturing is transitioning towards services, led by knowledge-economy sectors of finance and insurance as the largest income generating areas (Dosen & Graham 2018, p. 9). Agriculture remains central to the national economy, with Victoria recognised as Australia's biggest generator and exporter of food and fibre products (mainly wool, meat, dairy, fruit and nuts, cheese and wheat) (Dosen & Graham, 2018 pp. 9–10). Interest in the creative economy is at significant levels, with a government-backed Creative Industries taskforce documenting how cultural and creative industries generated almost three times Gross Value Added to the Victorian economy than agriculture (\$22.7 billion compared to 8 billion in 2013). This work foregrounded the development of a Victorian government strategy 'Creative State' developed to:

grow the state's \$23 billion creative and cultural economy, provide more opportunities for Victorians to embark on creative careers and enjoy creative experiences, and position Victoria as a globally recognised creative state (Creative Victoria 2016).

The emphasis on the state as a whole explicitly recognises the role that creative industries can play in stimulating the economy more broadly—particularly in addressing other government priorities such as tourism and regional development (Creative Victoria 2017). This celebration of a 'Creative State' with focus on immaterial resources like knowledge and creativity sits in strong contrast to the

historical development of rural Australia rooted in the exploitation of primary resources, as will be explored in the following section.

4.2.1 From Mining Booms to Desert Blooms: historical context of rural resource use in Clunes and Mildura

The colonial settlement origins of many rural communities in Australia are traced to a foundational base in agriculture or the gold rush (Hogan & Lockie 2013, p. 446). Following the arrival of British colonists from 1788, the country's common natural and cultural resources that were managed holistically and collectively by discrete Indigenous groups for millennia as a universal 'estate' (Gammage 2011, p. 1) were rapidly enclosed. This idea of a commons, recognised as 'a property, a practice or a knowledge shared by a community' (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013, p. 130) provides an important insight into how land was enrolled into ideas of productive use in rural economies through a process of 'uncommoning'. I will return to the concept of the commons in chapter 6 in considering new commons possibilities.

The enclosure of the existing Indigenous commons by the British Empire was facilitated through the legal principle of terra nullius, a principle which decreed Australia as 'empty of human societies', marking an ongoing process of primitive accumulation by settlers (Howitt 2012, pp. 818–819). For colonial settlers, 'the most important economic resource was the land' (McMichael 2004, p. 41). The limited commercial appeal of Indigenous crops, based on a diverse variety of native yams, grains and plants such as bush tomatoes (Pascoe 2014), gave way to the grafting of European farming practices upon the landscape in order to heighten 'productivity' (Gray & Lawrence 2001, pp. 7–9). From the late 18th century, Australian agriculture was characterised by the production of commodities, namely wheat, for the colonial market along with extensive sheep grazing for wool and meat (McMichael 2004). This marked the beginning of a capitalistic system of exchange between Europe and its colonies (Frost 2008, p. 67). Capitalistic exchange was significantly heightened through the discovery of gold; with the colonies of Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland producing 50% of the world's gold supply by the 1860s (Eklund 2015, p. 180).

Mining activities accelerated the formal enclosure of previously common resources like water and land. The enclosure of water is traced to the Victorian gold rush through the manipulation and privatisation of water via a network of water races and dams to address limited supply and power new technologies such as the steam wheel (Lawrence, Davies & Turnbull 2017). Research by archaeologists Lawrence, Davies and Turnbull led the authors to argue that the system of industrial

capitalism that underpinned mining was pivotal in turning water from a freely available resource into ‘a commodity that was privately controlled and sold for profit’ and generating ‘a new system of water markets and entrepreneurs’ (2017, p. 61). The discovery of gold led to formalised enclosures by ‘land-hungry gold immigrants’ mounting a challenge to previous squatting arrangements (McMichael 2004, p. 214).

At the same time that land was being enclosed as part of mining settlement, types of common land arrangements were being rapidly established on millions of acres of crown land by the colonial governments in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. Historian Ben Maddison outlines that ‘by the 1880s a common was considered a standard public amenity of Australian country towns, goldfields and farming districts’ (Maddison 2010, p. 38). These ‘commons’ however were very different to self-organised Indigenous commons. Access to common land for grazing, was based on property ownership and residence meaning the ‘de facto exclusion of Indigenous people’ and played a role in fortifying European occupation by ‘sustaining the white, rural, working class and small farmers during the colonization process of the nineteenth century’ (Maddison 2010, p. 43). This perspective offers a view into how the sharing of land offered to settlers provided an entry into an economic livelihood, however, this was attending to a colonial ideology of who and what constitutes as productive and should benefit. The idea of the commons will be returned to in chapter 6.

For gold mining areas in particular (including my research site of Clunes), these colonially created common lands provided an important resource for supplementing the livelihoods of independent gold miners, known as ‘Diggers’. Researching instances of goldfields commons in Victoria, Davies, Lawrence & Twigg (2018) show how this form of public land provided miners access to land for grazing, firewood and foraging, while allowing Crown control of the land. The authors describe how over 80 goldfields commons were founded in Victoria in the decade following the discovery of gold in 1851, with a recorded area in Clunes of 1,600 acres in 1870 (2018, p. 6). By the 1900s most goldfields commons were abolished in line with diminished gold mining activity and converted into other uses such as state forests or private ownership. The goldfields commons created in Clunes remained in a reduced form until the 1960s (Davies, Lawrence & Twigg 2018, p. 13). In the main, goldfields commons were ‘transitional’ with a core purpose in ‘managing unsold land in settler colonies’ (p. 2). While these commons ultimately played an instrumental role in colonial land management, they offer an insight into ways that land was shared (for a certain ‘productive’ population) and offered benefits to independent workers during a key moment in rural

capitalism. This is particularly pertinent in Clunes, a former sheep station that was transformed by the discovery of gold in Victoria 1851.

Following the discovery of gold by prospector James Esmond, Clunes was transformed from a sheep station to bustling mining town. Population numbers are estimated at 6,000 during the gold rush but it is claimed that numbers reached as high as 36,000 in the 1860s (Reid and Reid 1977, p. 11). Clunes mining operations included major companies such as Port Phillip Mining Company, recognised as exhibiting technological best practice and efficiency and depicting Clunes as a place of lucrative investment (Woodland 2016, p. 222). In turn, Clunes developed a formalised built environment where ‘the aspirations of 19th century civilisation were re-expressed in social organisations and physical structures’ such as municipal buildings, schools, churches and hotels (Reid & Reid 1977, p. 11). The high proportion of public buildings was usual across goldfields towns (Frost 2002b), imparting a material-built legacy that disproportionately commanded over dwindling populations in many cases.

The rapid rise of the gold rush spurred the colonial narrative of progress. As historian Helen Doyle (2005, p. 04.1) writes: ‘progress was the dominant message of the 19th century and intrinsic to the colonial mindset’. Following the depletion of minable gold from the 1870s, mining towns across Victoria encountered a ‘dramatic downturn’ where decline was compared against a period of former glory in media and local history accounts (Doyle 2005, p. 04.2). Nostalgic recounts of prior prowess are echoed in more recent Clunes histories, like in local historian May Townsend’s publication *The Story of Clunes* (1985, p. 11):

In the north of Ballarat, Victoria, lies a small township nestling sleepily under the name of Clunes. Perhaps just waiting for another awakening to a new and exciting era; one as exciting but perhaps not as dramatic as the Gold Rush Days of 1851 to 1900.

As this quote from Townsend shows, dramatic foundational stories of place are juxtaposed against dormant presents and hopeful futures.

Returning to the period after the gold rush, from the 1860s new forms of economic activity were sought across Victoria, as many towns lost their core economic purpose (Doyle 2005 p.04.2; McIntyre 1948, p. 11). For the Central Victorian region (in which Clunes is situated), wheat cultivation became a critical economic driver (Frost 2002b, p. 68). Political interventions were

sought following the depletion of minable gold, with water becoming the next ‘tool’ to develop the colonies (Henderson 2015, p. 87). Interventions to ‘overcome the shortcomings of nature’ were introduced through irrigation technologies that aspired to heighten productivity in dryland areas, while at the same time fostering new communities based on intensive agriculture (Davison 2005, p. 46). Narratives of progress and development based on the technological harnessing of resources were prolifically heard in Mildura. These technological solutions to commandeer nature starkly contrast to Indigenous environmental relations based on ‘intricate levels of knowledge about the environment and related cosmologies’ (Birch 2016, p. 96). In place of this holistic knowledge of environment and cosmology, faith was invested in technological fixes. The establishment of Mildura as the nation’s first irrigation colony followed earlier attempts at land grazing from 1846 (McIntyre 1948, p. 11, 14). Prior to irrigation, McIntyre (p. 11) described the poor condition of the land:

The productive value of the land was extremely low because of the low rainfall, the scarcity of water except on the river frontage, the long periods of drought and, after 1877, devastation by rabbits.

As this quote shows, land around Mildura and its surrounding settlements (known as collectively as the Sunraysia district) was unproductive from a settlers’ perspective leading to political and technological interventions.

The establishment of the *Irrigation Act* in 1886 by Victorian Minister for Water Supply (and later prime minister) Alfred Deakin, was instrumental in facilitating state control of water. Control was achieved by repositioning the resource from common property under riparian rights to a ‘collective good’ managed by government (Henderson 2015, pp. 85–86). The Act also enabled the establishment of irrigation colonies, with Mildura selected as a private irrigation settlement by ‘pioneering’ engineer George Chaffey in 1886 (Hamilton-McKenzie 2013). George Chaffey, along with his brother William, had gained the attention of Deakin through their establishment of a ‘model’ irrigation colony in California. Deakin’s study of irrigation in the USA shaped his ‘irrigationist philosophy’ underpinned by notions of the civilised yeoman settler, technological innovation and the taming of ‘wild’ and arid lands into productive settings (Hamilton-McKenzie 2012, p. 87). At this time, faith was invested in the expertise of the engineer who combined technological prowess with bureaucratic skills (Henderson 2015, p. 88). As Henderson assesses (p. 88), the region’s development was influenced by cultural forces involving ‘European derived ideals about the productive use of land, aesthetic beauty and the place of nature within human culture

were combined with religious imperatives to make the desert bloom'. Henderson's commentary attests to influence of a Westernised imaginary of productive and idealised landscapes and the privileging of human ingenuity in overcoming barriers to production.

Through technological advances, a new idealised landscape could be grafted on to a perceived unproductive setting as a testament to human ingenuity. The Chaffey's were allocated 250,000 acres to create the settlement, which was carved into 10-acre blocks and sold with water rights for irrigators. The Chaffey's' plans for the settlement included 'novel features' such as pumps to lift water ninety feet above the river and distribute to it blocks of land using gravity (McIntyre 1948, p. 13). A rapid influx of settlers were attracted to the irrigation colony from across Australia, Britain, the USA and India and turned their hands to growing crops like sultanas and citrus (McIntyre 1948, pp. 13–14). These developments in Mildura accorded with broader colonial objectives of Deakin's aforementioned Irrigation Act in facilitating 'closer settlement of the land, the establishment of white hard-working communities and the expansion of economic production' (Henderson 2015, p. 88). The creation of an industrious landscape of efficient blocks, cutting edge technology and desirable workers showcased Mildura and surrounds as an exemplary place of productivity, in a place previously conceived in colonial mindsets as hostile and unproductive.

Historian Richard Broome (2017) presents a different view of productive labour. Drawing upon colonial accounts of Indigenous groups along the Murray River such as the Jari Jari people near Mildura, Broome shows how productive labour (e.g. hunting, making nets and cloaks) occurred in ways that differed to European constructs. Much of this labour was sociable, occurring around the campfire and following the rhythms of nature rather than the clock. These practices holistically intertwined aspects of nature and culture in creating livelihoods in tough conditions and challenging European notions of productivity:

The Murray River's Aboriginal geography of labor brought humans and nature together through sustainable productive labor that bound them to country as much as did culture and religion. The arduous and constant work they performed to live comfortably belies the claims of laziness in the European stereotype. Their productive labor probably outmatched the work output and well-being of European pastoralists and farmers in the Victorian Mallee for the first hundred years of European settlement—until the 1940s heralded the spread of agricultural machinery, the extensive use of fertilizers, soil management techniques, and other modern farming practices. The infamous cyclical Mallee droughts hindered Aboriginal people far less than their successors, the wheat

farmers, as their riverine resources, and their mallee foods long adapted to aridity and drought, sustained the people through hard times (2017, p. 167–168).

For the Chaffey's ambitious project, attempts to commandeer nature were not without environmental and social effects. Rapid attempts to make the land 'productive' by carving it into efficient units evoked place to speak in ways that could not be wholly managed by technological solutions. Despite the Chaffey's deployment of celebrated technological innovations the irrigation colony was quickly confronted with problems. Environmental issues such as salinity, accompanied by a national economic depression, a lack of grower profits and social conflict manifested around 1892. These problems contributed to the liquidation of Chaffey Bros. Ltd in 1895 (McIntyre 1948, p. 15). In the following section I outline how the foundational legacies of Clunes and Mildura fared under shifting conditions.

4.2.2 Economic Progress and Productivism

Clunes and Mildura experienced divergent economic trajectories following their colonial foundations. Clunes endured rapid decline in population following the depletion of mineable gold, dropping from around 6,203 at its estimated peak in 1873 (although as discussed earlier there are claims that it reached as high as 36,000 in the 1860s) to 870 in 1960 (Reid & Reid 1977, p. 11). Clunes' main economic base shifted from gold mining to agriculture (mainly cereals, sheep and dairy); food processing (butter factory and meat works) and manufacturing (Reid & Reid 1977, p. 16). The establishment of knitting mills in former gold towns and ports provided a vital source of local industry (McIntyre & McIntyre 1944), and this was evident in Clunes through the formation of the Interknit Hosiery Co. in 1939 a key employer producing socks and jumpers for defence services, schools, and sports teams. Broadened economic activities demonstrated the adaptability of Clunes to changing conditions ensuring it did not 'die away' like many other gold towns (Reid & Reid 1977, p. 16).

In Mildura, conditions gradually improved for settlers following the Chaffey Bros. collapse. Improved conditions were mainly attributed to the organised marketing of dried fruit in 1896, the beginning of a cooperative arrangement which would increase profitability over individual competition and the opening of the railway station in 1903 (McIntyre 1948, pp. 15, 27–28). Formal state programs such as post-war soldier settlement schemes were deployed following World War 1 to develop the 'newly productive landscapes district' further (Argent, Griffin & Smailes 2015, p. 136). After World War 2, Mildura experienced a sharp increase in population through migration

from Southern Europe alongside expanding irrigation activities (Smailes, Griffin & Argent 2019), which lead to the rise of productivist agriculture.

Agricultural productivism gained momentum in Australia in response to meeting demands of post-World War 2 food production through the modernisation of agricultural practices (Burch & Rickson 2001; Lowe et al. 1993). Prior to this transition, cities and towns were the main sites of domestic or 'backyard' food production (Larder, Lyons & Woolcock 2014, p. 57), accompanied by small market garden plots predominantly led by Chinese migrants on the fringes of most urban settlements across Australia (Frost 2002a, p. 119). In the early 20th century, government policy was introduced to boost agricultural output to meet growing population needs and export trade. These shifts brought in a new productivist era (Argent 2002) with strong government support encouraging large-scale machinery and greater economies of scale (Gray & Lawrence 2001, p. 8). The 1950s national boom in wheat and wool prices, aided by developments in science and technology saw a 'golden age' of Australian agriculture (Frost 2008, p. 76). Economic historian Lionel Frost writes that this 'prosperity' through the inland corridor of Australia (including the sites of Clunes and Mildura) was the culmination of 'over a century of effort to bring the corridor into productive use' (2008, p. 76).

The infrastructure put in place under the Chaffey's scheme came to the fore under productivism in Mildura. At the same time, technological advancements and global trade placed increasing demands on efficiencies and scale. Many of the small blocks of land developed under the Chaffey's that housed family irrigators, known as 'blockies' became unviable during the 1960s-70s. An increasing trade and export market caused blocks to be amalgamated into larger entities to meet rising demands trade and export (Kiem et al. 2010, p. 52). Farm amalgamation was part of a suite of significant changes to the agricultural industry, known as 'get big or get out' mantra symbolising a shift towards a corporate or agribusiness structure (Askew, Sherval & McGuirk 2014, p. 240). Other factors influencing this structural shift include a drop in family farm succession and a lack of certainty around commodity crop type and investment trends (p. 240).

Productivism brought new challenges to agricultural communities throughout Australia. Despite the development of new efficiencies and economies of scale, farmers were subject to the pressures of lower prices as a result of this increased supply, coupled with higher production inputs (Barr 2008, p. 305). Therefore, while increased productivity brought producers into the world market, it also exposed them to its volatility as witnessed in events throughout the 1960-70s such as the

global grain glut, OPEC oil crises and a reconfigured export relationship through Britain's joining of the European Economic Community, leading to waves of farmer debt (Argent 2002, p. 103). Neoliberal policies in Australia further fuelled the productivist regime throughout the 1980s and 90s by expanding free trade and promulgating innovation through agribusiness products and practices such as fertilisers, monocultural cropping and factory farming (Lawrence, Richards & Lyons 2013, p. 35).

Productivism brought growing environmental concerns. Water became a critical issue in irrigation communities like Mildura. Henderson observes that the 1980s saw the 'certainties and securities' of water management challenged, as competition for the resource expanded from agricultural production to broader interests and needs such as preserving the health of ecosystems (2015, p. 88). Through the National Competition Policy (1994), the market was used as a regulatory device, uncoupling water rights from land and allowing water to be traded as a commodity (Kiem et al. 2010 p. 61). In doing so, it was hoped that markets would allocate water to 'its most socially valuable use' (Quiggin 2007, p. 41). Many of the intended outcomes of the marketisation of water have not been realised, however. The volatile water market created uncertainty for growers, particularly in the face of the millennium drought or 'Big Dry' a period depicting an extended crisis of aridity across Australia from 1997 to 2009 (Askew, Sherval & McGuirk 2014). An "irrigation drought" is uncharted territory' for policymakers as well as irrigators (Productivity Commission 2009, p. xx), challenging colonial ideas that irrigation provided 'insurance against drought and a variable climate' (Henderson 2015, p. 86).

The effects of the millennium drought manifested strongly in Mildura. Combined effects of unstable commodity prices, a fluctuating water market and the legacy of the millennium drought have forced many farmers to diversify their operations away from bulk crops such as wine grapes, or in the face of mounting debt, partake in the federal government's 'small block' irrigator exit package. This grant scheme provided funds to farmers of up to \$150,000 to exit the industry and transition to new employment, however, its role in effectuating the abandonment of land has been criticised (Kiem et al. 2010, pp. 64, 76–77). Askew et al. observe that the restrictions placed on land use on this scheme also had significant social consequences after irrigators departed 'leaving blocks of once productive land stripped bare and contributing to the sense of stress felt throughout the regional community' (Askew, Sherval & McGuirk 2014, p. 243). Productivism is, therefore, facing increasing uncertainty in the context of a drying climate. Head et al. capture this insecurity in observing how irrigated agriculture in the Murray Darling Basin appears to be 'in the early stages of

transition from productivist modern agriculture to something else, with a much less certain future’ (2018, p. 82).

In this section I have situated Clunes and Mildura’s development within broader narratives of economic productivism and progress. From the turn of the 20th century, different development trajectories were exhibited in each site. Clunes found ways to broaden its economic base from gold to agriculture and manufacturing, while Mildura capitalised on its foundational base in irrigation by further technological advancements, global market integration and policy interventions leading to expanding productivity and scale. These advancements helped to reassert Mildura’s foundational narratives in particular, but also exposed the community to new vulnerabilities. In their book *Struggle Country: The Rural Ideal in Twentieth Century Australia*, historians Graeme Davison and Mark Brodie (2005, p. xi) explicate the predicament that has followed the rapid development of the nation in the quest for modernisation:

The pioneer settlement was a battle to win the land, in which humans were evenly pitted against nature. But now, all too often, rural Australians are caught in a vice between large impersonal forces—technological change, global markets and climate change—all pushing inexorably in the same direction.

Davison and Brodie’s attention to a battle between pioneering human settlers and nature hints at the modernist ambitions that Latour (1993) scrutinises in his book *We have never been modern*. Latour argues that attempts to create an ontological divide between nature and culture, or nonhumans and humans, is part of a ‘modern Constitution’ that has its roots in Enlightenment ideology (p. 30), ‘purifying’ or separating ‘natural mechanisms from human passions, interests or ignorance’ or, in other words, promoting an objective science that is allegedly devoid of human influence or prejudice. As discussion up to this point has shown, the colonial project of settlement in Australia was a modernist one in that a privileging of science and engineering and the pursuit of productivity won the battle against ‘unproductive land’ in Mildura and unlocked new depths of wealth in Clunes through mining. By concealing the hybridity of nature and culture, or humans and nonhumans, new crises emerged for the Murray River around water availability for irrigators, alongside deterioration of ecological conditions and decreased native species such as fish and birds (Henderson 2015, p. 84). In the following section I look to how a growing complexity of rural space has emerged through ideas of post-productivism that bring into conflict modernist ideas of productivity.

4.2.3 *Post-productivist blurring*

The term ‘post-productivism’ was coined in the UK around the mid-1980s in relation to a shifting rural economy and landscape (Wilson 2001). The term depicts a change from traditional rural productivist practices such as commodity farming to broader land use interests such as tourism or alternative farming activities like small-scale sustainable agriculture (Argent 2002, p. 98). Post-productivism not only represents a shift in land use but a shift in values from production to consumption (Argent 2011, p. 186). Its usage was induced at a period of growing challenges to the sustainability of big agriculture and its shrinking political influence, alongside a broader inclusion of rural stakeholders in policy (Wilson 2001, p. 82). The broadening of rural economies through post-productive activity is thus not without social reverberations, and in this section I unpack the increasing economic and social complexity of rural space associated with post-productivism and discuss how this is an instructive precursor for understanding the genesis of creative economic responses to decline through Booktowns and Slow Food.

Post-productivism is a controversial term that has been debated widely in the literature. The assumption that a new paradigm could neatly replace productivist agriculture is strongly contested by British and Australian scholars, particularly when evidenced by continuing productivist practices (Argent 2002; Walford 2003). Rather than a linear transition, post-productivism is better understood as ‘a *shift* in emphasis, and not as an absolute change from material production to service provision’ (Mather, Hill & Nijnik 2006, p. 451). Following Wilson (2001), the term ‘multi-functionality’ was introduced into the lexicon to better reflect the complexity of rural land use change in Australia (Holmes 2006).

For my study sites of Clunes and Mildura, post-productivist activities offer an instructive lens into how these sites are adapting to economic change and how they come into tension with existing productivist activities. As described in the previous sections, the decoupling of Clunes and Mildura from their foundational basis in mining and irrigated agriculture brought the need for economic diversification in facing consequences of decline. For Clunes, the growth of a post-productivist or multi-functional economy followed a trend in many other mining towns that underwent a relatively sudden shift from production to consumption. As early as the 1900s, tourism was observed as a way to address decline in goldfields towns, with mining heritage generating interest in ‘an antiquarian appreciation that was part of traditional European aesthetics of landscape and secondly, a growing interest in the local colonial past’ (Doyle 2005, p. 04.8). Goldfields towns were therefore

seen very early as endowed with special historic and cultural assets that brought economic potential beyond servicing the declining mining industry.

Clunes is well positioned towards tourism as it is the site of the first gold discovery in Victoria and has a reputation as one of the most 'intact' gold rush towns based on its notable collection of bluestone and sandstone buildings. Although tourism potential offered hope for declining gold towns, tourism development in Clunes was a sensitive matter. Reid and Reid had concerns in their townscape analysis study of Clunes during the 1970s that following the path of other towns and becoming a 'fashionable arts/craft centre' would endanger 'the authenticity of the town' (Reid & Reid 1977, p. 69). While the 'special character' of Clunes provides an opportunity to develop a tourism economy, concerns for commodification were therefore foreshadowed as early as the Reids' study.

The commodification of rural heritage villages is accompanied by academic scrutiny. Rural geographer Clare Mitchell theorises the process of heritage village commodification as 'creative destruction' (Mitchell 2013). In studying processes of rural transformation, Mitchell draws upon the work of Joseph Schumpeter (and also David Harvey), which posits that innovation is underpinned by capitalistic logic of destroying the existing economic form to generate new innovations. Mitchell (1998; 2013) suggests that similar practices are evident in her study of rural towns in Canada, where heritage towns risk having their existing character and amenity destroyed through becoming heritage-shopping villages that alienate the local community and destroy place authenticity. For communities undergoing a shift from primary production to post-productive (or multifunctional) uses, this poses important questions around how to balance development without destroying the existing character and amenity.

Since Reid and Reid's study, concerns for commodification in Clunes had been mainly unfounded. Despite its heritage attributes and occasional use as a filming location, the town was regarded as having a lack of tourism attractions (Beeton 2004, p. 133). In a study of goldfields towns during the mid-2000s, tourism scholar Warwick Frost noted limited retail and hospitality services in Clunes compared to nearby goldfields towns such as Castlemaine and Maldon (Frost 2006). Therefore, while Clunes' heritage authenticity remained largely intact, its tourism offering appeared unfulfilled; generating questions around how to generate tourism while remaining sympathetic to inherited place resources, an issue that will be explored in section 4.3 in relation to Booktowns. Confidence to explore opportunities in tourism grew through the establishment of a Wesley College residential

campus for the private educational institution, bringing Melbourne-based students to spend a semester in Clunes. The Clunes Wesley College campus was initiated with the intention that students would integrate with the community as part of their education away from the city (Loader 2004), also bringing economic development opportunities for the town through increasing retail demand from students, teachers and visiting parents (Lloyd & Downing 2001).

Increasing evidence of post-productivism is visible in Mildura through tourism and consumption-oriented activities. The repurposing of built assets around food and culture in Mildura is demonstrative of economic shifts towards a consumption base. As Lionel Frost observes, buildings that symbolised post-war prosperity such as the Astor picture theatre have undergone subsequent waves of transformation from a 'derelict shell' to a boutique brewery that 'serves as a symbol of local confidence and prosperity' (2008, p. 78). The region is known as a 'foodie destination' through its focus on festivals and gourmet food and wine (Gibson 2014, p. 190). Since 2001, Mildura has hosted the 'Australian Alternative Varieties Wine Show' which was initiated by celebrity cook Stefano de Pieri and wine-makers Bruce Chalmers and Ron Bonfiglioli to promote and share knowledge of alternative grape varieties (AAVWS 2014) in contrast to mainstream bulk wine varieties such as chardonnay. Interest in native food cultivation appears to be growing, with opportunities being explored for Indigenous enterprises (King 2014). At the same time, however, Mildura is at the epi-centre of productivist agriculture with the region a leading contributor to Australia's 'food bowl' at 30% of national production and around 98% of Australia's dried vine fruit (Mildura Development Corporation 2014).

The productive/post-productive blurring of rural economies also signifies the social complexity of rural space. The introduction of new actors through counter-urbanisation or amenity migration trends bring with them visions of a 'rural idyll' lifestyle (Wilson 2001, p. 82). Migrant visions of a rural idyll are traced to a reaction to post-modernism's renouncement of the urban condition (Halfacree 1997, p. 79), with amenity seeking migrants assumed to be attracted to areas that feed a nostalgic desire for an 'imagined rurality' based on places with attributes such as scenic landscapes and heritage architecture (Tonts & Greive 2002, p. 60). Rather than being valorised as hyper-productive landscapes for food and fibre, in amenity rich areas non-farming values are influencing landscape commodification as scenic vistas for the tourism industry or real estate developers (Gibson 2014, p. 187). As a result, land prices increase with many farmers are restricted from increasing farm scale (Barr 2008, p. 308; Holmes 2006), leading to conflicting ideas on what rural land is for.

The broadening of rural economies has led to competing visions around rural space. As explored in the previous sections, the ‘productive’ use of the land, namely through mining and agriculture provided the foundational underpinning for many rural communities and the benchmark for which progress and modernity could be measured. Challenges to productivist models exposed a broad range of concerns about the economic, environmental and social sustainability of rural communities, with rural Australia commonly depicted as being in ‘crisis’ (Lockie 2000). In the next section I look to how the growing complexity of rural space has sparked new action around concerns over environmental and economic decline and how this brings into focus creative economic possibilities in place.

4.3 From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern in Rural Economies

Rural economies are undergoing substantial changes that unsettle traditional values of economic progress as tied to productivist agriculture. Rural areas are experiencing a number of challenges to existing industries through climate pressures and economic restructuring, along with a diversity of rural actors with competing visions of rural resource use. This section sets out how shifting rural relations are bringing into question how resources should be used in ways that challenge a growth/decline binary. Drawing upon discussions of rural movements (Woods 2003), friction (Tsing 2004; 2012b) and matters of concern (Latour 2004c), I look to how Clunes Booktown and Slow Food Mildura emerged against a backdrop of shifting relations between people and resources and what this means for understanding how creative economies are fixed to place rather than as external fixes.

The increasing multi-functionality of rural areas and competition between interests presents rural areas as ‘contested’ space (Murdoch et al. 2003), with ‘changing societal values’ around resource use intensifying sustainability and ethical concerns (Argent 2011, p. 185). Rural geographer Michael Woods traces the inception of a new ‘rural movement’ to the last quarter of the 20th century, where groups have emerged contesting the modernisation of agricultural economies (2003, p. 312). The proliferation of diverse stakeholders previously on the fringe of policymaking, such as environmental groups, have begun to play a key role in shaping what Wilson has coined as a ‘post-productivist rural governance’ with a much broader base of constituents (Wilson 2004). Woods describes this diverse grouping of rural action as a new ‘rural movement’ that diverges from traditional post-war and single-issue based ‘rural politics’ to a new multifarious ‘politics of the rural’

taking into account an array of issues such as hunting, environmental campaigns, global trade and housing developments (Woods 2003; 2008).

The reconfiguring of rural relations is increasingly foregrounding the role and agency of place. Inspired by the scholarship of geographer Doreen Massey (2005), Woods (2007) calls for the need to understand the relationality of rural areas, rather than deflecting to an overarching global totality. Woods looks to place-based approaches in understanding how rural places are being remade under globalisation, theorising the concept of a ‘global countryside’ to understand the ways that rural areas both shape and are shaped by global ties (e.g. flows of commodities, capital and labour; contested natures; corporate control; foreign property investment and social conflicts). Contributing a provoking description of the messy complexities of local-global interrelations, Anna Tsing (2012b, p. 1), an ethnographer of global supply chains, points to how globalisation scholars in the 1990s assumed a “friction-less” transnational flows of goods, ideas, people, and money’. Tsing (2012b, pp. 1–2) however brings friction into focus, by looking at the ways that ‘global histories come into being through specific histories of engagement and encounter. The *friction* is the engagement and encounter through which global trajectories take shape’. Drawing upon the case of logging in Indonesian rainforests during the 1980s and 90s, Tsing argues that friction-based encounters across difference, such as between landholders, governments, environmentalists and global corporations might give global capitalism its power but also disrupt its seemingly fluid mechanics. Friction not only allows a way to understand the mess underneath seemingly homogenous processes of globalisation (such as friction-free mining and irrigation interests in Clunes and Mildura) but also its generative and creative possibilities in reconfiguring economic relations.

Discussion up to this point has sought to illuminate the relational complexity of rural space and how concerns for rural resource use are mounting a challenge to productivist values. Debates around prevailing economic activities and relations also intersect with broader challenges to knowledge or ‘fact’ of rural resource use. As section 4.2 discussed, colonial and subsequent approaches to land use emphasised productivity as ‘fact’, shaped by what Latour describes as modernist aspirations of ‘economic rationality, scientific truth and technological efficiency’ (Latour 1993, p. 63). These aspirations were particularly evidenced in Mildura through political efforts to establish an irrigation colony by using engineering to ‘make the desert bloom’ (Henderson 2015), and Clunes as a best practice exemplar of mining technology and efficiency (Woodland 2016). Disruptions to the water security and a drying climate are creating an uncertain future for crop

growing around Mildura (Henderson 2015; Head et al. 2018); and the loss of mining as an original economic base has destabilised the taken-for-granted foundation of rural economies. This has motivated the search for a new economic purpose in a ‘post-productive’ context. The implication of this is what were once ‘facts’ have become something else.

The troubling of previously held ‘facts’ have a philosophical underpinning in the work of Bruno Latour (2004c). Latour questions how facts are presented as concrete and ‘naturalised’ representations of reality (2004c, p. 232). Proposing a shift in knowledge claims from ‘matters of fact’ to ‘matters of concern’ (2004c), Latour argues for examining the composition, and in turn, the deconstruction of facts that have been previously perceived as fixed or stable (Michael 2017, p. 116). According to Latour, matters of fact are products of modernity that are generally conceived as infallible, immutable and isolated from their creators (such as researchers or scientists) (Latour 2004b; 2004c). Matters of fact are linked to the concept of ‘black boxing’ complex associations and processes into a concealed object (Latour 1999). Matters of concern, in contrast, go beyond the veil of expert knowledge to depict debate and negotiation between the people and things of concern, allowing a range of actors (including nonhuman) to speak in this process (Michael 2017, p. 118). As Latour writes in *Reassembling the Social* (2005, p. 119), matters of concern can be distinguished from matters of fact through the ‘growing intensity of controversies over “natural things”’ such as climate change. The provocation of controversy around an established matter of fact provides an opening for matters of concern to emergence, bringing together socio-natural worlds (Latour 2004b, p. 22).

The shift from ‘matters of fact’ to ‘matters of concern’ brings important political as well as philosophical implications for exploring collective action. Mike Michael (2017, p. 116) recognises how matters of concern represent a more political ‘activist’ turn in ANT scholarship by attending to how knowledge and facts are produced and how they can also be reworked. This is led by the mobilisation of politics around controversies or dynamic *things* that are ‘matters of concern’ (Latour 2004a, 2004b). In doing so, reified ‘objects’ or ‘matters’ like global warming have become a gathering of heterogeneous things (2004c). Through emphasising the *matter* of matter, Latour is not only calling for material recognition of the properties that evoke controversies but also the populations for whom the concern ‘matters’ (2004b; 2004c).

Challenges to the ‘matter of fact’ of productivist agriculture (Hill 2015, p. 554) have generated particular insights from community economy researchers as to how new possibilities emerge

through place-based concerns. Examples include the gathering of farmers, soil, grasses and other species in taking a reparative approach to the externalities of productivist agriculture through degraded landscapes (Gibson-Graham & Roelvink 2010) or exploring possibilities for alternative food economies (Hill 2015, p. 554). For Clunes and Mildura, the emergence of creative economic activity through locally based concerns rather than external solutions to decline provides a way to understand not only the generative possibilities of friction driven encounters, between past and present, local and global. The increasing complexity of rural space, issues and actors thus leads to questioning of how rural areas are engaging in debates on economic pasts, presents and futures. In the following section I explore how concern, place and possibility entwine through Booktowns and Slow Food.

4.3.1 Matters of Concern in Clunes: a prologue to Booktowns

Clunes' Booktown trajectory is instructive for understanding how modern matters of fact based on progress around resource use are challenged and gathered into new matters of concern. As identified in the previous section, Clunes had been in a slow transition towards a multifunctional economy but had struggled to capitalise on its gold rush tourism assets in contrast to other towns like Ballarat, Bendigo, Castlemaine and Daylesford (Beeton 2004; Frost 2006). This is a problem experienced by smaller goldfield towns more broadly, with limitations around 'a lack of adequate visitor infrastructure, limited expertise in fundraising and underdeveloped or poorly marketed heritage product' (Jones et al. 2007, p. 8). In addition to limited tourism expenditure, the surrounding agricultural community had been suffering the effects of the millennium drought, with visible effects of decline evidenced in the number of empty shops in the town itself (Elg 2018a; Kirkham 2017).

Struggles around rural decline are familiar to other towns that have looked to Booktowns as a solution. The concept of a Booktown arose in the Welsh town of Hay-on-Wye in response to concerns for the decline of market towns. During the 1960s, most of rural Wales was experiencing structural shifts in its main economic bases of agriculture, mining and quarrying, leading to depopulation and decline (Woods 2010, p. 170). Hay-on-Wye was contending with many of the challenges faced by other Welsh market towns such as isolation, stagnant population and decreasing employment (Wales Rural Observatory 2007, p. 1). Globalisation also presented key challenges for rural Wales with trade liberalisation impacting food and commodity production (Woods 2010, p. 172).

The creation of Booktown in Hay-on-Wye in 1961 stemmed from local entrepreneur Richard Booth's establishment of a bookshop in the town's old fire station where he acquired books from private libraries, universities and private dealers all over the world. Booth went on to develop a cluster of second-hand bookshops in other iconic buildings such as the castle and cinema, earning a dual reputation as a *bon viveur* as well as champion of an agrarian economy. By 1985 the number of bookshops grew to 18, representing 17% of the local labour force (Seaton 1999, p. 391). For Richard Booth, creating a 'town of books' was a response to the effects of decline linked to industrialisation, particularly supermarket retailing and closure of small independent shops (Booth & Stuart 1999, pp. 10–11). As Booth describes on the drivers of action in his autobiography: 'I believed I was representing the frustrations and bitterness of people who objected to the destruction of a 1,000 year-old tradition of craft and agriculture by government-backed industrial food' (Booth & Stuart 1999, p. 142). The creation of a Booktown symbolised a refusal to accept the matter of fact of rural decline and bring decline into focus as a concern that could be debated and acted upon in the community.

Booth practised an unconventional politics in gathering people around concerns for decline in Hay. He was disdainful of government bureaucracies and led high profile publicity stunts (Johns & Mattsson 2005, p. 608) such as declaring Hay as an independent kingdom, rallying together locals to form a 'cabinet' and issuing local currency and passports. In his booklet 'Independence for Hay' in 1977, Booth launched a strident missive against government and brought attention to factors contributing to rural decline such imported produce and the closure of independent retailers ranging from grocers, cobblers and clothing stores, as well as transport services like the railway station. As such, attention was brought to the controversies surrounding industrial food production and its effects on local economies, particularly the closure of small artisan producers and traders. Booth proclaimed:

The decline of rural areas is not inevitable if we take our destiny into our own hands. The resources of the town and surrounding countryside must be developed for the benefit of local people. Tourists coming from all over the world to buy books should also be able to buy artefacts produced by local skilled craftsmen instead of cheap, factory-made souvenirs (Booth & Stuart 1999, p. 143).

For Booth, rural decline represented a manifestation of the controversies of productivist activities. Tourism through Booktowns also offered new potential for local resources to be utilised to the

benefit of locals rather than the import of place-less products. The idea of a Booktown also defied the Welsh traditional tourism profile with Booktown researcher Anthony Seaton observing:

The fact that Hay is the world's first, and most famous, Booktown does not mean that it fits into official Welsh definitions of an attraction in the way that, it seems, old coal tips, copper mines and cycle shops do (1996, p. 379).

While Booth's primary motivation was on reviving local retail rather than tourism, the unfolding of the Booktown led to Hay's transformation as a tourism destination, attracting approximately half a million people per year and leading to a surge in visitor accommodation and other enterprises in town such as bookbinding and crafts (Seaton 1999). An ancillary event, the annual 'Hay Festival of Literature', was developed by Peter Florence in 1988, further strengthening the economic contribution of books, with the 2012 festival recording sales of 225, 000 tickets and 72, 000 books (Hay Festival 2012).

Booth's positioning of Booktowns as a solution to rural decline gathered new proponents throughout Western Europe during the 1980s. Working with Noël Anselot, a bibliophile and entrepreneur, the town of Redu in Belgium became the first Booktown outside of Hay in 1984 (McShane 2002, p. 19; Merfeld-Langston 2013, p. 175). Similar to Hay, Redu was facing issues of decline such as challenges to the agricultural economic base, population ageing and empty buildings (Frank 2018, p. 213). A third Booktown was established in Montolieu in France during the 1990s, where upon its launch, Booth emphasised his resolve to foreground the anti-corporate purpose of Booktowns as replication of the model spread. He recalls the importance of emphasising the drivers of the initiative:

I was impatient to define the real reason for their existence: Book Towns were a reaction to the increasing redundancy of small villages all over Europe, largely due to supermarkets (Booth & Stuart 1999, p. 251).

Booktowns were therefore presented as a solution to revive retail in rural towns, whose core economic purpose was threatened by disruption to the local economy from supermarkets. Booth sought to redefine the second-hand book as an opportunity for local economic revival, positing it as 'an object *not* sold in a supermarket and therefore offering hope to the small town' (Booth &

Stuart 1999, p. 251). From Booth's perspective, books acted as a key constituent in mounting a challenge to rural decline as 'fact'.

Returning to Clunes, the 'matter of fact' of rural decline signalled its toll on conceptions of local agency. Tess Brady, one of the Booktown co-founders, reflected in a later speech at an international Booktown gathering that economic decline, exacerbated by the effects the millennium drought had a debilitating effect on agency in Clunes as it 'reinforces helplessness, a knowledge that the individual cannot act or make a difference' (quoted in Johnston 2016, p. 138). Through the concept of a Booktown, the fixity of decline was reworked as a matter of concern, mobilising 'a willingness to dream, to imagine, and to act' (Brady quoted in Johnston 2016, p. 138). This explanation of the drought as a motivation for Booktown depicts individual human agency as limited and bound to dominant and fixed narratives of decline. In addition, the Clunes Booktown concept was not just driven by physical decline but the threat of undesirable development as a solution such as a return to mining. Back in 2003, a proposal by Mount Rommel mining company to open a mine was couched in tourism benefits, with the mayor projecting that it would create 'jobs and eco-tourism' (ABC News 2003). Tess reflects on how the mining proposal and other industrialised forms of economic activity were seen as an undesirable fit for the historic town:

Change was on the doorstep. There was talk of making Clunes a cheap housing suburb of Ballarat; of relocating an abattoir and sale yards; of opening a mine; of using the empty flat land of the town as an industrial estate. None of it was particularly appealing and several of us, new to the town and old timers, realised we needed to try and steer the inevitable change (Brady 2011).

Through the reworking of rural decline as a concern rather than a fact, a new space of agency emerged through a call to 'steer' change. The concept of a Booktown for Clunes arose in 2006 through the coming together of Tess Brady with other 'treechangers' or amenity migrants, Tim Hayes (local government councillor/café owner), Graeme Johnstone (B&B operator) and Linda Newitt (PR consultant). As chapter 5 will explore in greater depth, the group were looking to revive Clunes in a way that fitted appropriately with the town's existing character (Kennedy 2011). Booktowns are particularly noted as a model of rural development based on preserving historic buildings, protecting local scenery and cultural landscapes (Frank 2018; Seaton 1996, 1999). The development of the Booktown concept in Clunes was therefore not only about framing loss of agency from rural decline as a matter of concern for residents to act upon, but also in navigating change that was seen as more sympathetic to the built heritage of the town (Kennedy 2011).

Reworking matters of fact into concern through the Booktown concept is not a smooth process however as the discussion in the following section will outline.

4.3.2 Debating Matters of Concern in Clunes

Steering change is not without friction and involves the rubbing together of different identities, visions of place and use of resources. To reframe rural decline as a concern, rather than a fact, leads to debate among people and the ‘things’ that constitute the fact (Latour 2004b; 2004c). As Latour notes, nonhumans ‘first appear as matters of concern, as new entities that provoke perplexity and thus speech in those who gather around them, discuss them, and argue over them’ (2004b, p. 66). While Booktowns offer one way of responding to decline through books, heritage buildings and culture, others in the community may see productivist or extractivist activities as providing greater benefit. As the proposal for opening a mine in 2003 discussed earlier demonstrated, benefits from the shire mayor were couched in job creation (ABC News 2003). Mining has come to the fore again recently, with Mount Rommel attempting exploratory drilling in Clunes, inducing a new ‘battle’ with some anti-mining residents (Shying 2015). Statements from Mount Rommel evoke a return to the ‘matter of fact’ narrative of technological modernisation and resource extraction promulgated by the ‘moderns’ (Latour 1993). In a statement to shareholders, chairman Fred Hunt provides a ‘matter of fact assessment’ positing an inevitable return to mining in Clunes:

Clunes is a goldfield whose productive years were simply suspended. Drilling anew will assist the Company in retention of these present holdings...The re-development of Clunes Goldfield can be predicated—eventually there will be agreed access to sufficient parts of the land surface (Mount Rommel 2016).

Furthermore, in his justification of Mount Rommel Mining Company’s renewed interest in mining in Clunes, Hunt asserts:

The nature of exploration is to be creative, no matter in what field. When it comes to gold, the creative work of this company has been to show just where gold remains at Clunes (*Courier* 2015).

Hunt’s assessment of ‘productivity’ as still latent within the landscape and waiting to be reactivated through creative exploration attests to the matter of fact manner in which economic progress is posited. Anti-mining residents perceive the proposed return to mining exploration in Clunes as a

threat to the local amenity and environment (Shying 2015), as well as its ‘tourism-based economy’ (Clunes Mine Action Group 2015). In 2018, exploratory digging was reported on the Clunes Common Nature Reserve, prompting dissent from residents due to a lack of consultation (Elg 2018b).

Reworking the fact of economic decline (and its coupling with a narrative of productivist progress) into a concern leads to broader negotiations. Negotiating a new economic future through Booktowns, in general, generates questions around who is enacting change, whose visions of place are being represented and how are local resources being reconfigured. Booth’s recognition as the heroic entrepreneur figure has featured widely in reports as the saviour of Hay (Frank 2018, p. 60; Landry et al. 1996, p. 53; Seaton 1999, p. 390), but at the same time, it is also acknowledged that Booth was supported by of a wide network of friends, employees and acquaintances who were pivotal in setting up the bookshops and stimulating a book trading economy (Johns & Mattsson 2005, p. 613). Booth’s renegade approach has highlighted strained relations between government bodies, and indeed others who have collided with his vision such as the organisers of the Hay festival (Booth & Stuart 1999). Macleod (2009, p. 141) reflects on the development of Wigtown, a Booktown in Scotland when at the beginning ‘local people saw the new book town as a veneer’ with residents perceiving newcomers opening businesses as key beneficiaries (Macleod 2009, p. 137). Frank (2018, p. xxiv) asserts however that Booktowns are reflective of both their creators and existing residents in stating that ‘The character of Booktown landscapes and townscapes reflects the values of the entrepreneurs and shapers of projects, as well as those who live in these places’. This brings up important issues around relations between actors (human and non) in creating change in place.

Becoming a Booktown provokes challenges and opportunities for how place is revisioned and local resources are utilised and managed. Drawing upon the example of Hay-on-Wye as an example of how place resources can be used to establish a niche, Woods (2010, p. 176) observes:

Place has also been valorized through collective action as a means of refocusing the economy of whole towns or localities, with communities developing particular cultural or economic “niches” to establish a brand and attract trade and visitors, often from outside.

Woods highlights how place-based initiatives can play an important social role in mobilising community, particularly when ‘local residents have been able to reconsider and re-articulate the

meaning of place in a globalizing countryside' (2010, p. 176). Booktowns offer a way to emphasise local distinctiveness in response to globalisation and create opportunities for residents to build a different economic future around culture (Frank 2018, p. 113 –144). At the same time, however, Booktowns imprint a new identity upon a place (Macleod 2009), a term that Merfeld-Langston (2013) describes as 'biblio-grafting'. She suggests that most of the French Booktowns were created '*ex nihilo*' requiring a new image construction given that 'the communities share few, if any, historical connections with book production' (Merfeld-Langston 2014, p. 125). Jane Frank's research into the prospects of the Queensland town of Maleny becoming a Booktown explicitly expressed for multiple identities to be projected to visitors such as organic food, arts and nature (Frank 2016). As these examples suggest, the development of a new economic identity or place-brand through Booktowns can offer a point of distinction but also wariness around the foisting of a singular identity upon place. Furthermore, activities that might come into conflict with the idyllic image of a Booktown require negotiation such as reported in the Norwegian Booktown of Fjærland, where noise from the operation of glacier helicopter tours threatened the associated tranquillity of Booktown (Vik & Villa 2010).

In sum, the remaking of a local economy around the singular theme of books poses creative 'friction' around how decline is reframed as a concern and disrupting past progress narratives underpinned by mining and global capitalism. The changing social landscape of Clunes enabled shifting relations with local assets and resources, reconfiguring the economy around the town's built mining heritage and amenity rather than productivist value. The gathering of key actors around books and buildings demonstrates how other latent resources other than gold are in place and can build a foundation for new possibilities. In chapter 5 I further consider how the mobilisation around a matter of concern sparks Booktown-led rural creative economies. Before doing so, I turn to matters of fact and concern interplay in Mildura through Slow Food.

4.3.3 Matters of Concern in Mildura: an entrée to Slow Food

The introduction of Slow Food to Mildura is also insightful for understanding how modern matters of fact based on progress around resource use are challenged and gathered into new matters of concern. Food is strongly interlinked with Mildura's identity, with the name of broader Sunraysia devised from a naming competition in recognition of its warm climate and favourable growing conditions (Ratten 2018). The idea of Slow Food was introduced by celebrity cook and Italian migrant Stefano de Pieri in 2003 at a time where the region was in the grip of the 'Millennium Drought' or 'Big Dry' (Kiem et al. 2010, p. 22). Through de Pieri, the inaugural Slow

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Food National Congress was hosted in Mildura, which he used as a platform to discuss concerns for the declining health of the Murray River, linked to the drought and irrigated agriculture, through a project entitled 'Slow River' based on 'protecting and promoting' Murray River produce, food culture, sustainable farming and biodiversity (Carrazza 2005).

The principles of the Slow Food movement offered de Pieri and others the opportunity of food as a vehicle to rework the fact of productivist agriculture through opening up concerns around decline. The Slow Food movement was instigated in Italy in 1986 by a gathering of the left-wing group Arcigola, in protest of McDonalds opening in Rome at the historic Piazza di Spagna. The protest was part of Arcigola's growing campaign to promulgate gastronomy and cultural life as a right in response to the increasing threat of globalisation (Andrews 2008). For Slow Food founder Carlo Petrini and fellow members of Arcigola who were protesting at the site, McDonald's personified the threat posed to local food culture by globalisation. According to Petrini, Slow Food was 'part of a much broader backlash against the high-speed, high-turnover culture of the global food industry' (Honoré 2004, p. 57). Arcigola's agenda was largely shaped by a fear of loss of local cultural traditions, threats to wine production in the Piedmont region and disaffection with how declining food quality and standards were presenting a negative reflection of local culture (Andrews 2008, pp. 7–8). Slow Food, therefore, sought to destabilise the growing separation of culture from the local environment or 'terroir' through commodity and 'fast' food. For Petrini and associates, the right to quality of cultural life was a universal issue and a democratic matter in need of action. This politicisation of gastronomy as an individual as well as collective concern evoked the broader 'personal is political' narrative adopted by social movements during the 1960s and 1970s (Andrews 2008, p. 8).

Slow Food was formalised as an international movement upon ratification of the 'Slow Food Manifesto: International Movement for the Defense and the Right to Pleasure' in Paris in 1989. Through the medium of Slow Food, the Manifesto pledges a better 'quality lifestyle' by:

cultivating taste, rather than impoverishing it, by stimulating progress, by encouraging international exchange programs, by endorsing worldwide projects, by advocating historical food culture and by defending old-fashioned food traditions (Slow Food 1989).

As an international movement, Slow Food draws together concerns for the loss of local food culture with a politics of globally networked action through its local chapters called 'convivia'. For

Geoff Andrews, a historian writing on the origins and evolution of Slow Food, the Slow Food Manifesto attempted to interweave politics with pleasure in creating change: ‘its alternative emphasis on pleasure both resonated with the earlier political backgrounds of many of the signatories, while also articulating an alternative way of living’ (Andrews 2008, p. 11). The focus on pleasure is strongly intertwined with its temporal descriptor of ‘slow’, which acts to ‘decelerate the food consumption experience so that alternative forms of taste can be (re)acquired’ (Murdoch & Miele 2004, p. 241). In the movement’s formative phase (up until around 2000), much of the work focused its gastronomic elements by advocating for traditional and varied local food through largely informal but politically driven grassroots activities like farmers’ markets, tastings and school gardens (van Bommel & Spicer 2011, p. 1728).

Around the year 2000, Slow Food transitioned from a gastronomic movement based on localised grassroots defence of local food culture and tradition to an ‘ecogastronomic’ movement (van Bommel & Spicer 2011, p. 1729). This involved moving beyond an emphasis on pleasurable consumption to principles of ‘good, clean, fair’ described by Cook as ‘tapping into the broader discourses of environmentalism, social justice and fair trade’ (van Bommel & Spicer 2015, p. 518). Through the identity of the ‘ecogastronome’, the movement has sought to counter elitist undertones and position this identity as a change agent (Petrini 2013). van Bommel and Spicer highlight how the evolution into an ecogastronomic movement transformed Slow Food structurally as well as ideologically, augmenting initial grassroots activities with more global and centrally coordinated formal activities such as the University of Gastronomic Sciences, the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity, and large-scale events (2011, p. 1728). Part of the success of this evolution was attributed to remaining in touch with activities at the local *convivia* level, while at the same time it has created a more expansive network of actors at all scales of food production and consumption—from farmers to policymakers, in establishing a ‘collective identity’ (van Bommel & Spicer 2011, p. 1736). Slow Food therefore offers a grassroots alternative to the corporate food monopolies that have enclosed food systems through monocultures and market domination (Holt-Giménez 2011).

Transferring the Slow Food ethos of ‘good, clean and fair food’ to the local context, at the 2003 National Congress, de Pieri launched the ‘Slow River’ project aboard a paddleboat on the Murray River to national members of Slow Food, journalists and the Victorian Minister for Tourism (Slow Food 2003). In an excerpt from an essay, de Pieri and his partner, Donata Carrazza explain how the Slow Food movement shaped their vision for ‘Slow River’:

taking a leaf out of the Italian-born Slow Food movement, we have sought to imagine ourselves immersed in a Slow River...to live and work by a set of principles which strive to uphold good things—respect for the environment, love of family and friends, conviviality, community engagement and so on (Carazza & de Pieri 2006, p. 145).

Through ‘Slow River’, de Pieri and Carazza situate the principles of the Slow Food Movement to a local context, foregrounding the importance of community and environment in their work. Slow River’s intertwining of human and nonhuman conviviality through food that is cleanly produced, as well as tasting good, contrasts with Mildura’s establishment as horticultural settlement in the 1890s, where Californian models of irrigation and technology dominated over nature (Hamilton-McKenzie 2012, p. 87). This manipulation of river flow for irrigation has been described as environmentally destructive (Hamilton-McKenzie 2012), with far-reaching implications for Indigenous communities along its course who have depended on the river as a source of cultural and ecological life (Weir 2015). This has led to broader concerns from de Pieri and others around the return of water back to the environment (Merlan & Raftery 2009, p. 174), along with recent allegations controversies in water governance involving ‘theft’ of water by irrigators in the upstream areas of the Murray Darling Basin (ABC News 2017). Through creating a new vision of a ‘Slow River’, a reworking of broader concerns for environment is made possible beyond the growth/decline fact of productivism. This possibility also evokes debate and contesting over concerns as the next section will detail.

4.3.4 Debating Matters of Concern in Mildura

Similar to Booktowns, Slow Food also evokes friction around different identities, visions of place and use of resources. As indicated in the previous section, Slow Food provides key opportunities for relations with local resources to be reframed around culture but is accompanied by tensions around whose vision is being followed. de Pieri’s arrival on the Mildura food scene in the 1990s reshaped local food culture by pioneering outdoor café dining, largely unpracticed in rural towns or even in the state capital of Melbourne at that time (Frost et al. 2010; Frost et al. 2016). Despite Mildura’s isolation, de Pieri observes how he recognised it as a ‘place full of possibility and energy—you just have to see it and embrace it’ (Frost et al. 2016). Some others in the community however perceived de Pieri’s observations and practices in changing the food culture as contentious. As de Pieri reflects in a media article:

A lot of people interpreted it as some kind of arrogance, because I came to Mildura and said, 'here's the citrus capital of Australia, and you can't find a freshly squeezed orange juice anywhere'. It's only this year we had the first orange festival, the Zest Fest. And even then it was mostly done by people not in the local food industry (de Pieri quoted in Gram Magazine 2014).

While de Pieri's quote indicates a frustration with the agrifood model, it also highlights energy in the community to celebrate its local food culture and enact a vision of place outside of the corporate agribusiness frame.

To bring a non-agrifood vision of place into being through Slow Food requires a foregrounding of what the movement considers as 'good, clean and fair' food. In this vein, Slow Food's ideals of protecting natural and cultural resources are at risk of being perceived as elitist. As Sassatelli and Davolio (2012, p. 222) write:

Agricultural goods and local foodways are considered cultural goods to be safeguarded just like intellectual property, with geographical specificity being protected, prefiguring a form of common property. Yet predicated, on the humanistic premises of sensory refinement, the translation of class politics at the global level may run the risk of looking quite ethnocentric, reinforcing the impression that SF (Slow Food) expresses a form of food snobbery.

The time, resources and money that underpin Slow Food activity are also considered the preserve of the privileged groups who can afford to do so (Sassatelli & Daviolo 2012, p. 222). Slow Food is, therefore, faced with challenges around reworking the fact of productivism and resultant decline into a matter of concern that evokes a broader community rather than a core group of food enthusiasts interested in local food culture, practices and traditions. In chapter 5 I turn to consider how matters of concern mobilise action in Mildura through Slow Food.

4.4 Conclusion

Understanding the emergence of creative economies in place requires consideration of how its stocks of resources have been valorised. This chapter has sought to highlight how perceptions of decline in rural economies are coupled with historic valorisation of economic progress tied to the 'productive' use of resources. Clunes and Mildura are exemplars of how grand modernist ambitions of economic progress, scientific advancement and technological efficiency set a benchmark for subsequent decline. This productivist growth trajectory was traced to colonial settlement and a

program of nation-building that saw Indigenous common lands enclosed for private profit, the commandeering of resources for mining and irrigation and a flow of global capital between Australia and other colonies. Following a contraction of resource availability and economic restructuring, questions are now raised around how alternative economic futures might be realised in response to the closure of mainstay industries or the ongoing viability of resources such as water. The vulnerability of place to these events has also manifested where the ‘spatial fixes’ (Harvey 2001) of a past economy have left a residual infrastructure of decline in the form of empty buildings and degraded landscapes.

A number of groups are challenging productivism as a ‘matter of fact’ assessment of economic vitality. The productivist discourse, in turn, reifies rural decline as ‘fact’. Instead groups are turning attention ‘matters of concern’ that have arisen around the economic use of place resources. Looking to new possibilities for resource use, community members are experimenting with a new vision of an economy based on culture and creativity through Booktowns and Slow Food. These new groupings not only depict how a diversity of rural stakeholders are coalescing around concerns but the generative power of creative ‘friction’ in fostering ‘other-kinds of difference-based interactions’ through global connections (Tsing 2012b, p. 1). The turn to Booktowns and Slow Food offers an alternative way to disrupt previous and current global connections (i.e. through mining and agribusiness) in considering new possibilities for resource use that tie into a more diversified and multi-functional (rather than ‘post-productive’) rural economy.

Rather than seeing creative economies as a generic fix to decline, this chapter has shown how decline is entangled in the fabric of Clunes and Mildura and shapes responses by the people and things affected. Creative economic responses to decline emerge in these places to generate new possibilities as part of broader concerns for resource use. Such insights present an important challenge to Florida’s framing of a creative economy by emphasising the existing place relations and conditions that enact an alternative understanding of a rural creative economy. Over the next three empirical chapters I will unpack the research questions of who is leading this response, how are resources being utilised and negotiated and what exchanges are taking place in performing this alternative vision of a creative economy.

CHAPTER FIVE

Locating Rural Creative Economy Actors

5.1 Introduction

Typical approaches to the creative economy as a solution to decline have focussed overtly on the role of the creative individual in generating economic activity through exerting their human or creative capital. Following Richard Florida, the idea of the amenity-seeking creative class as ‘agents of transformation’ (Petrov 2008, p. 174) has reverberated across rural areas as a way to identify how economic change is led by entrepreneurial, or ‘cosmopolitan’, outsiders who are mapping their new visions and tastes upon place. The view of heroic individuals as agents of change intersects with foundational narratives of place such the enterprising pioneers who ‘conquered’ the land in Australia (Davison & Brodie 2005; Hirst 1978)—including George Chaffey’s engineering ingenuity in Mildura (Kershner 1953) and the early pioneers of Clunes (Townsend 1989). Furthermore, founding narratives of cultural networks like Booktowns and Slow Food emphasise the role of individual agents, such as through Booth’s status as a heroic entrepreneur whose ‘brilliant ideas’ saved a community (Frank 2018, p. 60), or Petrini’s role as a ‘revolutionary’ leader in confronting globalisation and corporate agriculture (Ducasse 2004). Taken together, these various narratives attest to celebration of creativity and enterprise as the preserve of key individuals, and community and place as passive receivers of their actions, but is this an accurate picture of who mobilises creative economic change?

Current issues facing rural communities across Australia bring into question the capacity of a singular actor to confront decline that is entwined with forces of globalisation and climate change. The focus on the heroic creative class, in particular as a creative economy harbinger, risks muting how responses to change are inspired and enabled by those who might be most affected by it. This anthropogenic approach sits uneasily with the matters of concern evident in rural communities struggling with decline, particularly as witnessed in responses to the shared issue of the millennium drought as seen in Clunes and Mildura. This process suggest that place has a role to play, alongside the people who are affected by change. Key figures like Stefano de Pieri and Tess Brady were

central to instigating the network in each site, however, the concept of heroic agency located in a singular actor requires further exploration into how the network might be constituted more broadly.

In responding to the research question of who enacts change through the rural creative economy, this chapter traces how change is mobilised through Booktowns and Slow Food. Section 5.2 gives a conceptual framing of agency and hybrid collectives in the context of the rural creative economy. I then turn to the presentation of empirical analysis of the constitution of the Booktown (section 5.3) and Slow Food (section 5.4) networks and how agency was conceived and enacted. Section 5.5 concludes this chapter by drawing upon key insights into how the gathering of actors around concerns potentiates new forms of action, resource use and care. I take this point up further in the following chapter.

5.2 Who is enacting economic change?

Approaches to ‘who’ mobilises and enacts economic change in rural communities is an ongoing issue of debate in creative economy scholarship. As discussed in chapter 2, there are conflicting perspectives on this topic. On the one hand, the extension of Florida’s creative class theory continues to resonate. For instance, in a recent literature review on the creative economy in peripheral areas Petrov and Cavin (2017, p. 128) show how individual members of the creative class are recognised as leading ‘agents of transformation’ by virtue of possessing the stock of creative capital that turns knowledge and creativity into economic value:

a stock of creative abilities and knowledge(s) that have economic value and are embodied in a group of individuals who either possess high levels of education and/or are engaged in creative—scientific, artistic, entrepreneurial or technological—types of activities.

By locating agency in stocks of ‘creative capital’, creative economic actors fall into a capitalist logic of a creative economy. On the other hand, this capitalocentric framing of economy is seen as excluding a range of participants who are involved in noncapitalist modes of production and exchange, who are acting with local assets and relations to generate an alternative vision of a creative economy (Hwang 2013; Templer Rodrigues 2018).

Problems in locating creative economy identities call for a way to understand who enacts rural economic change more broadly. The wide range of attempts to move beyond Florida's metro-centric framing is evident in research that extends into new identities ranging from community leaders—including Indigenous communities (Petrov & Cavin 2017), other sectors such as farming (Corbett 2013), tourism and food service workers (Thulemark & Hauge 2014; Thulemark, Lundmark & Heldt-Cassel, 2014), and business owners, consultants, entrepreneurs, and retirees (Donaldson et al. 2012). The broadening of creative economy actors in these studies demonstrates the failings of Florida's model to locate creative economy actors in any leading sectors or individuals, but still leaves unanswered questions around understanding who acts outside of sectoral approaches, even if they are modified for a rural context.

The capitalocentric view of creative class saviours is also arguably an anthropogenic one that positions human actors as the solution to decline through a privileging of their knowledge, ideas and tastes. This solution is unevenly and subjectively associated with creative professionals acting as a proxy for vibrant 'creative hotspots' (Regional Australia Institute 2018), alienating the 'ordinary' places and those who are last in creative leaderboards (Gibson & Klocker 2005). The idea that creative places can only exist in relation to the creative class therefore risks obfuscating how community and place might steer change together in response to landscapes of decline. Making a case for the 'agency of place', geographers Soren C. Larsen and Jay T. Johnson (2017, p. 1) observe 'place is guiding Indigenous peoples, settler-descended peoples, and nonhumans into a new dialogue' which decentres the human as the key force of disruption. From this perspective, might place have agency in also mobilising economic change around who and what is already there despite an apparent lack of vibrancy?

The coming together of actors as part of a cultural network (such as Booktowns and Slow Food) offers an entry point into understanding who mobilises creative economies in place, is it the individual leader or broader collective acting with place? As discussed in chapter 4, the founding stories of Booktowns and Slow Food emphasise the revolutionary hero figure. In his autobiography however Richard Booth acknowledges the assistance by many locals and employees who were enrolled in the network to transform Hay as a Booktown (Booth & Stewart 1999). The celebration of the creative individual holds strong however, and has transmitted beyond Hay-on-Wye to understanding other Booktown heroes (Frank 2018, p. 45) such as Michel Braibant's influence in Montolieu in France; Noël Anselot in instigating Redu in Belgium (Merfeld-Langston 2013; Frank 2018); and Henk Ruessink as founder of Bredevoort in Holland (Frank 2018).

More recent studies offer differing insights into who is mobilising change through Booktowns. Donaldson connects Booktowns to a form of cultural entrepreneurship that is driven by a power elite of entrepreneurial migrants who are creating change in the absence of local policy initiatives (Donaldson 2018). Yet other mobilisations of the concept appear to be seeded by the community such as in the case of the Scottish Booktown, Wigtown, whose residents bid for the designation in a national competition (Macleod 2009); or the initiation of a Norwegian Booktown in Fjærland by inhabitants who were inspired after visiting Hay-on-Wye (Vik & Villa 2010). Understandings of who mobilises change through Booktowns therefore appears to oscillate between the idea of a visionary leader and broader community action.

The Slow Food movement also presents a muddled outlook on who enacts change. Co-founder Carlo Petrini is popularly depicted as a revolutionary ‘charismatic leader’ (Altuna et al. 2017, p. 282) and was recognised by *Time Magazine* as a ‘European hero’ (Gerard 2007). Altuna et al. however place Petrini in the context of a ‘radical circle’ of people sharing similar interests ‘The essence of the emergence of Slow Food does not lie in the work of a single genius but rather in the collective effort of four friends’ (Altuna et al. 2017, p. 284). The Slow Food movement appears to weave between individual and collective forces for change. Emphasis on the individual is not only evident in depictions of Petrini as a singular hero, but also in his creation of the ‘ethical consumer’ (Gerard 2007). Petrini describes the ethical consumer as an ‘eco-gastronome’ who ‘enjoys, knows and eats in the awareness that he must leave a better planet to future generations’ (Petrini 2013, p. 339). For Petrini, food system change can be facilitated through engendering the eco-gastronome as a ‘new kind of individual’ who he also considers as a co-producer of food alongside farmers and chefs. Petrini envisages these actors within a diverse network of gastronomes around the world working towards the ‘common’ good (p. 21).

The individualised perspective pervading local food movements is criticised by some scholars. Elizabeth Ramey (2017, p. 462) argues how ‘individual acts of shopping and eating are valorized over other forms of cooperative labour and social action...changing one’s personal habits is enough to belong to the “social” movement’. While Ramey’s argument points to a tension in individual approaches to change, Slow Food’s emphasis on conviviality foregrounds the social and pleasurable aspects of sharing food and enacting food system change (Tencati & Zsolnai 2012). Slow Food also focuses on connecting food communities globally through campaigns (such as Slow Meat), alliances (like the Chef’s Alliance) and producer networks (such as Terra Madre). At the same time, however, these activities are considered as a particularly middle-class practice

(Gaytán, M 2004; Sassatelli & Daviolo 2010) that delimits actions to serving only a segment of society. Similar to Booktowns, Slow Food shares strong conceptions of the movement as enacted by the middle-class, along with shifting perceptions between individual versus collective agency.

Providing a more hopeful perspective on movements like Slow Food, ethnographer Anna Tsing (2012a, p. 45) observes from her home in California that:

Somewhere in the terrain encompassing “real food”, “slow foods”, “food and justice,” and “fair trade” movements there is something quite exciting going on...these are the movements most likely to attract idealistic young people with a taste for social change. Each of these movements has been criticized for their elitism and other inadequacies. But this is a place to begin, not to end, the discussion. The chance to appeal to those who eat at the same time as those who provide food is extraordinary... This is a place to look for radical possibilities: might some of these projects offer models, too, of the transformative potential of coalition?

Rather than refuting these activities as the preserve of the privileged, Anna Tsing points to the possibilities that are offered through new ‘alliances’ that might emerge across ‘difference-based interactions’ (Tsing 2012 p. 1), such as between consumers and producers. To further look to the possibilities of encounters across different actors I draw upon the ANT concept of the hybrid collective introduced in section 3.2.2.

5.2.1 Conceptualising change through hybrid collectives

The limitations of Florida’s creative class model in locating creative economy actors and conflation of Booktown and Slow Food movement identities within a middle-class grouping, leads me to other ways to consider who might be involved in enacting change in rural communities in ways that recognise the agency of place and community. From an ANT perspective, an actor isn’t a predetermined entity located in an economic or social class position. As discussed in chapter 3, Latour (2005, p. 71) proffers that an actor can be any ‘thing’ (human or non) that makes a difference. In conceiving what this means for mobilising change, Gerda Roelvink draws upon ANT to explain that instead of imagining the source of action within conventional social groups (like working class), social action is materialising around matters of concern involving ‘a diverse array of humans and nonhumans, including animals, the natural environment, machines and objects’ (2016, p. 59). Roelvink observes (2018, p. 139), these collectives ‘are centred on concern, rather than identity’. Theorising socio-material groupings as hybrid collectives, Callon and Rabeharisoa (2003)

point to the new possibilities that are created in the treatment of Muscular Dystrophy when different actors (e.g. scientific researchers, patients, photographs and worms) encounter each other to conduct ‘research in the wild’ in contrast to the conventional closed domain of the laboratory. Turning to Booktowns and Slow Food as socio-material groupings, therefore, moves focus beyond class positions to the dynamics of people and things coming together and the new possibilities this might bring to place.

Turning to the hybridity of action involves attuning to ways that the social and material come together. Attending to the hybridity of matters of concern, John Law uses the verb ‘matter-ing’ to denote ‘making material in a manner that is of concern’ (Law 2004b). Law poses that one way that material is being made relevant is through controversies arising from the material effects of (in)actions. Using the example of the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak in the United Kingdom in 2001, he describes how the government’s decision to not vaccinate animals near affected farms had ‘material effects’ on the farmers, animals and possibly the course of the epidemic itself (2004b). Law posits that the critique arising from the issue mobilised a ‘re-valuing or re-moralising’, which ‘enacts a world that poses itself as a contrast, another possibility, an escape’ (Law 2004b). From this perspective, ‘matter’ is entangled with ‘morals’ that work to potentially shift action in a new direction away from established facts.

The entanglement of local concerns with material properties of Booktowns and Slow Food provides an impetus to move beyond the individual human subject to considering how agency may be distributed more broadly in shaping a new economic future. Roelvink and Zolkos (2015, p. 48) draw upon the way that nonrepresentational forces such as affect can mobilise hybrid collectives. The authors define affect as “‘forces of encounter’ that involve sensual or somatic experiences of feeling, touching, smelling, and so on, that increase (or decrease) a subject’s capacity to act, move and think’. Drawing upon affect allows us to explore how change is responsive to place, rather than a strictly rational process—resonating with Roelvink and Zolkos’s discussion of post-humanism’s critique of the ‘independent, disembodied and autonomous subject’ (2015, p. 47). By tracing those who gather around concerns (rather than class positions), new understandings into who mobilises change are opened up and provides an entry point into my empirical work.

5.3 Mobilising Booktown Actors

In this section I explore who the key actors were in mobilising the Booktown concept in Clunes. This involves tracing who is enacting change in place, rather than starting from a priori assumptions such as being led by a creative class. Chapter 4 detailed how the inception of the Booktown concept stemmed from a response to rural decline as a matter of concern over the effects of the millennium drought, loss of local agency, and controversies around introducing undesirable ‘matter’ in the form of industrial or extractive economic activity. As discussed in the previous chapter, the turn to cultural economic activity in the form of a Booktown provided a way for the community to ‘steer’ the change away from industries that were seen as unappealing to Tess and some other locals/new residents such as a potential abattoir, industrial estate or reopening of the mine. By introducing an economy around the printed book, an object of ‘cultural distinction’ (Driscoll 2016), an alternative economic future could be imagined. Alongside this cultural appeal, folding the matter of books into the town responds to nostalgic desires for materiality in a digital age and the ‘sensual appeal’ of old books that ‘espouse a materialism that is warm, humane, magical and sensual’ (Frank 2018, p. 177). The introduction of books as a desired economic ‘object’ is, therefore, not only suggestive of a way to stimulate collective action in response to perceived loss of individual agency but as an actor in ‘re-valuing or re-moralizing’ the local economy around culture rather than industrial activity (Law 2004b). Brought together with local buildings, Booktowns point to how a socio-material gathering was assembling to create new effects in the town.

The inception of the Booktown idea is instructive in understanding the role of books in bringing actors together from the outset. Tim, a co-founder of Creative Clunes, describes how actors gathered around the book in bringing about local economic renewal from the very beginning:

A group of people tended to come together at the one time. Perhaps not knowing that the other was interested in establishing a theme if you like for the town along the idea of literature or specifically books (Interview, Tim H, 29 September 2015).

As Tim describes, a group of people were drawn together around books and literature as a form of economic renewal. From Tim’s perspective as a local government councillor and café owner, he felt compelled to take action and called a meeting to scope possibilities for a book market:

I guess I felt some sort of obligation that the local economy could be improved and that visitations to the town could be increased (Interview, Tim H, 29 September 2015).

This first meeting to explore economic renewal in Clunes is instructive of the range of actors that came together to act from various economic class positions (Gibson-Graham, Resnick & Wolff 2001). Alongside Tim's occupational status as a self-employed café owner (independent class), he was also a local government councillor (communal class). The meeting attracted other community members who could also be considered part of an independent class of self-employed workers such as Tess Brady, an academic and writer; Graeme Johnstone a former teacher turned accommodation proprietor; and Linda Newitt, a PR consultant. Each of these residents had relocated to Clunes as part of a lifestyle shift associated with 'tree-change' or amenity migration (Kennedy 2011). These actors complicate the individualistic creative class narrative by coming together to consider ways to generate a new economic surplus for the town by reactivating the surplus assets of its mining heritage through culture.

From the outset, books appeared as a key actor in the formation of the collective. Tim recounted how during the meeting, a local book trader offered important insights into the practicalities of a book market concept, citing the labour-intensive nature of carrying books and setting up stalls on a regular basis, particularly as the majority book-sellers are of an older demographic. As an alternative, Tess Brady raised the concept of a Booktown based on her knowledge of Hay-on-Wye. From there, the idea evolved rapidly from book market to a more ambitious experiment in filling the town's empty buildings with bookshops (Interview, 29 September 2015). Books brought these key people together, with their physical weight pushing action away from a temporary book market to a more permanent intermeshing with the built environment as a Booktown. Books in Booktowns are considered to 'symbolically integrate print culture and distinct local heritage' (Frank 2018, p. 234) and this appears strongly evident in Clunes, where Tess Brady explains the rationale driving the idea in a speech to the Victorian Writer's Centre:

Why Books? We knew that if we were going to engage in a change project that would keep the village feel, preserve the heritage and be a 'good fit' we needed to find something that was both quintessential Clunes and which was not destructive...With a bit of homework the idea of discovery stood out—discovery of gold, of ideas, of learning (Brady 2011).

This quote points to how the enrolment of books into the collective therefore worked as a strategic force to re-orient Clunes towards a creative economy by intertwining books with the town's material form as well as foregrounding the concept's compatibility with Clunes' foundational narrative of gold discovery.

Taking books seriously as actors involves considering their status as an active participant in mobilising change. Jane Frank (2018, pp. 187–188) observes the agentic force of books in Booktowns:

when books as artefacts...are amassed together in small rural locales, they are the change agents that make possible the re-emergence of territorial identities and 'personalities'. It is the infinite numbers of books that draw collectors and contemporary travellers, who in turn relish the local history, terrain and symbolically laden sites that are converted into distinctive regional place profiles.

In Clunes, the potential for entangling books with local buildings created an affective force in mobilising change. Research into the Booktown model demonstrated how it drew upon the existing strengths of what was already in place. Tess recalled a pivotal moment when she and Graeme were researching the Booktown model and read a research report by tourism scholar Anthony Seaton, that outlined thirteen 'Critical Success Factors' for Booktowns (Seaton 1999). The report suggested that Booktowns offered 'exemplary models of sustainable rural tourism' due to their low impact on the existing town fabric, low start up costs through the reuse of existing assets such as empty buildings (Seaton 1996, p. 380). Seaton's report listed the key social and material attributes for successful Booktowns such as connections to the publishing and book trade industry, heritage appeal and available property for retail. Findings suggested that Booktowns shared geographic and socio-economic commonalities such as a peripheral location, low population, declining agricultural employment and retail activity. Such challenges also provided opportunities like cheap and available property (Seaton 1996, p. 380). Tess reflected upon the deeply affecting moment when they realised that Clunes fulfilled these key attributes.

I still remember the winter's night, sitting by my fire ...and that's when we first realised that we ticked the criteria for Seaton and thought, 'My God' this could work...and we were so scared...(Interview, Tess, 21 September 2015).

The validation of Clunes' Booktown potential through this report generated fear that transformation was actually possible (Interview, Tess 21 September 2015). Such an emotive response to Clunes' compatibility with the Booktown model highlights the affective forces between people and place in drawing together this gathering as a hybrid collective and bolstering its capacity to act (Roelvink 2016).

While Seaton's 'Critical Success Factors' suggested that Clunes had the built and human assets to create a Booktown, involvement from the broader community was uncertain. As Tim explained, the creation of a trial festival would provide an opportunity to prototype their ideas.

We would have to test it to see whether people would be interested in participating in the Booktown concept....so that's when we decided 'well look why don't we see—we'll try for one day—see what happens' (Interview, Tim H, 29 September 2015).

Beyond considering how the agency of books was pivotal in mobilising the hybrid collective, pushing action away from a temporary book market idea and towards a deeper entanglement in place, the mobilisation of the 'town' was also crucial, both socially and materially through providing support for the initiative. For Clunes to become a Booktown, buildings needed to be available to be used as bookshops and local support was also vital in testing the initiative. The creation of the 'Booktown for a Day' festival in 2007 offered a trial of the concept and is demonstrative of the formation of a collective of humans and nonhumans to experiment with the Booktown concept and its viability for Clunes. Christine, a local artist and farmer reflected on the affecting forces of bringing books in relation to buildings.

the first Booktown [festival] I walked down Fraser street and saw all of these people and it was just breathtaking. Just imagining what it would have been like in the 1850s was absolutely incredible, it was exciting and had a buzz to it (Interview, Christine, 8 April 2016).

In response to my interjection on how the book festival appears to compliment the streetscape, she affirmed that yes:

...even imagining the buildings are happy because they are so many people walking under the verandas (Interview, Christine, 8 April 2016).

Christine's quote reflects how the buildings seemed responsive to the new life breathed in by a temporary population (around 6,000) matching its gold rush years (see Figure 5.1). The animation of Clunes significant bluestone and sandstone buildings through the festival highlights the vibrancy of seemingly inert matter. Building on Jane Bennett's (2010) work on the vitality of iron, cultural geographer Tim Edensor (2013, p. 449) describes the vibrancy of stone in a building as 'forever in formation, shedding its previous incarnations as it becomes repositioned and resituated within a host of changing co-constituents and agencies'.



Figure 5.1 Lively Fraser Street at Clunes Booktown Festival (1 May 2016)



Figure 5.2 Book browsing under the Club Hotel veranda (6 May 2017)

During the trial festival, the vibrancy created through bringing books and buildings in relation to each other therefore helped to garner support for the initiative. Another resident reflected on the

possibility of a return to mining being proposed by Mount Rommel mining company, and how the Booktown offered a more sympathetic and environmentally friendly form of development and protection of the historic streetscape:

Things around books are not intrusive, they are not noisy, they are not smelly. So I think Booktown has always seen the need to be part of protecting the streetscape and the built environment (Interview, Neil, 4 December 2015).

Such perspectives demonstrate the affecting forces that the Booktown trial had in enacting a new economic future, where relations to its heritage buildings are foregrounded through the entangling of books and buildings. The intertwining of books and buildings, therefore, exerted affective forces by bringing this new economic possibility into being.

The trial festival was a pivotal moment in not only capturing the imagination of locals in inspiring action but also enrolling others into the collective—importantly books and book traders. The drawing together of book traders from around the state provided an important opportunity to tap into industry knowledge and understand who would be willing to participate in the concept. The organisers received an overwhelming response from book traders with around 50 registrations, exceeding the group's original aspiration for 15 (Interview, Tim H, 29 September 2015). This provided the group with the valuable opportunity to generate knowledge around the feasibility of concept and enrol potential book traders to relocate to Clunes to establish bookshops.

The event also played an important strategic role in enrolling others into the collective such as visitors, local government who provided funding, and local residents who volunteered in the performance of a Booktown. The estimated attendance of 6,000 visitors also surpassed organiser expectations leading to recognition that the festival not only offered an opportunity to engage with book traders, but that they had 'stumbled across a niche' with the public by offering an event focused around books (Interview, Tim H, 29 September 2015). As a result of this trial it was apparent that there was enough demand for the festival to take place annually over a full weekend each May. While 'Booktown for a Day' provided an opportunity for this emergent group to experiment and generate knowledge around a Booktown, the process of moving from a temporary festival to a permanent Booktown identity required action beyond the festival. In the following section I consider how this gathering of actors has gone on to create ongoing effects.

5.3.1 *Bringing Together a Booktown Hybrid Collective*

Whenever we were going in the right direction we went a million miles an hour, and when we didn't go in the right direction...it was just extraordinary, there was something here, some charm, some energy, whatever you want to call it...that it wanted to change...there was a change energy here...does that make any sense?...and it wanted to change so we had to tap into that (Interview, Tess, 21 September 2015).

The process of instigating cultural renewal in Clunes challenges conventional conceptualisations of change as being led by a key 'change agent' as part of a planned and rational process (Lippitt, Watson & Westley 1958, p. 10). Instead, as the above quote from Tess attests, the process of changing Clunes appeared to be guided by an attunement to an 'energy' in the town that guided action. This is exemplified in the positive momentum flowing from the trial festival that exceeded expectations. Yet as Tess explains, the shift to establishing Clunes as a permanent Booktown was a more difficult process in terms of recruiting booksellers and finding suitable premises. Tess relays how a book trader from the festival was pivotal in putting Clunes transition to a permanent Booktown into motion.

We got money to set up the first bookshop; we were facing to give it back because we couldn't find a premises. She [book trader] was undeterred. We brought her in to the selection committee to find a place. Within a week of inviting [her] in to help us there were seven options. That's her charm...I don't know how to explain that...You know...suddenly the places that were closed to us miraculously became available (Interview, Tess, 21 September 2015).

As a result of the enrolment of a new actor into the collective, the concept was provided with an energy that it needed to move forward. I asked Tess if the involvement of the bookseller worked to 'legitimise' the concept by drawing in someone from the book industry. She affirmed how it was a pivotal moment which confronts assumptions that change that can be scientifically rationalised:

I think it suddenly became real. So I think, we don't know enough about how human beings work and how communities work to be able to say it's all scientific (Interview, Tess, 21 September 2015).

Alongside the challenging of change as a rational or scientific process, the attributes of a 'change agent' oscillated between individual to collective agency. In doing so, cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984), a concept broadly considered as the acquisition and disposition of cultural competencies and

predilections (such as music, art etc.) that are unequally distributed amongst social classes, is redistributed throughout the collective. For instance, as an ex-urban dweller in a rural community, Tess reflects how she was able to use her networks to act as ‘conduit’ to knowledge, particularly in bridging urban-rural networks through connecting with the arts world and government funding bodies. On the other hand, she acknowledges drawing upon ‘different sets of cultural capital’ to work together with the community.

We knew how to write grants, how the publishing industry worked, I knew I had access to writers, so I think it’s really important to have somebody who is a conduit to that knowledge. So it’s a class thing too—cultural capital. I had the cultural capital to be able to be able to plug in if I need to. I could dress up but you also need the different sets of cultural capital to make it work (Interview, Tess, 21 September 2015).

This perspective is expanded in a speech by Tess made to Victorian Writers Centre (Brady 2011) highlighting the diverse sets of skills and backgrounds required to establish the Booktown:

To imagine, set up and run Booktown we did not gather a group of booky people but rather put together community workers, media experts, local government representatives, business people with the cultural workers. From the beginning this group used its various skills and focussed on cultural tourism and cultural pursuits as a way forward.

From this perspective, the gathering of actors around the book emphasised the importance of bringing different skills and knowledges to the collective to enact change rather than being led by one particular sector (such as the arts). This example of distributed agency (Callon & Law 1995, 1997; Michael 2017) therefore challenges the idea of change being led by a singular entity.

Themes of distributed agency were also evident amongst the Booktown co-founders. The impetus to acknowledge a singular change agent or heroic leader was strongly refuted by Tess.

It was everybody working hard to achieve that...very much a collective thing. Which of course is another problem we have, the problem of right wing subject’s nonsense of our society. We would like to have a hero, a hero’s journey, so there is one person, so people say—‘you are the hero’. No one person can do this. It’s the collective; it’s the group. It very much is. It’s not modesty or anything—it is just the reality. When one person gets up to do that it becomes a cropper very quickly.

It is important to note here the discomfort with the heroic narrative and the use of ‘collective’ which is used to pragmatically, rather than just modestly, to describe the process of change beyond an individual all-knowing and acting subject and their followers. The understanding of change as a collective endeavour was reinforced by Tim who highlighted the distributed workload.

So for the first few years it was, almost up until now...the event and Creative Clunes was sort of managed by the initial people, the core group, people came and went. Each of us took on a workload which you could quantify into you know hours and hours and hours of work throughout the year (Interview, Tim H, 29 September 2015).

The success of the Booktown concept was thus not dependent on the assertion of cultural capital from any singular identity, but the bringing together of a range of diverse knowledge and skills in the generation of a new economic surplus through cultural and creative activity. Driscoll observes that the Clunes Booktown initiative also challenges urban centric perspectives of literary culture by widening participation and repositioning ‘cultural capital away from the cities and into a regional area’ (Driscoll 2016, p. 15). The emphasis on re-locating cultural capital from urban to rural, however, suggests a hierarchical flow from urban to rural rather than what is already in place. From these perspectives, however, it is evident that cultural capital as situated in any one individual, social class or place is refuted. Instead it points to how the creative economy is mobilised in an affective way that brings the skills of a range of people together with the possibilities of place. In the following section I turn from books to food and water, to consider how key actors were mobilised in Mildura in responding to concerns.

5.4 Mobilising Slow Food Actors

Mildura presents a different perspective on how change might be mobilised in place but also shares some similarities with Clunes as to how agency is conceived and distributed. As discussed in chapter 4, chef Stefano de Pieri is attributed with championing Mildura’s food culture, along with raising environmental concerns around the impact of productivist agriculture on the Murray River. The hosting of the national congress in 2003 put in motion the development of a Slow Food chapter in Mildura, where de Pieri was joined by other key food identities such as Stephanie Alexander and Maggie Beer; Slow Food *convivia* members from around the country; journalists and officials such as the Victorian Minister for Tourism (Muir 2003; Slow Food 2003). As Muir

reports in her feature on the event, these professional and ‘passionate amateurs’ were brought together over:

a common interest in the world’s dwindling biodiversity, and a common belief that the Slow Food Movement is a powerful tool for reversing this decline (2003, p. 91).

The congress provided an important opportunity to not only introduce Slow Food to Mildura but to showcase Mildura’s food culture and landscape in contrast to its agribusiness image. The power of Slow Food to mobilise action is recognised by its visceral emphasis on sensing food as a pleasurable encounter, activating both mind and body. As Hayes-Conroy and Martin (2010, p. 273) put it, to embrace Slow Food as ‘bodied practice’ involves ‘engaging corporeally and mentally with regional landscapes, experiencing and caring for local agro-ecosystems and economies’. Through the hosting of the congress aboard de Pieri’s paddle steamer and other settings such as a local vineyard, a range of nonhuman actors are being gathered in the constitution of Slow Food. Muir’s recollection of the congress demonstrates how the event’s hosting on a paddle steamer amplified this attunement to place and how this method of engaging participants underscored their message:

The gentle rocking of the boat, permanently moored on the tree-lined banks of the Murray, the sound of birds and other river life as dusk settled were the perfect elixir to revive minds fatigued from the week’s work and bodies weary from the long journey, and to create the right frame of mind for a truly slow weekend (Muir 2003, p. 91).

Further emphasis on place was demonstrated through hosting activities like the congress dinner in the vineyard of a Calabrian family, the Garreffas, which highlighted the food culture of its diaspora as key local actors. The congress also brought attention to nonhuman actors such as the Murray River, with the launch of the ‘Slow River’ project as discussed in chapter 4, as a testament to how local matters of concern were intermixing with the global ideals of Slow Food. As Donata Carrazza (de Pieri’s partner) explains, ‘Slow River’ had the objective of amplifying local food culture and shifting practices towards protecting biodiversity, fostering sustainable farming and supporting relationships between producers, markets and tourism (Carazza 2005). From this congress new associations were being put in place in response to matters of concern.

Following its ambitious launch at the congress, Slow Food Mildura developed gradually with shifting leadership. Its membership base in its formative years was relatively small, with a focus on

translating the message of Slow Food, with activities mostly entailing group meetings. As Elina, a member from the outset reflects:

there were a few members but not many, you had to do a lot of explaining about what Slow Food was all about, and then there wasn't anything else apart from just a meeting...there were no events (Elina, Interview, 10 December 2015).

At the time this research commenced, however, Slow Food Mildura had broadened its membership base and activities significantly. Leadership of the *convivia* was shared between Deb, an ecologist and Brad, a chef who had worked for Stefano and shifted to leading the hospitality teaching program at the local TAFE college. Alongside growers like the Garreffa family, I was introduced to members from diverse cultural backgrounds and class positions including culinary students from Italy and Malaysia and a range of self-employed and professional workers and retirees from Mildura (both long-standing residents and newcomers).

Given the gathering of actors around concerns for the river was a mobilising force for Slow Food, its role as a nonhuman actor appears significant. While political ecologist Jane Bennett notes Slow Food's important work in drawing together associations between actors from producers to consumers, she notes limitations in how the movement 'tends to perceive of food as a resource or a means, and thus to perpetuate the idea that nonhuman materiality is essentially passive stuff' (Bennett 2007, p. 51). Yet, in the case of Slow Food Mildura, it is evident that the 'active vitality' (p. 51) of food was leveraged through its entanglement with water, an affecting force in drawing together a collective of actors from different backgrounds. In separate discussion, both of the co-leaders of Slow Food Mildura identified the threats to the sustainability of the river as a key concern and an affecting force for action through finding alternatives. Brad raised concerns around the short-term exploitation of water for irrigation and profit without longer-term considerations for the environment. He described how the prospect of not taking action against a corporate food system was deeply affecting:

It not only bothers me, it harms me if I don't just do anything about it (Interview, Brad, 13 November 2015).

Drawing upon her ecological background, Deb explained how the manipulated flow of the Murray River provoked despair, along with concerns of the loss of people's 'connection to country'

(Interview, 14 November 2015). Dropping the river would provide opportunities for natural biological process to take place but she reflected that this would be highly contentious due to Mildura's conservative political environment and agribusiness economy. By focusing on food, something everyone 'relates with', Deb reflected that Slow Food could help enable change (Interview, 14 November 2015). This creates the potential to 're-matter' or 're-moralise' around entanglement with water. Such perspectives emphasise how Slow Food action is not necessarily dominated by pursuit of pleasure but a visceral response to also 'feeling bad', a response that resonates with Hayes-Conroy and Martin's (2010) call on the need for Slow Food to bring 'pleasure into question'. In doing so, the harmful affective encounters with environmental decline led to investing more hopeful encounters through food.

Slow Food Mildura's focus on events has played a key role in creating these hopeful encounters and attracting other members to the collective. Brad explained that he had gotten involved in Slow Food through various workshops and was encouraged to join by his employer at TAFE (Interview, 13 November 2015). The focus on learning traditional knowledge and techniques like salami making from the Garreffa family and other Italian migrants intrigued him:

if we don't hold on to those things we wouldn't learn them...for me it was fun and for the others in Slow Food things have snowballed, people are interested in what we are doing, they are interested in those type of concepts (Interview, Brad, 13 November 2015).

Slow Food thus provided an outlet for people wanting to collectively act in making change. Giovanni, a student chef explained that he had joined Slow Food out of despair for the future (Interview, 11 December 2015):

My joining Slow Food is because I'm pessimistic about the future and I think in 20–30 years there will be nothing left for us, end of story that's what I think...and that drove me to joining Slow Food and starting a slow change, a little change, that's what has driven me, my pessimistic view of the future.

During my first meeting with Deb in September 2015 at the TAFE college, she introduced me to Giovanni, who along with another student, was preparing a sustainability-themed menu for a Slow Food event, the screening of a documentary on 'Fair Food'. Through Brad's job in TAFE, the convivium were allowed to use the kitchen facilities and Deb invited me to help her cryovac

surplus prosciutto from a recent event, allowing it to be stored safely and redistributed at future gatherings (Figure 5.3).



Figure 5.3 Cryovacking Slow Pig prosciutto at TAFE (14 September 2015)

Deb was also meeting with Brad's students Gio and Matteo who were experimenting with the Slow Food concepts for their project in designing and executing the sustainability themed menu to accompany the documentary. The students were challenged to base their menu around local and seasonal food, therefore requiring produce to be sourced outside of supermarkets. Gio carefully checked the menu with Deb, explaining the resourcefulness required in finding local produce or thinking of substitute ingredients like local honey instead of sugar. They were basing the dessert around the quandong, an Indigenous fruit which Deb explained as she passed around the seeds for us to study, had significant value to Indigenous communities through their versatility as food and medicine. In a later discussion, Gio reflected that the challenge of preparing a sustainability menu was a turning point in his direction as a chef in terms of thinking about seasonality and sourcing produce locally. The exposure to local food, particularly the quandong tart was deeply affective learning experience and influential in his development (Interview, 11 December 2015, see Figure 5.4):

I didn't know what quandongs were—it put me in contact with quandongs! I didn't know quandongs, before this and they have been good to me, quandongs have been very good to me.

Through this perspective it is evident that Slow Food Mildura is bring different actors from a range of backgrounds and cultures to relate to the environment and food in new and affecting ways. A range of human and nonhuman actants are mobilised around the concept of Slow Food including chefs, producers, ecologists, the river, quandongs and the TAFE college as a place of interaction and experimentation between Slow Food and aspiring chefs. This plays out through experimentation at events and has significantly expanded the following of Slow Food in Mildura which is associated with a higher proportion of youth members than any other convivium in Australia. The following section explores how this collective is creating new effects and how this work of change is conceived.



Figure 5.4 Gio's quandong tarts at Terra Madre Event (10 December 2015)

5.4.1 Bringing Together a Slow Food Hybrid Collective

It's about the grower. It's not about the chef or the status of anybody. So in fact the hero is not the chef...it's the producer (Interview, Brad, 13 November 2015).

While Slow Food Mildura grew from Stefano de Pieri's influence, there was a reluctance by de Pieri to accept credit for instigating change. Comparable to Tess Brady in Clunes, de Pieri described himself using the same word 'conduit', through drawing upon his own 'resources and connections' in the food industry to host the congress (Interview, 11 December 2015). This intersects with de Pieri's responses in other studies to reject being recognised as a food and tourism champion, citing 'It's a collective thing' (Frost et al. 2016, p. 166). Similarly, in our conversation, de Pieri acknowledged he had a role to play in Slow Food but that those who do the work are the 'real

heroes'. Brad's quote above also shifts emphasis away from the chef, looking to the producer and challenging the prevalent status of the chef as an individual champion (Frost et al. 2016 p. 153).

The distribution of agency amongst actors in the network was evident from the outset of my initial engagement with Slow Food Mildura through Deb and Brad's sharing the title of 'co-leaders'. In our first discussion at the TAFE kitchen, Deb had mentioned that it was the right time for their convivium to 'make a difference'. When I brought this up in a conversation over lunch she mulled over it and rephrased it as 'time to enable a difference' (Interview, 15 September 2015). The emphasis on enabling change was also reflected in a later comment by Deb, stressing the importance of community:

We are just building and growing and bringing people together. I think creating that sense of community is such an important part of doing this (Interview, Deb, 14 November 2015).

Deb also pointed out the distributed composition of the group, explaining that she is part of a leadership team:

I see myself as part of the leadership team. I think here in Mildura we are really lucky. We've got people who are prepared to take on leadership roles that have different strengths (Interview, Deb, 14 November 2015).

Deb's own interests were in food system change, and she had been pursuing projects with other networks like the Open Food Network to share knowledge about food grown locally, and the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance. Slow Food offered the network in Mildura to expand action. In a conversation with Deb, I questioned whether Slow Food was a more subtle form of political activism than other global movements such as the Australia Food Sovereignty Alliance, which drew solidarity with the peasant movement, La Via Campesina. Deb emphasised the political roots of Slow Food and how their focus was on balancing these aspirations through bringing the community together around food:

I think the way that we have been operating and continue to operate is to have these events that bring people together that are just about the food, so people can feel comfortable in that environment and not threatened by it. And a lot of those people wouldn't necessarily want to be

part of a more political movement, but a lot of people do, so you're trying to kind of bring the whole community along (Interview, Deb, 14 November 2015).

This emphasis on building community through food speaks to Slow Food's broader ideals of blending 'pleasure' with 'politics' (Sassatelli & Daviolo 2010), as Deb hopes, this form of 'disguised activism' will lead to change.

The development of the Slow Food youth chapter was a new initiative that was being developed to mobilise change in a specific sector of the community. Jon explained that its focus was to mobilise youth participation, partly in response to the older and wealthier demographic perception that surrounded Slow Food at a national and international level.

If you can encourage younger generations to support local producers and think about what is seasonable, what's good, what's available, then we will make change (Interview, Jon, 13 November 2015).

For other younger members like Reece, the pull towards local food activism was motivated by wanting to act or 'do something'. He described how the drive to do something was partly in response to the effects of his employment in bee crop pollination that worked with large agribusiness entities such as the almond industry:

I suppose it's a bit of me wanting to do something sort of a bit more downscale because what I do to make money is fairly not that! (Interview, Reece, 16 April 2016).

Reece's perspectives suggest that finding a way to 'do something' by getting involved in the local food movement is a way of moving outside of his usual economic class position to the creation of surplus in the local food rather than agri-food economy.

Through these perspectives, it is evident that the convivium's approach was guided by a collective approach to change. To create food system change away from the agribusiness model and towards Slow Food involves drawing upon the different skills, knowledge and passions of different segments of the community rather than a singular identity such as chef. The philosophy of sharing leadership duties also informed the approach of steering the group more broadly. Brad explained how action was guided according to the collective's various interests:

It's important that we are across everything but not spread too thin so...we do what you are interested in. So obviously Jon is interested in youth and Giovanni as well...I'm interested in the Chef's Alliance... and the Terra Madre networks, which is basically just sharing information that is in my head as a chef. Mike is interested in the community garden side of things. So we've all got our own interests within it and it's important that we keep it that way rather than one independent focus (Interview, Brad, 13 November 2015).

From these insights, it is apparent that the convivium draws upon a range of skills, backgrounds and personal expertise that transcends conventional class positions or conceptions of Slow Food as treating food as a passive entity (Bennett 2007). Instead, Slow Food Mildura's work appears deeply affected by a range of active matter, the decline of the Murray River and the externalities of corporate agriculture and the hope that is provided through entanglements with Slow Food. The effects of the hybrid collective in 're-mattering' food (and water) through providing opportunities for people to relate to food socially and in affecting ways, points to new possibilities that will be explored in the ensuing chapters.

5.5 Discussion and Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to identify who mobilises change through rural creative economies. Drawing upon the concept of the hybrid collective, I showed how community members in Clunes and Mildura embarked on a process of economic experimentation that sought to address matters of concern around drought and decline as detailed in chapter 4. To attend to these concerns through the concepts of Booktowns and Slow Food requires the building of affective relations between people and place, rather than attracting an external creative class change agent. While the presence of clearly identifiable leaders provided an entry point into the study, equally present was the matter of concern of the millennium drought and decline as a constituent of this collective.

Insights from this chapter overturn the perception of creative economic identities as located in a particular sector. Drawing upon ANT, I identified how the creative economy enacted by Clunes Booktown and Slow Food Mildura is a material assemblage of diverse actors who have come together around economic and environmental concerns. I argued that these concerns for the use of local assets mobilises class relations and creative economy activities that are very different to Florida's conception. Following the work of Gibson-Graham, I highlighted how these new class relations bring together a variety of economic subject positions, from professionals to retirees and

students, in considering how the economic surplus of place assets can be generated in more ethical ways.

The inception of rural creative economies through cultural networks like Booktowns and Slow Food provides a different perspective of how such economies are generated beyond an individualistic and disjointed sectoral approach. Despite the recognition that the original Booktown and Slow Food movements come into being through heroic actors in the example of Richard Booth and Carlo Petrini, the idea of a singular heroic identity was contested in each site. While Tess Brady and Stefano de Pieri were positioned as leading identities in the founding narrative of Clunes Booktown and Slow Food respectively, they both used the same word ‘conduit’ to describe their role in driving change. The success of the Booktown and Slow Food movement’s economic experimentation is instead strongly tied to a socio-material assemblage of people and material attributes of books, buildings and food. This assemblage redistributes agency from a heroic identity to a distributed agency that created a combined power to act.

From these findings, it is evident that the creative economy being created was an outcome of diverse relations rather than creative class positions. As we saw through Clunes Booktown and Slow Food Mildura, this creative economy was not a rational instrument of economic growth but rather an outcome of the need to reappropriate assets associated with decline such as empty buildings and drought. Questions arose around how to regenerate assets that are surplus to a past economy, such as the stock of buildings generated through Clunes’ gold rush boom or how to reappropriate the surplus of nature (Gibson-Graham & Roelvink 2010) away from commodity food and towards more sustainable uses in Mildura. In this way, creative economies are mobilised through affective processes between people and place, building upon existing assets and creativities to create a material assemblage rather than an individual entrepreneurial fix.

The strategic remobilisation of place resources through Booktowns and Slow Food enrolls others to join the collective, creating new powers for both human and nonhuman actors to gain acceptance by others in the community. The animation of Clunes as a Booktown and reactivation of empty buildings was an affective force in gaining support for a creative economy versus a return to environmentally destructive industries such as the proposed return to mining. Similarly, Slow Food Mildura’s leveraging of local cultural assets and traditions was a way to bring attention to environmental concerns through food. The hybrid constitution of Booktowns and Slow Food, therefore, requires attunement to the affective relations that are forged between human and

nonhuman actors in directing action towards a creative economy. It also raises questions on how local relations and resources are managed in cultivating a creative economy, forming the central focus of the following chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

Cultivating a Commons

6.1 Introduction

Towns across rural and regional Australia offer a strong visual reminder of externalities of past economies. In gold rush towns, vacant buildings of grandeur such as former banks immortalise mining booms and busts. Along the Murray River, salinity stricken and abandoned irrigation blocks are testaments to modernist ambitions of commandeering nature. The residual effects of these past economies such as empty buildings, an altered landscape and reduced water flow amongst others, largely dominate the picture of resource decline in rural areas. In turn, rural creative economies offer hope for local cultural resources to be ‘remobilised’ by appealing to a postmodern taste for place via local foods, arts or heritage-based experiences (Scott 2011). While the remobilisation of place assets through a creative economy can offer hope for rural areas to regenerate it also raises pressing questions around how inherited cultural resources should be used and for whose benefit?

The use of shared cultural resources evokes a commons concern in certain contexts. While Booktowns and the Slow Food movement are emblematic of trends to reimagine shared cultural resource use, there is a careful balancing act required. The use of natural and cultural resources or ‘fragile regional endowments’ threatens to put precious assets at risk of destruction (Scott 2011, p. 859). Dilemmas around cultural resource use materialise in a number of ways, such as the commodification of heritage buildings for tourism, which undermines the existing character and alienates locals (Alonso González 2014; Mitchell 1998) or social divisions as cultural practices and resources experience privatisation or overuse (Hess 2012). Using the example of the traditional cheese rolling competition in Gloucester, England, to represent a ‘modern-day cultural commons problem’, Hess (2016, p. 19) describes how the cultural practice, which had run for centuries, became threatened due to the number of participants exceeding the carrying capacity of the hillside. The event’s cancellation due to safety concerns raised conflicting perspectives on how this cultural commons could be managed and continue. These examples generate important insights into how cultural commons face a delicate balance between over and under use. A tension,

therefore, is that the turn to the creative economy to mobilise resources might invariably enclose the resources it is seeking to celebrate or alienate their respective communities.

In this chapter, I explore the use of resources underpinning creative economic activity in Clunes and Mildura. As the previous chapter introduced, the coming together of a hybrid collective of people and things to act in response to decline suggests an alternative vision of local resource use that has emerged out of concerns for place. This chapter explores the dynamics of how this vision is enacted through the concept of the commons to consider how cultural resources are reimagined and negotiated in bringing new economies into being while attending to place concerns. The chapter unfolds as follows: firstly I explore the relationship between the commons and creative economies; secondly, I outline how commons thinking intersects with the Booktown and Slow Food movements and introduce the ‘commons identi-kit’ (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013) as a frame of analysis. The commons identi-kit is an instructive tool in locating types of potential commons, combining diverse economies perspectives on property with overarching rules and protocols associated with managing the commons. Following this, I present my interpretation of the commons identi-kit in each site and discuss how it amplifies understanding of a commons generated around Booktowns and Slow Food. In closing the chapter, I discuss key learnings and implications for understanding the relationship between place-based cultural resources and rural creative economies.

6.2 Cultivating a creative economy through the commons

6.2.1 Conceptualising the commons

The gathering of actors around books and buildings in Clunes, and the river and local food in Mildura indicates how new economies are being imagined around alternative visions for cultural resource use. As chapter 4 discussed, previously shared resources such as Indigenous common land in Australia were steadily ‘uncommoned’ through colonial enclosure and the growth of private property rights, with enclosures extending to seemingly open forms of resources such as water in the Murray Darling Basin. For Clunes, while types of shared land or ‘mining commons’ provided a fleeting collective approach to property in goldfields areas (Davies, Lawrence & Twigg 2018), the town’s heritage streetscape was the product of private property rights that sprang up to service the mining boom. While gifting a rich heritage legacy, individual buildings and businesses have experienced challenges in adapting to a declining population and shifting economic base (Reid & Reid 1977). The development of cultural movements like Booktowns and Slow Food offers a new

way to consider how the cultural properties of place are reimagined and remobilised through new forms of commons.

Defined as ‘a property, a practice or a knowledge shared by a community’ (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013, p. 130), the commons is an instructive frame to explore how shared place resources are being drawn upon in building rural creative economies. This definition recognises the vast stock of material (e.g. land) and immaterial (e.g. knowledge) resources that are collectively embedded within communities. Historic inquiry into the commons was typically concerned with material property through practices of land sharing in pre-capitalist society. A key example is the shared pastures of medieval Britain, which acted as an important source of livelihood for peasant farmers who drew upon the commons for grazing animals, foraging for food and fuel and festivity (Linebaugh 2008). Following the demise of feudalism and the rise of property rights, many commoners were forced to move from the land and into cities (Wall 2014). Karl Marx saw the enclosure of the commons through the end of feudalism and during the 18th and 19th centuries as a pivotal moment in creation of a market-based society (Wall 2014). Enclosure not only produced a new labour force in the nascent capitalist economy, but also new economic uses for the land through producing goods for the market (Huron 2018, p. 19). For colonies like Australia, the enclosure of commons created widespread damage to Indigenous livelihoods and the landscapes they holistically tended to, heralding the enclosure of other resources such as water in the fuelling of the colony’s modernist ambitions as described in section 4.2.1.

The complexities of managing shared resources are illustrated by preeminent commons scholars Charlotte Hess and Elinor Ostrom (2007, p. 3) who stated that the commons is ‘a resource shared by a group of people that is subject to social dilemmas’ involving competition, over-use or free-riding behaviour, where individuals draw benefits from the commons without directly contributing. Focus on free-riding behaviour was brought to popular attention through the work of economist Garrett Hardin in the 1960s in his influential paper the ‘Tragedy of the Commons’ (Hardin, 1968). Hardin’s allegory describes the self-aggrandisement practices of individual herders who increase their stock on the commons without regard to the overall capacity of the land. According to Hardin, the accumulative effects of individual autonomy inevitably result in resource degradation, ‘Freedom in a commons brings ruin to all’ (Hardin 1968, p. 1244). In later work, however, Hardin (1998) qualified that the tragedy is caused by an ‘unmanaged commons’, an issue that Elinor Ostrom foregrounded in her Nobel Prize winning work on economic governance of the commons. Ostrom showed how common pool resources, such as water, forests, fisheries and food, have been

effectively managed by communities outside the control of the market or the state over some time (2015, p. 1). Examples of communities exercising collective management of natural resources are extensive, and span a range of contexts including from farmer-controlled irrigation (Ostrom 2015), fisheries management in Ireland and the USA (Bresnihan 2016; St. Martin 2009) and Indigenous recommoning of land in Australia (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013).

The commons is not just an important concept for studying the management of shared stocks of natural resources—it extends to cultural assets. Charlotte Hess, a collaborator with Ostrom, observes: ‘all commons concern the relationship between people and resources, either natural or human made’ (Hess 2012, p. 25). Cultural commons are types of ‘new commons’ that are attracting interest, alongside ‘knowledge commons’ such as information (Huron 2018, p. 24), two categories that are seen to overlap considerably (Hess 2012, p. 27). Cultural commons can therefore be drawn from anything that involves the relationship between people and resources and is subject to dilemmas around its ongoing use or how it should be managed—with diverse examples including language, wine from a particular region and Indigenous traditional knowledge (Bertachinni et al. 2012, p. 3).

The interplay between material and immaterial is particularly evident when exploring concepts of cultural commons. Indigenous communities provide valuable insights into the inextricable links between material commons (such as land) and immaterial commons (such as knowledge); showing how the sustainable management of resources are also dependent on the passing down of a knowledge commons. Illustrating how knowledge commons intertwine with natural resources commons, Derek Wall describes Indigenous commons created around sturgeon fishing in Lake Winnipeg, Canada where the sustainable management of the resource was dependent upon the passing down of knowledge commons on how to source and prepare the fish (Wall 2014, p. 53). The enclosure of this commons through private property rights and commodification of fisheries has led to a decrease in sturgeon catches (p. 53). More broadly, the term ‘culinary commons’ is used to detail the cultural knowledge, customs and practices around the cultivation, preparation and consumption of food (Barrère, Bonard & Chossat 2012, p. 130). A notable example of this is the UNESCO listing of ‘the gastronomic meal of the French’ as a type of intangible heritage on its register in 2010 in recognition of ‘customary social practice’ including the selection of dishes, the pairing of food and wine, table setting, and the sequencing of dishes (Barrère, Bonard & Chossat 2012; UNESCO n.d.). Cultural commons can therefore depend upon ongoing use for survival, in contrast to the overuse problem underpinning many types of natural resource commons.

Cultural commons are also connected with tourist landscapes. Scott (2010) outlines how England's picturesque Lake District resembles a cultural commons that draws upon place to produce significant cultural and literary references through the work of scholars like Wordsworth and Byron. This cultural commons faces dilemmas around the stewardship of these resources and brings together a variety of government and private groups to balance tourism development without damaging the unique environment and aesthetic (Scott 2010). Similar tensions are evident in the management of built heritage commons, where Pablo Alonso González (2014) describes the commoditisation of the Spanish village of Val de San Lorenzo, a textile producing area since medieval times with a notable building vernacular. Following the decline of textile production, government and entrepreneurs have led a process of 'heritagization' that aims to package the village's distinct 'material culture, pasts, tradition and surrounding landscape' in growing tourism and service-based economies. Alonso González (2014, p. 381) describes this process as alienating locals who see the benefits as concentrated in the hands of a few entrepreneurs who are capturing the value of the historic environment and delinking community from commons. These tensions intersect with broader concerns raised chapter 4 around post-productive forces in rural economies, particularly for places with notable heritage assets like Clunes. Such examples also point to the inherent tensions involved in the management of cultural commons and, as I will explore in the next section, its uncomfortable alignment with neoliberal creative economy discourse.

6.2.2 The Commons and Creative Economies

The concept of the commons is increasingly evoked in creative economy discourse, particularly around interest in the immaterial commons of knowledge and ideas. As identified in chapter 2, a large part of the appeal of the creative economy is the monetising of ideas (Howkins 2002). Yet as Lewis Hyde argues in his book 'Common as Air', many human achievements have been shaped by an inherited legacy of shared knowledge and cultural artefacts 'that vast store of unowned ideas, inventions and works of art that we have inherited from the past and that we continue to enrich' (2010, p. 18). Boyle (2003) describes the expansion of proprietary claims on knowledge previously shared in the public domain (e.g. algorithms and codes) as the 'second enclosure movement'. Hardt and Negri's publication 'Commonwealth' (2009) was particularly influential in bringing to attention the interplay between the commons of digital information, language and codes and its relationship to capitalist production. As Gibson-Graham, Cameron and Healy (2016) point out however, Hardt and Negri's view, along with other work by Massimo De Angelis and David Harvie (2014, p. 194), situates the commons within capitalocentric logic—'drawn into a discourse that places capital at

the gravitational centre of meaning making'. Similarly, cultural scholar Max Haiven is critical of how the 'hype' of the neoliberal creative economy and its leading agents, the creative class, positions creativity as individual property rather than drawing from a commons or shared 'cultural and material reservoir' (Haiven 2014, p. 214) or the inherited wealth that Hyde speaks of above.

The enclosure of commons through creative economy commoditisation brings concerns for not only the enclosure of knowledge, but also the effects that the commoditisation of culture has upon place, by presenting cultural resources as inputs for capitalist consumption. Bertachinni et al. (2012, p. 4) liken the concept of a cultural commons to a 'cultural district' that depicts a clustering of 'cultural resources and activities within a symbolic and intellectual link to a specific local community and territory'. The authors provide examples of cultural quarters in cities that amass theatres, museums and localised systems of production around culturally distinct goods such as artisanal products or fashion (p. 4). While these authors are concerned with issues of collective action and social dilemmas around cultural production, (pp. 4–5), shades of the creative economy's neoliberal framing are also evident through language that notes 'the positive economic externalities arising from agglomerations of specialized but complementary cultural activities or resources, associated with local labour markets, and innovative activity' (pp. 8–9). Similarly, Scott uses the term 'creative region' (2010, p. 1586) in describing a rural counterpoint to creative cities and how the English Lake District's clustering of natural and symbolic resources 'functions as a type of creative region in the overall system of cognitive-cultural capitalism'. In other words, Scott is suggesting the cultural commons of the Lake District offers appeal to those seeking to consume and be stimulated by the area's natural and symbolic value. The incursion of creative economy language into commons thinking, therefore, not only brings the commons into the logic of a commodifiable creative economy, but extends to the branding and reputational imagery of cultural quarters and creative regions.

The relationship between the creative economy and cultural commons is one that is seemingly eclipsed by capitalism. The preceding examples show how cultural resources have been enclosed or interwoven into capitalist logic of the creative economy that uses culture as an input for commercial benefit. Broader anthropogenic concerns accompany this capitalocentric view. Anna Tsing (2012, p. 44) is critical of Hardt and Negri's emphasis on the immaterial knowledge commons:

Have immaterial relations taken us beyond the material world? When we consider the environmental crises, this makes no sense. Humans are incapable of living in the immaterial. We are material, and so is everything we eat and use to sustain our lives.

Rather than thinking in material-immaterial binaries, geographer Patrick Bresnihan (2015) follows Peter Linebaugh's (2008) argument that commons are best considered as a verb, depicting a process, rather than a definitive noun. Therefore, the commons cannot be separated into material and immaterial containers such as land or knowledge. Instead, emphasis must be placed on how resources are 'combined, used and cared for by and through a collective that is not only human but also non-human' (Bresnihan 2015, p. 95). Gibson-Graham, Cameron and Healy (2016) also emphasise the idea of commoning as a 'relational process'. This process has the potential to bring together a 'commoning-community' (p. 196), as a diverse assemblage of humans and nonhumans and provides a way forward in advancing the commons beyond an anthropogenic and capitalocentric framing. This approach recognises the hybridity of collectives as discussed in chapter 5 and brings attention to ways that Booktowns and Slow Food might draw upon a broader idea of commons in the constitution of rural creative economies.

6.2.3 Exploring the commons through Booktowns and Slow Food

The growth of movements like Booktowns and Slow Food point to new ways that groups are coming together to create a new vision for place. As Community Economies scholar Kevin St. Martin (2009, p. 493) observes:

A host of contemporary movements, from indigenous rights to resources to antienclosure movements, rely on a vision of community territory or local commons through which alternative forms of environmental knowledge, productive utilization of resources, and local identities can be imagined.

From this perspective, the commons offers an insightful frame to understand what assets are existing in communities, and how new potential for place can be realised. Rather than being constrained by what community resources or properties that have been enclosed or uncommoned, Gibson-Graham, Cameron and Healy (2013) look to diverse property forms that could be potential commons such as public, tenanted or state-owned land, open access property such as water, and even private property. This reasoning has been taken up by others who bring attention to the relational property forms that constitute contemporary commons that blur distinctions between

public and private (Eizenberg 2011; Turner 2017). From this reframing of property, urban research has looked to how seemingly ‘enclosed’ spaces are contested and reframed as commons such as cultural spaces (Bresnihan and Byrne 2015); housing cooperatives (Huron 2015; 2018) and community facilities (Williams 2017).

While growing enquiry on urban commons highlights how reframing property enacts new possibilities for the enlargement of shared resources, it often puts the urban commons in juxtaposition to a ‘traditional’ rural commons. Commons in rural areas are assumed as being less complex than in cities, where ‘commoning is grounded in a community of people who have known each other for years’ (Huron 2015, p. 969). Yet, as discussed in chapter 4, rural areas increasingly eschew perceptions of shared identity, with the ‘global countryside’ embedded in flows of capital, commodities and labour (Argent & Tonts 2013; Woods 2007). Processes of counterurbanisation and globalisation challenge conventional notions of rural areas as inherently similar, and open up to thinking around ‘friction’ generated by the ‘unpredictable heterogeneity of worlds coming into being’ which are not necessarily driven by conflict but multiple other types of encounters with difference (Tsingb 2012, p. 1). Increasing diversification of the rural suggests new challenges as well as opportunities for how a shared cultural commons can be conceived.

Although rural areas may share more with urban commons in diversity of population than typically recognised, a key difference is that competition for space is less of a concern. For many rural communities, a central concern is the oversupply of space as a result of economic restructuring (Pritchard et al. 2012). As chapter 4 detailed, processes of rural economic restructuring have been uneven, with particular effects felt in agricultural or irrigation communities that have been left with an oversupply of land as farmers are forced to downshift or even abandon their properties, an issue evidenced in Mildura. For amenity landscapes (like Clunes), Nelson et al. (2010, p. 351) broadly observe how ‘the restructuring of the rural economy has produced a supply of gentrifiable properties (barns, farm houses etc.) as well as an expanding pool of potential gentrifiers (e.g. ageing baby boomers, footloose telecommuters)’. These externalities of past economies offer new potential but require careful navigation in terms of resisting new forms of enclosure (such as commodification), a topic of particular resonance for Booktowns and Slow Food.

The enlargement of local resources (including both material and immaterial property) is a crucial concern for Booktowns and Slow Food. Booktowns provide an interesting example of how the surplus of a past economy (e.g. heritage buildings or land) is repurposed. Booktowns developed in

response to decline through reanimating under-utilised resources for local benefit (Booth & Stuart 1999; Seaton 1996). The repurposing of existing buildings as bookshops is recognised as a sustainable model of development (Seaton 1996, p. 380), with particular benefits including economic revitalisation and the protection and enhancement of local heritage at risk of dereliction, although this is not without concern for gentrification or the grafting of nostalgic imaginaries of rural place (Merfeld-Langston 2013). Through its network of around 1,500 *convivia* or chapters, Slow Food works to protect and enlarge food commons by providing a grassroots alternative to the corporate food monopolies that have enclosed food systems through monocultures and market domination (Holt-Giménez 2011). Culture is positioned as a tool in reframing relations with food through the movement's focus on preserving regional food and food culture, knowledge and tradition (Tencati & Zsoloni 2011, p. 348), considered as a form of culinary commons (Barrère, Bonard & Chossat 2012). Similar to Booktowns, tensions surround Slow Foods practices as nostalgic and middle-class (Gaytán 2004) and also lead to concerns around the appropriation of culture (Donati 2005). In coalescing around cultural resources, Booktowns and Slow Food invariably draw upon types of cultural commons and must, therefore, negotiate the reimagining of a new economy between people and place.

Commoning groups are complex entities. Typically, commoning groups have often been positioned as unique and brought into being through shared values or traditions (Bollier 2016, p. 7). Gibson-Graham, Cameron and Healy (2016, p. 196) highlight however that being-in-common in the twenty-first century challenges diverse entities to work together around complex ecological problems, challenging conventional notions of harmonious commoners 'the community that is assembled does not share an essence and may indeed comprise those who in other situations are locked in antagonistic relationships'. In a further layer of complexity, for global movements like Booktowns and Slow Food, new ideals and imaginaries of place are mapped onto the local. The commoning practices of social and cultural movements transcend geographic boundaries into a 'trans-local' or 'global commons' (Cumbers 2015, p. 6). Recognising that as a relational process, commoning is 'more often a struggle', Gibson-Graham, Cameron and Healy (2016, p. 195) draw upon the pioneering scholarship of Ostrom (2015) to simplify five key tenets of commons cultivation (Healy et al. 2018). These core tenets of access, use, benefit, care and responsibility (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013, pp. 131–133, see Figure 6.1) bring to attention the sociality of managing a commons through various rules and protocols and foreground a community economy ethic of interdependence, along with recognising that from a diverse economies frame 'all forms of property can be potential commons' (p. 131).

Access	Use	Benefit	Care	Responsibility	Property
Shared and Wide	Negotiated by Community	Distributed to Community	Performed by Community members	Assumed by Community members	Any form of ownership (private, state or open access)

Figure 6.1 *Commons identi-kit* (Source: Adapted from Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013, p. 135)

(i) *Access and Use*

The tenets of ‘access’ and ‘use’ address protocols around who and what is included in drawing from the commons. According to Ostrom’s study into a wide range of examples of common-pool resources, effectively managed commons typically involve external barriers and rules around who has the right to access and use the commons in specified ways (e.g. hunting or fishing quotas) rather than unrestrained free access (Ostrom 2015; Wall 2014). Understanding who can access and use the commons is typically delineated through clearly defined boundaries (Ostrom 2015), with Amanda Huron (2018, p. 23) observing how Ostrom’s ascribing of boundaries in *Governing the Commons* and other work is comprised of both physical and social terrain, clearly identifying when people are ‘on or off the commons’ and who is included and excluded from the commons community. From a community economies perspective, the commons identi-kit highlights how access to property ‘must be shared and wide’ and use ‘must be negotiated by a community’ (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013, p. 131), recognising that boundaries need not be static and can be redrawn by groups resisting enclosures and creating new commons.

(ii) *Benefit*

By setting boundaries, it is also clear how ‘benefits’ from the commons should be distributed to the community rather than ‘appropriators’ who have not contributed (Ostrom 2015, p. 91). While Hardin posited that in an unmanaged commons, individuals sought to maximise their own benefit, Ostrom’s work established that individuals can negotiate ways to ‘maximize their net collective benefit’ (Wall 2014, p. 51). Understanding how benefits can be negotiated and distributed is connected to the type of commons under analysis. For instance, some types of ‘subtractive’ common-pool resources such as fisheries mean that ‘one person’s use reduces the benefit to others’ while knowledge commons are considered to be typically ‘non-subtractive’ in that ‘the more people who share useful knowledge, the greater the common good’ (Hess & Ostrom 2007, p. 5).

The commons-identikit identifies how benefits from property ‘must be distributed to the community and possibility beyond’, recognising that from a community economies perspective, interdependence between different types of commoning-communities (i.e. both knowledge and physical) is crucial to ‘take back property and the common for all’ (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013, p. 148).

(iii) Care and Responsibility

Ostrom’s protocols show how commons endure because of rules setting out care and responsibility (Healy et al. 2018). Care and responsibility are brought together through the concept of ‘stewardship’ in preserving a resource for future generations (Hess & Ostrom 2007, p. 352). The commons-identikit stipulates that community members perform care and assume responsibility for the commons (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013, p. 135), but also takes into consideration how from a community economies perspective that responsibility extends beyond individual commons to how commons are interconnected (p. 148). Together, Ostrom’s protocols and the commons identi-kit opens up possibilities for identifying potential commons and practices of ‘commons-sociality’ or practices of commons cultivation (Healy et al. 2018) in line with a diversity of property forms and ethic of community practice. In the remainder of this chapter I look to how commons possibilities are being cultivated through Clunes Booktown and Slow Food.

6.3 Cultivating a Booktown Commons

6.3.1 Reclaiming the Railway Station: Introductory Vignette

On 21 September 2015, I met with Tess, along with Richard the new CEO of Creative Clunes at the Booktown office at the Club Hotel. Tess had advised that Creative Clunes was being restructured as part of a succession planning process and she was stepping down as artistic director. For almost ten years, festival organisation was dependent on the volunteer labour of its founders. The new structure facilitated a small core of paid staff accompanied by an expanded board who brought a wide range of expertise. These structural changes were accompanied by a physical move to the renovated Railway Station building, an abandoned building which had gone into disrepair following the suspension of passenger railway services in 1993. Despite the resumption of passenger rail in 2011, the building had remained boarded up. Creative Clunes applied to be a custodian of the building under a government program and were successful in their bid to have the building renovated and turned into a shared community asset. Eagerly pointing out the floor plans, Tess and Richard explained the benefits this new multifunctional space would bring for organising Booktown Festival activities and other community events.

I raised a question on the physical visibility of Clunes as a Booktown. There was an entrance sign to the town that intermingled the town's mining and Booktown status (Figure 6.2). Tess explained that the group were negotiating with the government to get improved signage from a state government grant that had been allocated. Tess also noted that there were efforts to gain more visibility of the concept in the town, not a 'Big Book' like the Australian country town branding craze such as the Big Banana and Big Pineapple, but in a more subtle way. Attempts with local businesses to name rooms after authors appeared to be unsuccessful, however. Richard did note however that one accommodation provider had a 'Romeo and Juliet' room, and pondered over the prospect of renaming the streets after authors. Tess reflected that as some still didn't get concept, it would be unlikely to think that street names could be changed if at a basic level they wouldn't be able to rename something like a butcher's shop sausage! This led to some reflections on tensions between introducing a theme such as Booktown, although Tess acknowledges they are 'gradually getting there'. Their work on Booktown in the beginning was about 'instilling hope' in the drought-stricken community. Making a reference to philosopher Jean Paul Sartre she advised: 'You have to instil imagination and hope... you have to take everyone with you'.

From this first meeting, it became evident that the physical and structural changes described above marked a pivotal moment for Clunes as a Booktown. The securing of a more permanent base helped to anchor the Booktown concept in Clunes, along with fulfilling the core goals of a Booktown in reanimating empty buildings. Accompanying this enlargement of physical property is the continued enrolment of people committed to producing the Booktown, which for many rural areas is difficult given the precarious situation of rural festivals that are susceptible to volunteer 'burnout' (Frost & Laing 2015). Yet at the same time, there are inherent tensions around who participates and who refuses to be enrolled in the Booktown concept. The drawing together of these stocks of community resources to be used in 'common' thus creates new possibilities in responding to the matter of decline but also means there are dilemmas to navigate and negotiate. Throughout the following section I explore how Creative Clunes cultivates a cultural commons through the enlarging of property around 'books, writing and ideas' (Creative Clunes n.d.a). Following this, I discuss the inherent negotiations and tensions that intersect with the constitution of this commons.



Figure 6.2 Entrance to Clunes intertwining books and mining identity (3 May 2015)

6.3.2 Enlarging Property: Drawing together multiple properties in Clunes

Creative Clunes works to enlarge physical property in two key ways. Firstly, through creating a cluster of bookshops to satisfy the critical mass required of an accredited Booktown. Secondly, through the enlargement of the Booktown as a temporal commons through the annual festival. These diverse and fluid property relations have expanded significantly since the concept was introduced. At the time that the Booktown initiative began in Clunes there was only one bookshop. In order to fulfil International Organisation of Booktown criteria as an accredited Booktown, at least eight bookshops were required. As detailed in the previous chapter, this prompted the trial festival Booktown for a Day, which played an important role in mobilising a hybrid collective of empty buildings, book sellers, the local community and authors around the concept of a Booktown. Tim relayed how the first festival was supported through access to empty council and community group buildings along with converting existing shopfronts into temporary bookstores:

we had all these buildings available, a number of shops we got for no charge at all [along with] some of the public buildings—the town hall, the court house, the old library etc. (Interview, Tim H, 29 September 2015).

As this quote from Tim shows, a diverse array of property forms (public and private) were leveraged in creating the festival. The enacting of a new economic imaginary of a Booktown was therefore brought into being through the sharing of property. The growth of the festival and

establishment of Clunes as a permanent Booktown has in turn expanded property and instigated new relations around sharing local public and private property. In turning to how these multiple forms can be considered to be held together as a commons I apply the commons identi-kit to explore how commoning practices around access, use, benefit, responsibility and care work to maintain a Booktown commons in its temporal (festival) and permanent forms.

(i) Access and Use

In considering how Clunes Booktown constitutes a commons, it is necessary to explore both the types of property that are used to draw together a commons, along with relations governing access and use. While Ostrom (2015) observes that successful commons management typically involves demarcating access and use according to both physical and social boundaries, the commons identi-kit also suggests ways of commoning that might expand considerations of property so that *access* is ‘shared and wide’ (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013, p. 131). Similar to Ostrom, the commons-identikit stipulates that to constitute a commons, *use* must be negotiated by a community (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013, p. 131).

Commencing with property types, diverse properties are brought together to perform the Booktown Festival. In 2017, 64 sites were sold to book traders across a range of locations (Creative Clunes 2017). Figures 6.3—6.5 show how alongside the existing bookshops in the town, a variety of public, private and community buildings are reimagined as bookshops for the festival like the town hall and courthouse, real estate agents, butcher’s shop, mechanic and bowling club. Open spaces like the main street are closed to traffic, where book trader marquees (property that is owned by Creative Clunes) inhabit the streetscape, along with festival entertainment and dining facilities. Through drawing together diverse property types, the festival cultivates a temporal commons around books.



Figure 6.3 Mix of public property: Town Hall and open space (3 May 2015)



Figure 6.4 Private Property (Mechanics) reconfigured as bookshop (6 May 2017)



Figure 6.5 Community group property (RSL) reconfigured as bookshop

In terms of establishing rules around commons-sociality, both physical and social boundaries are delineated in accessing the temporal festival commons. Generally, attendees must enter the festival

precinct through a paid ticket, book traders purchase a site, but others such as guests (e.g. authors and media), community group stalls (such as arts groups), residents and volunteers are exempt from the festival entry fee. The introduction of the entry charge in 2014 has changed the physical boundaries of the Booktown by requiring the construction of fencing (Figure 6.6) and entry points (Figure 6.7) to regulate access to the main street.



Figure 6.6 Festival fencing on Fraser Street



Figure 6.7 Festival entrance Fraser Street (6 May 2017)

The entry charge system has evolved over time, and had caused some tension locally as highlighted in the 2014 Festival Review, when it was first introduced as a badge system:

The monitoring of badges at strategic entry points caused some friction amongst some locals, who were accustomed to not paying, although it should be said that by far the majority accepted it (Creative Clunes 2014a, p. 4).

The review highlights recommended actions to provide residents with a Clunes postcode with free entry (p. 23), as displayed on the Festival entrance (Figure 6.7). Nonetheless, there are still concerns that visitors may be discouraged from attending: ‘We may have alienated a few people this year by charging. We alienated a few locals because they couldn’t access the main street’ (Interview, Richard M, 4 November 2015). The issue of ticketing highlights a key negotiation and ethical consideration around who can access and use the festival commons in parallel to its function as the town’s main street. Creative Clunes has attempted to mitigate tensions by keeping the costs for non-resident entry low at \$10 with free attendance for children under 15. This price provides access to a selection of author talks (some author talks incur an additional charge), booksellers, the Kids festival area, and heritage buildings that are noted as ‘not generally open to public access’ (Creative Clunes n.d.c.). While the festival permits access to restricted buildings, for some residents however, access and use of the town is considered inhibited. Particularly in the early years of the festival, local residents were aggrieved with the disruption to the flow of everyday life, such as access to parking and the supermarket, with some services closing in ‘protest’ (Interview, Clunes business owner (name withheld), 26 July 2016). These tensions indicate how the temporal commons created through the Booktown Festival is one that is both physically and socially bounded (Ostrom 2015). For festival attendees, access to buildings provides a way to encounter place in new ways. For others not participating in the festival, the festival obstructs access to services in the main street. This has particular salience in rural areas where the main street is seen as the locus of community life (Paradis 2002). Such tensions attest to how the entrepreneurial dynamics of creative regeneration are accompanied by concerns over the enclosure of community space, with questions of who benefits followed by ethical negotiations (discussed in the following section 6.3.3).

The use of a whole town to stage a festival requires negotiations between a range of property ownership structures. Private businesses such as the real estate office donate their shop as a temporary bookshop, along with other private institutions such as Wesley College who permit access to part of their campus through use of the historic Bluestone Church. The use of public facilities such as the main street to facilitate book trader marquees and use of public buildings like the Town Hall, Courthouse and Warehouse is negotiated between Hepburn Shire Council and

Creative Clunes via a Memorandum of Understanding detailing sponsorship and permit arrangements. This drawing together of a festival commons varies depending on availability. Presenting a map of the festival layout, the 2016 festival director Ailsa described how this assemblage of spaces varies each year:

every year it has to look different because we are dependent predominantly on privately owned spaces which may or may not be used commercially. They may be even used as an arts studio some of the time or not at all. So every year the physicality of the festival is inclined to be different because the circumstances are different for the people who loan or lease these spaces (Interview, Ailsa, 12 February 2016).

These fluid property arrangements involve negotiations between individual property owners or custodians. Over time, support for the Booktown Festival has spread with nonconventional properties like the pub now housing author talks, demonstrating how new businesses are getting on board with accessing and using the Booktown Festival commons (Figure 6.8).



Figure 6.8 Tim Fischer author talk at pub during Booktown Festival (6 May 2017)

Access and use of the Booktown commons outside of the festival is subject to a different set of issues. Clunes status as a permanent Booktown requires a change in property use involving the conversion of empty premises or other uses into book related enterprises. This has led to the enlargement of permanent bookstores (currently 6 permanent and 2 online bookshops), including other shops that enrol in the initiative through selling books as part of their stock e.g. cook books

at the greengrocers (Creative Clunes n.d.b.). Access and use of a Booktown commons outside of festival is thus regulated by the opening hours of private enterprises and Booktown related activities (such as author talks or workshops). Given the limited flow of tourists during the week there is less incentive for bookshop owners to open outside of peak times. Furthermore, the new businesses that were opening were cafes, which are considered as more lucrative than bookshops and creating a tension in maintaining a Booktown identity.

Two buildings have recently been bought and turned into cafes...if we are to maintain our reputation as a Booktown you need bookshops but there is apparently not a lot of money in bookshops and that's the conundrum I guess (Interview, Tim H, 29 September 2015).

As a result, the reputational image of Clunes as a permanent Booktown becomes threatened and can also be replaced by other businesses such as cafes, which provide a service but also 'dilute' the Booktown concept (Interview, Richard M, 4 November 2015).

Like other cultural commons, commons viability is maintained by input, in contrast to natural resources commons that are threatened by overuse (Bertacchini et al. 2012). This dilemma is raised by a local book trader who noted that more rather than less bookshops are desirable:

we need competition...the more [bookshops] you have, the more people come, the better stock you can have, it puts you on your toes...monopoly is not always a good thing (Interview, Book trader (name withheld), 4 December 2015).

The use of buildings as bookshops is largely determined by the will of traders to relocate and landlords to commit to maintaining use of the premises as bookshops. As one book trader reflected, she hopes the business can be maintained as a bookshop by others once she retires 'I am hoping if the landlady agrees that I can sell it as an ongoing business' (Interview, Book trader, 4 December 2015). The ebb and flow of bookshops and their conversion into other businesses highlights the fluid property relations that underpin the production of a Booktown commons. While the Booktown Festival is adaptive to shifting property forms every year, Clunes' ongoing performance as a Booktown is contingent upon access to bookshop space (as well as a commoning-community of books, retailers and supporters). The success of the concept also brings key dilemmas where bookshops are not replaced, or space might be lost to more lucrative enterprises resulting in the concept's dilution as detailed above. This could result in a situation

where these new enterprises might be seen as ‘free riders’—a key issue in the commons where ‘one reaps benefits from the commons without contributing to its maintenance’ (Hess & Ostrom 2007, p. 10)—benefiting from Clunes’ Booktown identity without contributing to the initiative. On the other hand, the participation of non-book stores (such as the green grocers) show how other businesses are getting involved and contributing to the diversity of the stock mix of books.

Public property access also plays an important role in creating a Booktown commons. An important development in anchoring Clunes as a Booktown has been attaining the lease of the Railway station as a central space (Figure 6.9). The building is a key community asset that had been boarded up following the closure of passenger rail services in 1993. Through their successful bid for a lease under a government program, the renovated building provides a space for Creative Clunes to run the Booktown Festival. Between this building and the Clunes Warehouse where Booktown on Sunday events are held, the ongoing production of a Booktown is thus threaded together by diverse property forms. The fluidity as well as fragility of property use highlights a key dilemma for the Booktown commons in meeting the protocol of a minimum number of bookshops set by the International Organisation of Booktowns, but also inventive ways of collaborating and commoning resources by those seeking to take part in the ongoing production of the Booktown commons.



Figure 6.9 Railway station Creative Clunes Headquarters (4 December 2015)

(ii) Benefits

The distribution of benefit to the community (and potentially beyond) is a key commons protocol (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013, p. 132). Collective benefits can be negotiated in ways that challenge the rational, self-interested idea posited by Hardin (Hess & Ostrom 2007). While benefits are typically considered as owing to those inside the commons boundary (Ostrom 2015), the commons-identikit definition notes the possibility of benefits spillover in recognition of an ethic of wider community interdependence. The enlargement of physical property through the Booktown Festival brings a number of monetary and non-monetary benefits to the town. Monetary benefits are generated through the enlargement of property by the creation of the festival commons. The clustering of numerous traders has led the event to be labelled as ‘the largest book trading event in Australia’ (Creative Clunes 2013). For existing bookshop owners, the festival is therefore seen as crucial to bolster economic sustainability.

The festival is vital, absolutely vital, for me and just generally for the town (Interview, Book trader (name withheld), 4 December 2015).

Benefits in trade spill over to other enterprises. Despite the aforementioned initial tensions with some businesses who were opposed to Booktown, it was noted by a local business owner that over time, more businesses have gotten involved in the Booktown Festival due to the benefits realised.

Whereas now, I would say even the majority of business have experienced that ...it gives them good revenue and they are more committed, and that’s definitely a very different perspective in the town (Interview, business owner (name withheld), 26 July 2016).

The spill over of benefits beyond Creative Clunes demonstrates how benefits are distributed more broadly than amongst the core group. It is estimated that around 40% of goods for the festival are purchased locally (Creative Clunes 2014a, p. 23). Community groups such as the local primary school supply food stalls, with funds invested back into their organisations and the agricultural society is compensated for providing security services for the event (Interview, Graeme, 29 September 2015). The expansion of the festival into nonconventional venues like the pub is indicative of the growing support of diverse businesses providing support to the initiative and growing the festival commons.

Physical assets such as event infrastructure are also shared between groups throughout the year:

We share assets—we borrow tables from the primary school, they borrow marquees from us, the agricultural society use our assets, the senior citizens use our assets and it is all shared (Interview, Graeme 29 September 2015).

Funds generated from the festival are invested into purchasing and maintaining assets like the numerous marquees that are also shared with other community groups. Surplus is also invested into the monthly program of free authors' talks called 'Booktown on Sunday' which sustains Clunes' reputation as a Booktown and drives tourism visitation throughout the year.

The enlargement of property through the Booktown Festival creates substantial non-monetary benefits for the community. Alongside the opportunity to access buildings that are usually enclosed by private or other institutions, the event also creates the opportunity for different segments of the community to encounter each other. This perspective was affirmed by the above local business owner who commented that Clunes is made up of discrete groups such as a farming community, bohemians, and a professional workforce (including semi-permanent residents) and that Booktown offered a way of bringing them together:

[Booktown volunteers] seem to have come from a whole range of different groups and therefore as a way of bridging some of the gaps between those different groups does seem to work as quite a powerful force (Interview, business owner (name withheld), 26 July 2016).

The local business owner remarked how taking part in the festival offers a way for those to participate in the physical presentation of their town and acts as a source of pride:

there was a real sense that there were people who weren't particularly interested in books but they felt that it really added a lot of value and benefit of the town, and as a result they wanted it to be a big success and they took a great deal of pride in the components that they contributed to even though they probably wouldn't read a book themselves. The elements and components they contributed to they were really committed to doing well (Interview, business owner (name withheld), 26 July 2016).

From this perspective, benefits are also perceived to be accrued from participating in the event and presenting the town to the outside world. The temporal nature of the event thus brings transient members of the community (such as weekenders) and permanent residents from different

backgrounds to perform the commons, challenging the assumed prior shared commonality of rural communities (Huron 2015; 2018).

The gifting of labour by volunteers is also vital to the production of the Booktown Festival, with the event requiring approximately 150 two-hour shifts filled by 300 volunteers (Creative Clunes & Kennedy 2013). This draws in long-term community members along with part-time or ‘weekender’ residents in building community connections. As one ex-urban dweller observed:

It is hard sometimes for people from a big city to find their niche or service offer or what they can really do to contribute in a way that is satisfying and also considered significant and worthwhile from that local community (Interview, Ailsa, 12 February 2016).

Outside of material assets, knowledge and skills are also shared between Booktown organisers and other community groups:

Not everything is about money and I suppose when it all comes down to it we are really doing a lot of training. When we started we just had our group and now we are able to pass these skills and understanding on to quite a number of people who have developed these skills to go on to do things...A lot of the skills that are developed by the volunteers are being transported into other organisations like Men’s shed, Neighbourhood House, other sporting clubs. Because of that we are getting much broader and broader and getting acceptance of what we are doing and people are not just knocking the arts (Interview, Graeme 29 September 2015).

As this quote suggests, the knowledge and skill that is accumulated in the production of the Booktown Festival is exchanged with other community members outside of the event itself and in doing so helps to achieve greater ‘buy in’ for creative economic activity. Alongside expanding the knowledge commons around economic experimentation, it also provides an opportunity for residents to reflect their skills back to the community. A local artist observed that being invited to design the festival poster assisted with her creative confidence:

it was just wonderful having that opportunity because it was confidence boosting because that was one thing that Booktown was about, to also to give skills or other people [the opportunity] to use their skills (Interview, Christine, 8 April 2016).

Outside the revitalisation of the main street and conversion of buildings to new uses, Clunes' designation as a permanent Booktown has been linked to a number of benefits that are more than property including the reinstating of rail services. The association of Clunes as a creative community has led to some anecdotal recognition of an influx of creative types to the town such as animators and designers. These insights into how benefit is distributed more broadly (to schools, community groups and private businesses) contrasting with Florida's individualistic creative class that calculates benefits according to economic growth, or Hardin's conceptions of individual benefit-maximising behaviour.

(iii) Care and Responsibility

The final two protocols in the commons identi-kit are concerned with the stewardship of resources involving how *care* and *responsibility* of property must be undertaken by community members (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013, p. 132). The enlarging of property through the Booktown Festival commons depends on the labour of a wide range of community members through 'working bees' to clean up the buildings, many of which had been closed up for a long period. A significant portion of labour is involved in the construction of the Booktown 'festivalscape' (Gration et al. 2011) through constructing elements such as a Kids Village—along with the construction of marquees to house the booksellers that exceed the available building spaces. These types of activities demonstrate how care and responsibility for the Booktown commons extends beyond Creative Clunes to embrace the schools, community groups and individual volunteers who contribute to caring for this commons.

The securing of the Railway Station building, as detailed in the opening vignette, also shows how derelict buildings are being cared for through the permanent Booktown initiative. The successful application for the tenancy of the station has helped to propel the group forward in a new direction as well as allow care for the building. As one of the Creative Clunes members involved in the application explains:

The move up to the Station gave us that bigger premises [we needed to manage the festival]. And activated the building which VicTrack wanted to do and it has given it life. So we contributed and of course before that happened, Vline, reopened the passenger service, so the Station was all nailed up and boarded up when the service stopped at the platform, so it has added to the value, the value added of the building, so when the train arrives the station looks a bit lived in and not nailed up and forgotten (Interview, Richard G, 26 July 2016).

The securing of the Station buildings also assisted in demonstrating to government the commitment of the group in managing and caring for resources and returning investment back into the community:

The Station building is a little bit pivotal in showing where we are utilising a government asset and the whole thing is snowballing, being to Creative Victoria, whoever puts in more money, the festival gets bigger, the spin off comes back to the town, our energy is there, we look after the Station as a result of that (Richard G, Interview, 26 July 2016).

Another member of Creative Clunes, Lily, reflected how the Railway Station development had a positive effect on the broader community:

getting this space renovated, I mean this is huge for people in Clunes. There are so many people ecstatic that this building is now going to survive, it's not falling down anymore, it's not the target of vandalism and decay...it's pretty massive. Again for people's confidence in the town (Interview, Lily, 4 December 2015).

The care and responsibility of the Booktown commons emphasises the role that the hybrid collective plays by enrolling others into the initiative and creating powerful effects in regenerating abandoned public assets such as the station (see Figure 6.10). On the other hand, other buildings have failed to be drawn into the network, such as a building that has been left to disrepair by a vacant owner (see Figure 6.11). From this perspective, it is apparent that as a hybrid collective, the group is showing how local assets can be managed and enlarged in the hands of the community through the Booktown initiative.



Figure 6.10 View of platform from renovated Railway Station building (4 December 2015)



Figure 6.11 Building left to disrepair in Clunes (6 May 2017)

6.3.3 *Negotiating Ethical Decision Making in Clunes Booktown*

As the above discussion of the commons identi-kit shows, Clunes Booktown is underpinned by diverse and fluid property relations. The enactment of a Booktown vision for Clunes as a new ‘community territory’ (St. Martin 2009, p. 493) has thus been successful in terms of filling the empty shops and acquiring the critical mass to gain accreditation as an international Booktown. Through introducing new use as bookshops, buildings like the Railway Station are protected from disrepair or vacancy. Other public assets are even temporarily enlarged through the festival, with access provided to buildings that are normally closed, eliciting appreciation from locals and visitors alike (Kennedy 2018). Conversely, however, the success of the initiative has led to a struggle for space to stage the festival.

One of the problems is in finding space. There are so many businesses that have opened up in the buildings such as the fruit and veg, the post office and chemist moved over to the empty shop and that became the wine bar. So it filled the vacuum. So finding a venue is a bit hard going now because there are some many occupied buildings, apart from being a sleepy old country town pre-2000 (Richard G, Interview, 26 July 2016).

The constitution of the Booktown is not without inherent tensions and decisions. The introduction of an entry fee, while relatively modest, has led to consternation around the enclosure of the town through fencing. For Creative Clunes, an ongoing process of negotiation has attempted to resolve issues and provide free access to locals as well as investment of the profits into other events to encourage visitation outside of the festival weekend, along with providing opportunities for community groups to benefit financially through food stall fundraising.

The constitution of the commoning-community involved in Clunes Booktown is one of continual evolution and shifting boundaries. For instance, one community member highlighted controversy around the initiative, particularly in its formative years:

Booktown was seen as only a slice of the community and a bit elitist, and there were some businesses that were really anti-Booktown that closed in protest (Interview, business owner (name withheld), 26 July 2016).

These tensions intersect with broader debates around Booktowns that observe a divide between local community and external entrepreneurs who are seen as key beneficiaries (Donaldson 2018;

Macleod 2009). Other research on Clunes Booktown suggests local tensions surrounding the initiative and its direction for the town reveal the complex sets of relations instigated through ‘urban-rural class mobilities’ and contested imaginaries of ‘place’ (Duffy & Mair 2017, p. 133). Such tensions intersect with the recognition of the complexities of commons building and negotiating ‘who belongs and is therefore entitled to rights of decision’ (Gibson-Graham 2006b, p. 97). Recognising these tensions, Graeme reflected from his background of co-founder on how community consultation and negotiation was vital in enacting the Booktown vision beyond the core group:

it has been important that we have all learned how to communicate with a wide range of people and convince them what we are doing is going forward...all the changes have happened with a lot of community consultation. They haven’t just happened. They have developed and evolved and with a few variations (Interview, Graeme, 29 September 2015).

Over time, the constitution of the Booktown commoning-community has significantly expanded to embrace a range of local volunteers and community groups. As a local business owner observed:

I think over time it is being owned more broadly by the community. I think in the first instance it was seen to be owned by a discrete group in the town, and as a result not everybody embraced it, whereas over time it is being seen as a Clunes event...there is greater degree of collective ownership (Interview, business owner (name withheld), 26 July 2016).

The shift to ‘collective ownership’ is suggestive of how the Booktown concept is expanding this vision of a local commons, demonstrating how broader attachments to Booktown have formed over time and extend beyond the original hybrid collective. In the next chapter I turn to how practices of commoning are undertaken by the community to sustain the commons, before this I outline how the commons is enacted in Mildura and further reflect on how the cultivation of commons through Booktown and Slow Food movements contributes to understandings of rural creative economies.

6.4 Cultivating a Slow Food Commons

6.4.1 Conference Planning: Introductory Vignette

On 14 November 2015, Slow Food Mildura met to plan the hosting of the national conference. The event was returning to Mildura thirteen years after it was hosted by Stefano de Pieri at the beginning of Slow Food in Australia. At this first meeting, over a dozen Slow Food Mildura members gathered around in a circle in the Garreffa's courtyard. There seemed an acute awareness that the success of the first conference brought high expectation. Events such as a dinner staged outdoors on local salt flats had left a memorable impression upon delegates—highlighting the area's local creativity, tradition and resources (see Figure 6.12). While most of the members had not been involved in Slow Food Mildura at the first conference, they had attended more recent national conferences in other places and were inspired to focus on action rather than talk, and showcase local resources.



Figure 6.12 *Slow Food conference dinner on salt flats recreated at 2016 conference (19 November 2016)*

Although the meeting agenda was largely concerned with the logistical aspects of the conference—the formulation of working groups, selection of venues and speakers—talk turned to understanding the meaning of why the conference was being undertaken in the first place and what the convivium hoped to achieve. Stefano had joined the meeting and asserted that the conference planning should strongly focus on what Mildura should be known for—its ‘legacy’. Much of the discussion centred around how hosting the national conference could be used as a lever to draw attention to Slow Food amongst the Mildura community.

Stefano also raised how the concept of a ‘Slow River’, introduced at the first conference could be reignited in response to ongoing concerns around the sustainability of the Murray River. The following questions were written up on the board:

- What are we doing this for?
- What legacy do we want to leave here in Mildura?
- What do we want to present to the world/Australia about this area?

While these questions were directed to planning the conference, they demonstrate some of the ethical negotiations surrounding how the international vision of Slow Food is enacted in place and in turn, the ongoing effects that the collective generates in response to matters of concern around the local environment.

My objective in this section is to consider how Slow Food Mildura is cultivating a commons through an alternative vision for local resource use. Firstly, I consider how Slow Food Mildura amplifies the local food commons through the commons identi-kit and then turn to discussing the ethical negotiations underpinning its ongoing production.

6.4.2 Enlarging Property: Drawing together multiple properties in Mildura

(i) Access and Use

Given Mildura’s status as a major agribusiness area, property is increasingly associated with the decline of family farms and rise of large amalgamated (and often multinational) properties (Kiem & Austin 2013, p. 1310). As chapter 4 detailed, smaller irrigation blocks have been abandoned due to volatile commodity and water markets alongside a drying climate, accompanied by increasing concerns around flaws in water governance including ‘theft’ of water by irrigators in the upstream areas of the Murray Darling Basin (ABC News 2017).

In contrast to the corporate agribusiness landscape associated with the region, Slow Food Mildura depends on a wide range of private properties in cultivating a commons around good, clean and fair food. In a diverse and community economies mapping session with Slow Food members and others interested in the local food movement, Deb noted the significant contribution of private property, particularly the sharing of local farming properties for Slow Food workshops:

I think there are quite a lot of private places that we consider common like the Garreffa's Sultana Avenue shed, the Garreffa's Belar avenue vineyard, the Bawden's olive grove...(Interview, Deb, 28 May 2016).

The below adaptation of the 'Commons Identi-kit' (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013, p. 135) provides an example of how the 'Slow' workshops are drawn together through diverse private, state and open access resources. These workshops are designed to provide members with hands on experience of learning traditional methods. The majority of Slow Workshop events like Slow Tomato and Slow Pig (Figure 6.13) have taken place at the Garreffa's home through the sharing of their outdoor cantina and shed to make passata, sausages and salami.



Figure 6.13 Elina and Gino lead Slow Pig workshop at their shed (Source: Slow Food Mildura, 6 June 2015)

Alongside the sharing of material resources, the family's sharing of their culinary commons through traditional techniques and recipes is appreciated by other members of the group, particularly in a culture where recipes are typically sacred and protected. As Brad observed in a separate conversation:

We are so lucky to be aligned with them, so lucky that they share it. I think they have Italian friends who go, 'you are telling all your secrets...!' (Brad, Interview, 13 November 2015).

This sharing of a culinary or knowledge commons is central to Slow Food's goals of preserving traditional knowledge and works in tandem with sharing physical property. The Garreffa's vineyard is used for annual Slow Food events like the Festa della Vendemmia (Grape Harvest Feast) (Figure 6.14). The Festa is a showcase Slow Food event held in a setting under the vines at the Garreffa's property. Over 200 guests (including non-Slow Food members) attend this Italian cultural celebration of feasting and dancing, with many travelling from Melbourne and interstate.



Figure 6.14 Festa at Garreffa's vineyard – entrance/ tables under vines (12 March 2016)

Workshops such as Slow Wine and Slow Olive are also hosted across private and commercial properties which allow participants to co-produce with growers. For the 2015 Slow Olive workshop (Figure 6.15), a local grower provided access to a row of olive trees for harvesting. Following this the group used the facilities at an olive oil manufacturing facility to crush the olives, demonstrating Slow Food commoning activities across a range of public, private and commercial sites.



Figure 6.15 Slow Olive harvesting from donated row (Source: Slow Food Mildura, 23 May 2015)

Access to state-owned property through the use of the local TAFE hospitality training facilities supports Slow Food through the use of a commercial kitchen and equipment to pack and store food prepared by the group, such as salami for later sharing at Slow Food and community events (Figure 6.16). The convivium also relies on access to public land managed by the council such as their stall at the farmers' market and community garden plot at the Ecovillage. Food is also foraged from public land (such as fennel seeds from the river banks and channels, see Figure 6.17), highlighting the diversity of food sources outside of capitalist enterprise.



Figure 6.16 TAFE training restaurant and kitchen facilities (14 September 2015)



Figure 6.17 Fennel seeds foraged from abandoned irrigation channel (Source: Slow Food Mildura, 6 June 2015)

While most of the activities that enlarge the Slow Food commons in Mildura are temporal, and centred around events, recent developments have seen the convivium support the enlarging of the physical commons through the ‘Food Next Door’ initiative. This project led by Deb through a new group called ‘Sunraysia Local Food Future Movement’ helps to facilitate land access for Burundi migrants, who are in turn contributing their knowledge commons to experimenting with maize crops in adapting to climate change (Klocker et al. 2018). This project involved negotiating a plot of land with a local retailer, Sunraysia Produce, who donated one acre of land for the establishment of a Burundian Garden. During the diverse and community economies mapping session, discussion turned to how this project also has the potential to enlarge other resource commons like water through the establishment of a community water bank, a collective water entitlement to facilitate farming in contrast to private water rights. As Deb responded when I questioned whether water was open access:

It’s a currency. If you don’t own water and want to grow food you can’t do it (Deb, Interview, 28 May 2016).

Through collective approaches to sharing water, new possibilities for enlarging the food commons are being imagined through Food Next Door, such as the regeneration of abandoned 10 acre blocks and linking with state government projects that are seeking to rejuvenate dried out blocks through small scale farming.

(ii) Benefits

The sharing of both the material and immaterial commons through Slow Food brings multiple benefits to not only those within the core group, but also allows benefits to be enjoyed by what Ostrom might consider as outside ‘appropriators’ who have not directly contributed (2015, p. 91). Consideration of how benefits are distributed to the community and beyond is central to identifying commons activity from a community economies ethic of interdependence (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013). For Slow Food members, the Slow Workshops are more than coming together on private property, they involve the expansion of a culinary commons through the learning of traditional techniques. Gio acknowledged the importance of these activities more broadly for society in ‘keeping the food culture alive’. However, he also noted that Slow Food activities were more than promoting Italian culture:

[It is about] trying to keep the culture, every culture, because we do Italian things like the salami and the tomato but we also promote Indigenous food (Interview, 11 December 2015).

Slow Food Mildura’s promotion of Indigenous food is particularly evoked through Terra Madre Day (Mother Earth), an annual celebration of traditional food and small-scale producers auspiced by Slow Food International. The key objective of the event is to display how Slow Food is ‘using its creativity and knowledge to express our love for the planet and defend the future for the next generations’ (Fondazione Terra Madre 2016). In Mildura, the celebration is themed as a ‘River Soiree’ (Figure 6.18) and is held at the rowing club on the riverbank. Deb explained in the diverse and community economies mapping activity that Slow Food Mildura has partnered with Indigenous communities for Terra Madre events (Interview, Deb, 28 May 2016), along with offering an opportunity to connect young chefs and consumers with Indigenous culture and ingredients such as yabbies and Murray Cod. The event thus plays an important role in distributing benefits by creating awareness of the region’s ancient food commons and highlighting the need for its ongoing care and protection.



Figure 6.18 Chef cooking yabby risotto at River Soiree at Mildura Rowing Club/Terra Madre Flag (10 December 2015)

This sharing of private land, produce and skills also creates a wider distribution of benefits (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013, p. 154). For instance, the produce is used at Slow Food events or in cooking demonstrations at the farmers' market and distributed to the wider public as a form of education around what Slow Food is. Alongside the sharing of produce and resources, exists the sharing of facilities such as the TAFE kitchen which allows Slow Food access to equipment to properly prepare and store goods like prosciutto for later consumption. In return, hospitality students learn about the local food culture as well as the principles of Slow Food, particularly the international students who I spoke to from Italy and Malaysia who found it to be a valuable way to connect to the local community (Interview, Gio, 11 December 2015; Interview, Poh, 15 April 2016). These examples attest how commons created through the Slow Food events create an opportunity to leverage different forms of property for a shared benefit and create an opening for a commoning-community that amplifies community and planetary wellbeing (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013).

(iii) Care and Responsibility

Stewardship of the commons created through Slow Food involves consideration of who is caring for it and assuming responsibility (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013). Slow Food Mildura plays a key role in collaborating with a broader commoning-community (private business owners, chefs, community groups and traditional food) in experimenting with enlarging the food commons and enacting collective care and responsibility. In terms of education, at Slow Food workshops and events, participants are learning about the immaterial commons, the cultural knowledge that is a valuable resource in the community and the breaking down of the production and consumption binary through traditional practices. The material commons is also revealed, where in the preparation of shared food, spaces of commoning are also opened up, ranging from private homes

such as the Garreffa's shed, to public land such the floodplain where the fennel seeds are foraged, providing an alternative to corporate production. Through building this knowledge, awareness of the local food commons is being cultivated, along with considerations of how to care for it. Recognising that an ethic of care and responsibility extends beyond the core group, Slow Food Mildura extends responsibility to other community food initiatives such as the Fruit and Veggie swap by covering the cost of their insurance (Interview, Deb, 14 September 2015), along with auspicing the Food Next Door program. These activities demonstrate how care and responsibility of the burgeoning food commons is enacted by sharing resources.

6.4.3 Negotiating Ethical Decision Making

As the above discussion shows, the Slow Food commons is drawn together through diverse property forms, largely facilitated through access to private and state land. Through these diverse property forms a range of actors are brought together, such as chefs and students at TAFE and producers like the Garreffas, migrant groups such as the Burundi community, as well people from diverse occupational positions, along with retirees. The coming together of these diverse entities around 'good, clean and fair food' nonetheless raises challenges in how to bring people and resources together around these principles.

The first principle, 'good food', is concerned with standards of taste, quality and place in local food culture (Petrini 2013). This presents particular challenges for discerning the subjective qualities of flavour as well as identifying a singular place-based food culture in a multicultural settler society. Furthermore, there is a delicate balance in running events that are socially and economically accessible. Events that are about enjoying the pleasure of 'good' food can reinforce critique of Slow Food as a 'dinner club' (Interview, Jon, 13 November 2015), a perception that members of Slow Food grapple with more broadly (Andrews 2008, p. 120). This was an issue that both Jon and Gio saw as something for the Slow Food youth chapter to address. As Gio noted, his earlier thoughts about the movement were shaped by elitist connotations:

I thought it was like an elite group... that only elite people would do that, fine dining and stuff like that (Interview, Gio, 11 December 2015).

Stefano de Pieri acknowledged that Slow Food needs to be 'politically aggressive' by engaging in political lobbying in response to the movement being perceived as a 'middle-class affectation'. This is consistent with other studies (e.g. Gaytán 2004; van Bommell & Spicer 2011), which have tended

to emphasise Slow Food's elitist rather than activist practices. In a conversation with Deb, I questioned whether Slow Food was a more subtle form of political activism than other global movements such as the peasant movement, La Via Campesina. Deb emphasised the political roots of Slow Food and how their focus was on balancing these aspirations through bringing the community together around food:

I think the way that we have been operating and continue to operate is to have these events that bring people together that are just about the food, so people can feel comfortable in that environment and not threatened by it. And a lot of those people wouldn't necessarily want to be part of a more political movement, but a lot of people do, so you're trying to kind of bring the whole community along (Interview, Deb, 14 November 2015).

Considerations for bringing the community along also extend to producers themselves. To locate food that is simultaneously 'good, clean and fair' according to Slow Food principles raises questions around how this can be achieved. As Brad reflected, one principle may be foreground over the other:

[A producer] can bring stuff but are they doing it in a good, clean and fair way to deserve the snail symbol? So when it comes down to it, there is not a lot of people that do care for biodiversity on their property. The product is probably good you know, the importance is having it clean, they then get fair, fair for the people who are buying but also for them, they are getting remunerated properly. It's hard to tick all those boxes, and only a few would but then you certainly don't want people hijacking the brand, and then having to police it would be the hardest thing.

Such tensions highlight the risk of free-riding behaviour where individuals benefit from the collective effort without contributing (Hess & Ostrom 2007, p. 10).

6.5 Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter focused on the research question of how of place-based cultural resources are used in rural creative economies. Growing demand for distinctive rural products and experiences is associated with satisfying creative class or 'cognitive-capitalism' consumption desires (Scott 2011) and seeing places reimagined as 'creative regions' (Scott 2011) or 'cultural districts' (Bertacchini et al. 2012, p. 6). While new economic uses for place-based resources offer opportunities to 'remobilise' local assets, often seen as surplus to previous economies, these often fragile resources are in danger of destruction through overuse (Scott 2011). A key impetus behind Clunes Booktown and Slow

Food Mildura is the reimagining of resources that have become residual from capitalist enterprise—whether it is the stock of heritage buildings that sustained a booming but ephemeral 19th century mining town in Clunes, to concerns for how the Murray River is reduced to a residual flow due to sustained capitalistic irrigation and agribusiness. This chapter considered the use of resources through the idea of a cultural commons by exploring how Clunes Booktown and Slow Food Mildura are reimagining and negotiating cultural resources in bringing a new vision of an economy into being.

To explore how Clunes Booktown and Slow Food Mildura are representative of commons cultivation, I applied the exploratory commons identi-kit (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013), which integrates diverse economies thinking with key commons principles and protocols based on the work of Ostrom (2015). From a diverse economies perspective, any type of property can be a potential commons (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013 p. 131). This offers an entry point into thinking about how Clunes Booktown and Slow Food Mildura are engaging and enlarging cultural commons via property typically perceived as outside a commons domain (such as private bookshops or agricultural properties). The commons-identikit also provides a way to not just enlarge understandings of properties that can be commoned, but how the boundaries of the commons, a typical characteristic of commons scholarship, need not be closed but consider the needs of different commons communities through an ethic of interdependence (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013, p. 148).

Findings showed how the cultural commons was activated in a temporal dimension through events such as the Booktown Festival and Slow Food events and workshops. These events draw together multiple property forms—private properties along with public land—thus highlighting the relational dynamics of property rights (Turner 2017). The commons that is being created is also more than providing access to material property. Immaterial resources like knowledge are also pivotal to bolstering a cultural commons, as evidenced through the Slow Food workshops that draw upon Elina's culinary knowledge to prepare traditional tomato sauce and salami. These activities bring to attention a broader food commons outside of the region's capitalocentric agribusiness backdrop, including open-source food commons along the bank of the highly commoditised Murray River. In Clunes, a range of knowledge and skills are mobilised in terms of producing and staging a Booktown, sharing creative skills and transferring festival and organisational skills to other community groups. The range of shared material and immaterial resources that are cultivated through Booktowns and Slow Food thus come into conflict with

creative economies notions of enclosing resources through individual benefit via marketisation or knowledge through intellectual property rights.

The diversity of the types of land and resources that are commoned reflects a diversity of commoners. In doing so, the hybrid collective that gathered to experiment around the concepts of Booktowns and Slow Food has expanded. The performance of the Clunes Booktown festival brings together a broad range of people: including the local schools, city-based student volunteers from Wesley College, long-term alongside ‘weekender’ or recent in-migrants, community groups such as the senior citizens, local business owners and the range of external groups and partners from creative industries such as authors and booksellers. For Slow Food Mildura, the commoning-community is constituted by a wide variety of actors, including people from various professional backgrounds such as ecology and hospitality, local Indigenous groups, local producers, a burgeoning Slow Food youth convivium, and through supporting new projects like Food Next Door to proliferate new commons for other cultural groups. These relational dynamics thus provoke the myth of rural commoners as homogenous. Booktown and Slow Food aspirations for cultural resource are also not without ‘friction’ (Tsing 2012b) amongst locals outside the boundaries of the commons or those who perceive Booktowns and Slow Food as elitist endeavours, leading to ethical negotiations around how encounters across difference might generate new alliances (Tsing 2012b).

While Clunes Booktown and Slow Food Mildura are predominantly expanding the commons in a temporal way through events, temporality leads to longer-term commons expansion. The securing of the empty Railway Station in Clunes and establishment of the ‘Food Next Door’ block of land for Burundi migrant farmers provide key examples of how local commons are being enlarged through physical property. Securing these material resources not only assists in achieving Booktown and Slow Food related aspirations, but extends benefits to the community more widely. For instance, while the Railway Station is under the stewardship of Creative Clunes, use of the building is intended for community groups more widely. In Mildura, the experimental ‘Food Next Door’ project has turned into a food cooperative that has recently secured government funding to secure more sites in building a community farm for an expanded range of migrant groups (Stutchberry 2018). These practices of commons cultivation show how physical and social boundaries are not static but reflective of recognising interdependence with others.

The enlargement of a commons through a rural creative economy is sometimes fraught and difficult. The very definition of a commons emphasises this problematic—‘a resource shared by a group of people that is subject to social dilemmas’ (Hess & Ostrom 2007, p. 3). As shown in this chapter, issues of who accesses, uses, benefits, cares and takes responsibility for the commons are brought into tension with who is included and excluded from a Booktown and Slow Food led vision of place. These tensions manifest through physical boundaries such as fencing off the main street for the Clunes Booktown Festival, along with social boundaries around elitist perceptions of Booktown and Slow Food activities. Dilemmas also surround who benefits from these commons without contributing, resembling the free rider problem, whether it is the businesses that benefit from the Booktown without contributing to the concept or the producers that might not strictly adhere to Slow Food principles but seek benefit through association. On the other hand, these beneficiaries could also be recognised as recipients of a broader social surplus generated through a community economy that acknowledges broader interdependencies in place (Gibson-Graham 2006b, p. 91).

Overall, this chapter contributes to how the commons might be reconsidered against the normative creative economies frame of enclosing knowledge and cultural resources for commercial benefit, or conferring ‘creative region’ or ‘cultural district’ status. In contrast, findings from Clunes and Mildura showed how creative economies arose from attending to place concerns. The activities of Clunes Booktown and Slow Food Mildura show how commons are brought into being through repurposing the surpluses of previous economies (e.g. vacant buildings and land) and the building of relations around property, culture and community that offer more-than-capitalist (or creative class) benefits. This chapter shows the ways that place resources can be enlarged through culture, but also that commons management is rarely consensus management and is subject to dilemmas around who accesses, uses, manages, benefits from and takes responsibility for the commons. This chapter shows the ways that place resources can be enlarged through culture, but also brings into question how cultural goods can be supported and sustained. The market is part of the tensions of commons commodification and management and in the next chapter I turn to the role that the market plays in sustaining the commons.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Building a Relational Marketplace

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter revealed how the enlargement of the cultural commons through Booktowns and Slow Food was predominantly driven by activities such as festivals, workshops and other events. This activation of the local commons therefore largely relies on market interactions, whether it is the exchange of money for festival entry and book and food sales, or the exchange of traditional recipes in Slow Food workshops. In a neoliberal-inspired vision of a creative economy, markets have particular appeal in fostering competition and monetising cultural commons as evidenced through interest in creative industries that are highly commodifiable in global markets (i.e. protected by intellectual property rights and copyright) such as tech industries, film and music (Edensor et al. 2009; Gibson & Klocker 2005). Along with fostering enclosures of cultural commons, global markets also generate a distancing and desocialisation between producers and consumers through the division of commodities into anonymised global supply chains (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013; Tsing 2012a).

This chapter sets out to explore what types of market exchanges underpin rural creative economies—do these exchanges further desocialise and distance producers from consumers and facilitate the enclosure of cultural resources or is there an alternative? From a creative economies perspective, market exchanges emphasise the monetisation and enclosure of cultural resources (whether it is knowledge or cultural goods), projecting a market-driven imperative that comes into tension with ideas of the commons as resources that are shared (Haiven 2014). Yet without use, the cultural commons that is generated is at risk of disappearing (Bertacchini et al. 2012). As key ‘commodities’ underpinning a Booktown and Slow Food vision of a local commons, the exchange of books and food is central to the ongoing production of the commons. This interplay between commons and market thus raises the question—how does the commons that is generated articulate with the commercial imperatives of the market?

In this chapter I explore what types of market exchanges are occurring in rural creative economies by looking to the diverse market practices of Clunes Booktown and Slow Food Mildura. To frame the discussion, I explore ideas of how markets are perceived to function in creative economies and how they might be reimagined in terms of building a relational marketplace. Following this, I explore the market practices of Clunes Booktown and how this intersects with the commons.

7.2 Conceptualising a Relational Marketplace

7.2.1 *Creative economies and markets*

The overarching role of markets in a creative economy is ultimately perceived as a device that facilitates the commercialisation of creativity. Creative economies are explicitly intertwined with a raft of market imperatives to promote innovation and creative content, protect property rights, foster competition and encourage foreign investment and regulation (Drache & Froese 2008, p. 52). Creative economy proponent, John Howkins, clearly emphasises the affinity between creativity and commerce—‘without markets, creativity might flourish but a creative economy could not’ (Howkins 2009, p. 133). While non-commercial markets, or what he terms ‘social marketplaces’ provide an important generative function in a creative economy through free exchange of knowledge and ideas, Howkins asserts that creativity also depends on ‘commercial markets’ where ideas are put ‘on sale to gain commercial value and create wealth’ (Howkins 2009, p. 134). This bifurcation of sociality from commerce underscores the instrumental role of markets in making creativity an individual property and is contradictory to the commons underpinning of creative economies as discussed in the previous chapter (Haiven 2014; Hyde 2010).

Tensions around the commercial imperatives of the market and commons have a much deeper history than creative economy debates. From the perspective of medieval commons, Derek Wall (2014, p. 83) observes how the creation of market-based economies intersected with commons enclosures. The turn to a market economy was facilitated through increasing barriers to accessing the commons for food and fuel, generating a necessity to buy and sell in the market instead of relying upon the commons, which, in turn, ‘accelerated more intensive use of existing commons to generate surpluses for exchange’. Highlighting the opposition between commons and markets, anthropologist Rudi Colloredo-Mansfeld (2011, p. 53) observes how scholarship on the commons typically ‘pits the sharing, reciprocity, and stewardship of the commons against the self-interest of the market and warns of public domains being lost to private profit’. This view positions commons and markets as irreconcilable, where the development of markets not only acts to exacerbate

commons enclosures but also erode the sociality underpinning noncapitalist use and exchange of resources.

Rather than seeing commons and markets as antagonistic, others are looking to how commons and markets might work together through practices of commoning. As discussed in the previous chapter, one key stewardship challenge for cultural commons is to maintain ongoing transmission to future generations. Rather than suffering the natural resource commons problem of overuse, many cultural commons (such as languages or creative practices) risk underuse and becoming stagnant without new ideas or artistic communities to maintain reproduction (Bertacchini et al. 2012, p. 6). This problem poses interesting questions as to how market activities might assist with the ongoing production of the commons. Colloredo-Mansfield (2011) suggests that commons can derive from the marketplace in instances where stewardship of a cultural resource (e.g. local handicrafts or place-based food) entwines with private enterprise collaborations around protecting the authenticity of the good. Balancing commercial imperatives with a commons interest means ensuring that cultural resource or practice is sustained while at the same time limiting ‘destructive behaviour’ amongst enterprises through negotiated rules and regulations (Colloredo-Mansfield 2011).

Also on the topic of commons and markets, Jenny Cameron (2015) looks to the example of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) in Australia to show how an agricultural biophysical commons (soil, seeds, water, microbes and insects etc.) and knowledge commons (generational farming knowledge and practices) are being sustained through CSA markets that connect rural producers to a market of urban consumers. Commons scholar David Bollier (2016, p. 11) shows how groups of commoners are undertaking innovations ‘that seek to replace exploitative proprietary platforms and corporate structures’ e.g. the Fresno (California) commons that is reconfiguring relationships in market supply chains through a commons-based trust. Similarly, Stephen Healy (2018, p. 61) describes how a cooperative enterprise commons, a composting organisation called CERO in Boston, has developed in conjunction with the market in providing a service to urban farms who are supplying greens to a ‘burgeoning foodie culture’. Instead of market forces acting as a source of commons enclosure, these examples suggest that commons and markets might interconnect and help to sustain the commons. To explore the role of markets further, I first outline what markets are and what they can do, commencing with conventional framings and moving to new possibilities for Booktowns and Slow Food.

7.2.2 *What are markets and what can they do?*

Markets are typically understood as a mechanism to mediate the supply of goods and services between consumers and producers. Put simply, ‘a market for something exists if there are people who want to buy it and people who want to sell it’ (McMillan 2002, p. 5). The multiplication of markets is linked to increasing commodification and the recognition that virtually anything can be bought and sold in today’s economy, from human organs to future currencies (Gregory et al. 2009, p. 440). Markets are afforded ‘peculiar’ power in contemporary economies—assumed as neutral arbiters of rules of supply and demand and conventionally considered ‘the ideal natural system for coordinating complex transactions between producers and consumers’ (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013, p. 85). This mechanistic view of markets offers key insights into the role markets have played in distancing producers from consumers.

The conventional description of markets as naturally operating is inherently desocialised. Stanford economist John McMillan points out in *Reinventing the Bazaar: A Natural History of Markets* (2002) how traditional textbook economic accounts do little to dispel a ‘markets-are-magical’ notion of markets as abstract and autonomous entities. McMillan argues that diagrammatic representations of supply and demand typically explain what prices ‘do’ but are silent on how buyers and sellers get together, negotiate and reach agreements (McMillan 2002, p. 8). Similarly, Gibson-Graham (2006b, p. 62) identifies that conventional economics presents market transactions as a perfunctory exchange between parties: ‘For mainstream economists, market transactions involve the exchange of equivalents (and are, thus, without obligation beyond the transaction)’. Furthermore, internet commerce has heralded what Bill Gates described as allegedly ‘friction free capitalism’, allowing companies to connect with consumers directly in bypassing the middleman (McMillan 2002, p. 50). Global capitalist structures depict a further distancing of buyers and sellers via ever-lengthening and anonymised supply chains (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013, p. 95), a topic that is particularly resonant with books and food, key ‘commodities’ at the heart of the Booktown and Slow Food Movements.

Books are emblematic of how desocialisation between buyers and sellers is visible in mainstream markets. Cultural industries scholars Danielle Fuller and DeNel Rehberg Sedo remind us that books are ‘commodities that are part an economy of production, even if we only receive them as gifts or borrow them from libraries’ (2013, p. 138). While books are considered by many as ‘special commodities’ that have intrinsic worth to many beyond price, books as commodities offer insights into how an object of social value interplays with mass-market dynamics (Fuller & Rehberg Sedo

2013, p. 138). For Richard Booth, introducing books en-masse into Hay-on-Wye provided a way to control a flow of commodities locally, in contrast to the rise of agricultural commodity production for global markets occurring throughout rural Wales (Booth & Stuart 1999; Woods 2010). The special value of books was recognised by Booth who saw books as an ‘object’ that could not be sold in supermarkets and offered hope to small towns to maintain control of local economy through independent retail (Booth & Stuart 1999, p. 251). Significant changes to distribution have occurred since Booth’s observations, however, with statistics in the UK showing that supermarkets (such as TESCO) and online stores like Amazon are now leading retailers (Fuller & Rehberg Sedo 2013, p. 141). The local retail model of book-selling is thus drastically different to what Booth predicted, with the rise in chain bookshops, online sales and the invention of e-readers noted as some of the major changes affecting the local book retailing industry (Campbell 2014).

In the contemporary book economy, the market functions to satisfy consumer demands around choice and ease of access (Fuller & Rehburg Sedo 2013, p. 141). It is estimated that more books are being published than ever before in the USA and UK (for instance in the UK the number of books published in 2009 hit a new peak of 157, 039) (Fuller & Rehburg Soho 2013, p. 138). Strong publishing trends are echoed in Australia, with a dramatic increase in fiction titles from 2011–2016 (Carter & Kelly 2018). Despite the continued demand for books, major changes have affected publishers and retailers in Australia through the rise in online distribution and consumption via e-readers and the 2011 collapse of the chain bookstore Borders (Carter & Kelly 2018, p. 21). Throsby, Zwar and Morgan (2018, pp. 5–6) estimate how trade books (e.g. general fiction, non fiction and children’s books) experienced a loss of 20% of the value of book sales to offshore retailers like The Book Depository, Apple Amazon and e-book sales from other vendors, and a decline in average selling price of books from a peak of \$19.10 in 2014 to \$16.90 in 2014.

Food offers another example of the desocialisation between people and goods in markets. Food scholar Nick Rose (2017, p. 226) argues that the ‘Australian food system has been exposed to the full rigour of market forces over the last 30 years’ with numerous consequences arising from neoliberal reforms including: the deregulation of previously protected agricultural industries such as dairy; the rise in supermarket power; declining terms of trade for producers and independent retailers and competition with cheaper imported produce. The rise in supermarket dominance in particular attests to a growing production-consumption divide, with the Coles and Woolworths duopoly or ‘Big Two’ supermarkets recently increasing their market share to over 50 per cent of Australia’s \$40 billion fresh food market (Roy Morgan 2018). The desocialisation between

producers and consumers also extends to a desocialisation with the matter of food itself, which is increasingly recognised as ‘an industrialized product’ based on generally expected characteristics of uniformity (e.g. minimisation of natural variations in tomatoes), safety (e.g. minimisation of pathogens) and predictability (e.g. appearance, cost and taste) (Vivero-Pol 2017, p. 194). Evans and Miele demonstrate anonymising effects of industrialised practices on meat production, in particular, observing how animals are ‘made absent’ through processed food and contemporary hastened shopping and consumption practices (Evans & Miele 2012). The desocialisation of books and food thus attests to market efficiencies at work, where transactions between buyers and sellers are mediated by price, competition and lengthening supply chains. In the following section I look to what this means for Booktowns and Slow Food and whether markets can offer alternative possibilities for place.

7.2.3 Relational marketplace: new possibilities for Booktowns and Slow Food?

In contrast to the abstract or neutral framing of markets above, an alternative body of scholarship is challenging assumptions about what markets are and what they can do. From a diverse economies perspective, Gibson-Graham (2006b, p. 62) reminds us that ‘Not all markets are where capitalist commodities are exchanged and not all commodities transacted in formal markets are produced by capitalist firms’. In other words, market transactions should not be assumed within a capitalist logic of profit maximisation and competition. In addition, Gibson-Graham argues that standard logic of the market as mediating self-interested and rational exchanges obfuscates other motivations that might shape the exchange (e.g. solidarity, stewardship or obligation) (Gibson-Graham 2006b, p. 57). The relationality of exchanges in a diverse economy illuminates the sociality of markets. For instance transactions in informal or underground markets are shaped by customised arrangements or practices of bartering that negotiate value in non-monetary terms (2006b, p. 62). Transactions in a diverse economy bring to the fore a sociality that underpins market transactions whether in positive ways (such as gifting) or negative ways (such as theft) (Gibson-Graham 2006b, p. 61).

The sociality underpinning market transactions disorders the neat abstracted view of markets as an autonomous calculative device to efficiently allocate resources. Indeed, in business language, the term ‘relational marketplace’ has emerged from marketing literature (Hingley & Lindgreen 2002), to emphasise a shift from ‘transactional’ interactions based on instrumental business relationships between buyers and sellers to meet a generic need, and characterised by ‘power, conflict and control’ to ‘relational marketing exchanges’ based on meeting more specific needs, developing

longer-term relations and building co-operation and trust (Hingley & Lindgreen 2002). Hingley and Lindgreen (2002, p. 807) define this ‘relational marketplace’ as characterised by ‘relationships, networks and interactions (as opposed to an anonymous and efficient transactional market place)’. Similar to diverse economies thinking on markets, this type of marketplace offers a way to comprehend markets as being driven by relational rather than strictly rational exchanges.

Pushing ideas of market relations and encounters further, a community economies perspective allows us to ask more of markets than facilitating the flow of commodities. Community economies theory offers insights into how diverse market transactions offer an entry point to ethical action. This occurs when economic interdependencies and the wellbeing of others are taken into account in transactions (Gibson-Graham 2006b; Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013). Gibson-Graham (2006b, p. 79) describes how alternative economic movements, ranging from global networks such as Fair Trade to local farmers markets, are examples of how economic relations are being resocialized around direct trade between producers and consumers, in contrast to disembodied exchanges mediated through elongated supply chains and commodity markets. Ethical principles around producer livelihoods both near (in the case of local farmers markets) and far (in terms of connecting minority world consumers with majority world producers of products such as tea, coffee, chocolate) are visible in market transactions. Fair trade transactions in particular not only bring into focus how consumption can address concerns for the livelihoods of remote producers, but also shows how markets can be ‘challenged and changed’ (Roelvink 2016, pp. 110–11).

The work of STS scholar Michel Callon provides a key insight into the sociality of markets by considering how markets function as actor-networks or hybrid ‘agencements’ of people and things (Callon 1998). This perspective on market sociality extends beyond the idea of a rational human subject to consider how nonhumans also shape market action. Callon uses the concept of ‘framing’ to demonstrate the associations that are taken into account in market activity, particularly who and what is included and excluded in the boundaries of activities such as negotiating a contract or undertaking a commercial exchange. Framing a market exchange is facilitated by a process of entanglement (building relations between different actors) followed, by ‘disentanglement’ or unravelling previous entanglements and associations so that ‘the object of exchange is disentangled from previous owners’ (Michael 2017, p. 156). While this process allows entities to come together to perform an exchange, framing is not stable. Overflows can occur when boundaries are transgressed by unintended objects or events such as pollution that requires the relationship to be

reconfigured (Callon 1998). To illustrate this with an example, Gerda Roelvink (2016) draws upon Callon's concept of framing to show how social movements can use overflows to reframe markets. Using Slow Food as a case, Roelvink (2016, p. 127) observes how the movement is acting upon overflows of health risks to reframe markets through providing an alternative. By excluding or 'disentangling consumers from fast food products' Slow Food works to reframe the market by taking into account diverse actors involved in the food system (including animals and biodiversity more broadly) (Roelvink 2016, p. 128).

In sum, as these discussions show, markets need not be considered as inherently desocialised entities that facilitate the rational and efficient exchange of goods, but can offer new possibilities in building new relations between people and 'goods' that are exchanged in a creative economy. In the following section I look to Clunes Booktown and Slow Food Mildura for ways to understand how new socialities might be created through the market and how this intersects with commons interests.

7.3 Building a Relational Marketplace in Clunes

In this section I explore what types of market exchanges underpin Clunes Booktown and how this interplays with the commons described in the previous chapter. As discussed in the previous chapter, the creation of the Booktown Festival and ongoing Booktown identity draws together diverse property forms to enact a Booktown commons around 'books, writing and ideas' (Creative Clunes n.d.a.). At the same time, the repurposing of local resources generates a new marketplace for local economic activity. For the Booktown commons to be successfully reproduced requires use and input into the commons to prevent it from becoming stagnant, a requirement typical to many forms of cultural commons (Bertacchini et al. 2012). A particular challenge then is to maintain commoning practices around books in the face of popular suppositions that printed books and local bookshops are under threat. A number of innovations are taking place however that work to resocialise relations between people and books. Consumer preferences, bookshop adaptability and technological innovation are broad trends that have particular resonance for how Booktowns maintain their relevance. After briefly exploring these trends, I consider how these trends intersect with Booktowns, and the role that Clunes Booktown plays in fostering new socialities between books, bookshops and writers.

Countering the overarching narrative that asserts the demise of local bookshops, independent bookstores show promising growth signs in Australia. Carter and Kelly observe that 'Independent

bookstores, like the book itself, have found new roles and an expanded space for themselves in the reconfigured world of reading and book culture' (Carter & Kelly 2018). 'Readings' bookstore for instance, a Melbourne-based independent chain is lauded for fostering community through its bookshops via community fundraising, launches, events and book readings and staving off competition from a nearby Borders store in a 'David and Goliath' battle between independent retailer and multinational (Harmon 2016). Notably, Readings was a recipient of the 'International Bookstore of Year Award' in 2016 in recognition of its 'community outreach, support of Australian authors and its help for non-profit organisations working on literacy initiatives' (Steger 2016). Alongside innovations in bookshop sociality, the rise of literary festivals in Australia since the 1990s is recognised as a growing trend in cities and regional areas alike (Carter & Kelly 2018). Providing opportunities for readers to connect with writers, literary festivals straddle what Carter and Kelly describe as a celebration of the literary 'in its own terms' and 'a "festival" of commercialization' through offering promotional opportunities for writers and publishers (p. 23). The balancing between cultural offerings and commercial opportunities is a concern for literary festivals (Carter & Kelly 2018) and will be returned to further below in relation to the Clunes Booktown Festival.

Booktowns offer key opportunities to build on desires for market exchanges fostered around book sociability. Jane Frank observes in her study of Booktowns around the world that Booktowns can offer book-loving consumers a place of sociable encounter: 'Booktowns stimulate sociability: books can be touched, customers can interact with booksellers and bibliophiles can browse for long stretches of time' (Frank 2018, p. 69). The capacity of Booktowns to attract consumers with an affinity for second-hand books is considered part of a broader trend of conscious consumption around 'slow tourism' representing consumers driven by an ethic of social and environmental responsibility (Frank 2018). The ability to browse books and interact with book traders is appealing to many bibliophiles, with Booktowns considered by some bookshop owners in Europe to offer a special appeal to consumers in an era of declining bookshops in non-Booktowns (Seaton & Alford 2001).

Technological changes also offer opportunities for Booktowns to assert their relevance and adaptability in an increasingly digital world. McMillan observed back in 2002 (p. 18–19) that 'the market for second-hand books has been transformed by the internet' with new ways for consumers and sellers to encounter each other across distance. The internet offers bookshops in Booktowns a way to supplement local sales income (Seaton & Alford 2001), meaning that while bookshops can

tap into desires or nostalgia for physical books, they are also leveraging technology and global interconnectivity to maintain their business. As McMillan (2002, p. 19) puts it, 'Musty book-shops are now global players'. These broad trends suggest the picture of the book industry as being in decline, and by association, Booktowns (Rinaldi 2012; Thomas 2014) which delimits insights into how market relations are being fostered around books in Booktowns. In the following section I explore how Creative Clunes works to foster new socialities around books via market exchanges through the annual Booktown Festival and ongoing practices of sustaining the Booktown commons detailed in the previous chapter.

7.3.1 Clunes Booktown Festival: Enacting new socialities with books, writers and ideas

The annual Clunes Booktown Festival is an instructive example of attempts to offer an alternative market and foster new socialities around the printed book by linking consumers directly with authors and book traders. Strong emphasis is placed on providing an array of books and topics to cater to a variety of interests. At the 2018 festival, there were 71 book trader sites (Creative Clunes 2018a, p. 9), offering a broad range of new, second-hand and collectable books and genres such as arts and literature, children's books, Australiana and vintage cookbooks (Creative Clunes 2018b). The focus on the physical book is a strong ethos of the festival and demarcates the event from Writer's Festivals, as Tim explained:

We felt that even though we eventually spent a lot of time, a lot of money and a lot of effort in attracting writers, we always felt that it was a festival of the book and not a writer's festival (Interview, Tim H, 29 September 2015).

Attentiveness to the book as an object is evident in promotional texts positioning the event as the 'Festival of the Book' (Creative Clunes 2014b, p. 3), 'For the love of books' (Creative Clunes 2013) and 'Australia's largest book trading event in the Southern Hemisphere's Only Booktown' (Creative Clunes 2015). Beyond promotional texts, Driscoll observes how Clunes Booktown materially elevates the 'cultural value' of the printed book through the display of books in window fronts, boxes and even book sculptures to create a 'nostalgic appeal' that is complemented by the heritage setting of the town (Driscoll 2016, p. 15, see Figures 7.1 and 7.2)



Figure 7.1 Book sculpture display in Wesley Bluestone Church by artist Nicholas Jones (6 May 2017)



Figure 7.2 Small handmade book display by Clunes Regional Art Group encouraging the books to be handled and enjoyed (6 May 2017)

The interplay between books and the heritage of the town is emphasised in the following quote from the Festival director:

In essence, the Festival is about the book. It's a celebration of the book in all its forms, variations and meanings...To me anyway, Clunes Booktown Festival is multi-faceted, because it is not just about the intrinsic and tangible value of the book, but also what is inside and... this is happening in a space, a village, a community, in which you have the incredibly charming visual aesthetic of authentic 19th Century Goldfields era buildings, which in their own way contribute to and nurture memory...It's a powerful mix (Interview, Ailsa, 12 February 2016).

This interplay between physical books and goldfields buildings shows how interrelations between objects can create powerful effects by inspiring sociability between things that could be perceived individually as endangered. Threats to the physical book through the rise of e-books are concerning for Booktowns, sparking Hay-on-Wye bookshop owner David Addyman to campaign to ban Amazon's Kindle e-reader from the town, blaming it for leading to a number of bookshop closures (de Bruxelles & Wilson 2014; Rinaldi 2012). Similarly, empty buildings contribute to 'ghost town' designations for place; a status conferred on a number of neighbouring goldmining towns in the popular travel guide the *Lonely Planet*, such as Talbot (Rowthorn, Landragin & Daly 2002 p. 316). Commonly applied to former mining towns around the world, 'the term "ghost town" conveys a sense of abandonment, desertion, dereliction, isolation, decay and even the supernatural' (Prideaux & Timothy 2011, p. 227). As Ailsa's above quote suggests, however, the bringing together of books and buildings, stories and place, animate Clunes in new ways by facilitating encounters between the Clunes community, book lovers and book traders. Figure 7.3 offers a glimpse into this intermingling of books, the streetscape, book buyers and community volunteers in their distinctive red aprons.



Figure 7.3 Book browsing in Clunes along Fraser St/ Service Street (6 May 2017)

The ongoing support of Clunes Booktown Festival by book traders over its 10-year existence is indicative of its appeal to industry. In a study I conducted on the festival in 2010, the majority of

book traders reported that they were either very satisfied (29%) or satisfied with their sales experience (57%) (Kennedy 2010, pp. 38–40). While income generated through sales varied, traders recognised the added value of industry and consumer interactions such as networking opportunities, connections with ‘book-orientated customers’ and the identification of a ‘target market’ (pp. 38–40). The appeal of the event for book traders was reinforced by Mark Rubbo, Managing Director of the Melbourne-based independent bookstore Readings:

I think it’s the best literary event in Australia. Sales have been great, there’s a fun atmosphere and the people who are here are people who are so keen and interested in books (Creative Clunes n.d.d. 2016b, see also Figure 7.4).

Readings’ involvement in the event is emblematic of the ways that independent bookstores are engaging with the community. This speaks in support of Carter and Kelly’s (2018) earlier observation that independent stores are finding new ways to assert their place in the changing industry, but this time in a rural locale. While Clunes Booktown benefits from Readings’ involvement in the festival as a respected retailer, Readings is also buoyed by the opportunity to engage with book-loving communities outside of its metropolitan stores as Rubbo’s quote suggests.



Figure 7.4 Readings Marquee at Clunes Booktown (6 May 2017)

Clunes Booktown Festival provides crucial support to sustaining the local book traders who have established businesses in Clunes. As discussed in the previous chapter, a book trader commented in an interview how the festival was ‘vital’ for her own business and for the town generally. These sentiments are echoed by another Clunes book trader, Robin Schmidt, in a newspaper article where he is quoted as saying ‘if it wasn’t for that one weekend, the shop wouldn’t be here...it’s tempting to close the store down during winter when you can barely pay the electricity bill, let alone yourself’ (Jones 2015). Schmidt explains how he normally sells around 50 books on a regular weekend and supplements his income with online sales, demonstrative of how online bookselling is part of a diverse Booktown market that spans local to global markets. During the festival, however, Schmidt states around 1,000 books are sold, recognising that the people who attend the event are ‘book people’. These reflections demonstrate how exchanges around the material attributes of the ‘book’ and ‘town’ generated by the festival build a sociality, which helps to sustain the livelihoods of local traders in leaner periods.

Clunes Booktown also builds new relations with the literary world through exchanges with a wide range of authors from Australia and beyond. This is a significant feat for a rural event, with the attraction of high-profile authors and cultural agencies working to redistribute ‘cultural capital’ from the state capital of Melbourne into a peripheral area (Driscoll 2016), a phenomena that is attributed to the role of regional festivals in improving cultural access more broadly (Carter & Kelly 2018). Tess reflects on how the process of selecting authors for the festival was carefully staged over time in consideration of the community:

[It] was really important...that we brought writers in that looked ordinary. And they didn’t have to be ordinary and their ideas didn’t have to be ordinary, it was physical...if we brought more people in with blue hair and needles hanging out of their arm we wouldn’t have had a second one. So, now we can do that. But at first they would look weird at us—we had to push people to say hello to them [the authors], but now it’s fine. I think people are comfortable, relaxed (Interview, Tess, 21 September 2015).

In making this comment, Tess highlights how diversity is being proliferated through relations between residents and authors in a measured and mediated way through Creative Clunes. Cultural diversity is also being expanded through international Booktown collaborations. These types of local-global connections differ considerably to creative economies discourse which focus on competitiveness and the ‘primacy of global markets’ (Gibson & Klocker 2005), by instead

foregrounding nonmarket international exchanges based on shared learning and cooperation. For example, a project between Creative Clunes and the South Korean Booktown of Paju Booksori was motivated through the discovery that a Clunes photographer, George Rose, had captured a series of images of street life in Seoul in the early 1900s. This historical connection has led to an intercultural exchange between Clunes and Paju where the visual artists William Yang (Australia) and Koo Bohnchang (Korea), photographed each Booktown and conducted workshops. This creative partnership culminated in an exhibition entitled ‘In the Spirit of George Rose’ at the Clunes Booktown Festival and at the Australian embassy in Korea in 2015. As the CEO of Creative Clunes reflects:

For us to have this relationship, as this tiny minnow from Australia with this whale in Korea, it’s astonishing (Interview, Richard M, 4 November 2015).

Furthermore, in May 2018, Clunes hosted the International Organisation of Booktowns conference, involving visitors from other Booktowns in Belgium, Germany, Iceland, Malaysia, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland to take part in a symposium with locals on the future of books, trends in creative and cultural tourism, community development and volunteering. These international collaborations demonstrate the ongoing building of relations across scale and sharing of Booktown ‘intellectual property’ or a commons of best practice and collective learning that counter the commercial imperatives of creative economies around private wealth creation (Howkins 2009). As this section has shown, socialities fostered between books, consumers, distributors and cultural producers play an important role in celebrating the printed book, strengthening Clunes’ Booktown identity and providing an important source of income for existing booksellers, but what types of market transactions sustain the commons more broadly outside of the festival? I turn to this question in the next section.

7.3.2 Practising a Booktown Commons through markets

The ongoing production of Clunes as a Booktown depends upon continuing transactions beyond the festival in order to sustain the concept and livelihoods of local booksellers. As discussed earlier, bookselling is a challenging industry from a commercial standpoint with its continued viability brought into question. It is therefore unsurprising that rather than being driven by profit, Booktown shop owners were found in an international study to be driven by lifestyle motivations, comprised of people from a range of backgrounds such as: retirees on pensions; book enthusiasts turning their hobby into trade and executives in search of a slower pace of life (Seaton & Alford

2001, p. 120). This bookseller profile intersects with Richard Booth's observations that Booktown traders are not 'hungry young capitalists' but a 'grey economy' of people seeking community connections and to contribute to rural development (Booth & Stuart 1999, p. 287). A similar book trader profile is exhibited in Clunes where bookshop trading is generally part-time and supplemented by other sources of revenue such as a government pension, other stock mixes like antiques or diversifying into the global book marketplace through online sales. As one Clunes book trader relayed:

I don't make a fortune at it. If I wasn't still getting a pension I'm not sure how I would survive, I'm not sure how I would survive without this either. One keeps the other. (Interview, Book trader (name withheld), 4 December 2015).

Despite limited financial opportunities, the book trader noted how opening a shop contributed to wellbeing in ways that selling in temporary book markets could not provide:

I enjoy it. So I think I miss the people contact more than anything, doing markets is no fun. It's a different thing (Interview, Book trader (name withheld), 4 December 2015).

From the perspective of this book trader, being enrolled in the Booktown offered meaningful exchanges beyond financial transactions. This is evident in their ethic, as well as enjoyment, of helping the hybrid collective achieve its Booktown aspirations:

I think the thing was too that opening a shop here, even on a reduced basis was a way to still use my expertise and do something for the town as much as anything. So we are crying out for people to establish permanent bookshops and they come and go, but I'm here for the moment...I'm just coping and I enjoy it (Interview, Book trader (name withheld), 4 December 2015).

Interdependencies between book traders and Creative Clunes are evident in the ongoing production of the Booktown commons. A sustainable local book industry is vital to the ongoing production of Booktowns, and the book traders are dependent on Creative Clunes to drive activity. As the above quote from the book trader infers, there is fragility in maintaining the Booktown equilibrium collectively for the town (in providing the minimum number of bookshops), as well as a personal financial threshold. In order for Booktowns to be more than a street with bookshops, a coordinated approach is generally required to build an overarching Booktown identity (Frank 2018,

p. 17). Yet the creation of a clustering of bookshops in a rural town with a limited weekday tourism market presents more pressing challenges. These challenges are particularly pronounced in an Australian context, where in contrast to many of the European Booktowns, towns are separated by longer distances and relatively low population densities, placing limitations on specialised enterprises like bookshops. As one local business owner observes about variability in local business activity generally:

Some of them have worked really well, some of them have struggled. Monday to Friday there is still not a lot of people necessarily buying the product that they have for sale (Interview, Neil, 4 December 2015).

While limited bookshop operating hours may be necessitated to maintain viability, difficulties occur conveying this message to tourists looking to experience the Booktown outside of weekends:

Tourists come in during the week, a Wednesday afternoon, and they expect 8 bookshops open...not going to find it. Now that's I suppose a publicity exercise to let people know when they are open...don't expect a town of libraries open every day...cos the economy can't support that...people would be sitting in their shops doing nothing (Interview, David, 8 April 2016).

In addressing these challenges, marketing and online sales assistance has been supported through the federal government funded Advancing Country Towns project. Some of the funds have been allocated towards marketing and branding materials such as book strips for windows and shopping bags with the Booktown logo for businesses that become a member of Creative Clunes (Interview, Tess, 21 September 2015, see Figure 7.5). While marketing assistance is valuable in contributing to the Booktown identity of the town and facilitating access to new markets such as online sales assistance, ongoing practices of Booktown activities are essential in contributing to the ongoing production of the Booktown commons outside of the festival.



Figure 7.5 Bookstrip branding on pub window (6 May 2017)

Significant energy is directed to practicing the Booktown commons through diverse economic exchanges like monthly free author talks entitled ‘Booktown on Sunday’ and writing workshops, revenue from which are reinvested in the festival. Booktown on Sunday helps to regularly attract visitation to the town and bookshops outside the festival, along with promoting Clunes’ identity as a cultural hub in providing the opportunity to exchange ideas with authors and other attendees. The curation of the program is rotated annually amongst Creative Clunes board members and has embraced an expansive array of topics including: war, history, politics, refugees, trauma, connections to country, popular culture and narcissism. In a discussion with Tim Nolan, a past curator of the Program, he noted that while putting together the program was time-consuming, it was a rewarding experience leading to connections to authors and stimulating conversation in the community:

Doing it was kind of a challenge, it was kind of a big time commitment at times, but it lead to some lovely kinds of relationships with authors and publicists and publishing companies. And people in the community are really grateful that it’s there and I got to do some things like select certain authors and have certain conversations presented—cool conversations about things like refugees or the rise of narcissism, some interesting topics that I wanted discussed in the community that really made a difference to some people (Interview, Tim N, 19 January 2016).

This quote suggests that Booktown on Sunday plays a pivotal role in creating dialogue on important topics in the community. Community members with an interest in the subject area are

invited to chair the sessions and in return receive a copy of the book and lunch in advance with the author. The creative economy that is being produced here thus emphasises nonmarket exchange through the currency of conversation and ideas:

They get a free book, they get lunch with an author they might like to spend some time with and it makes the talk better...Hopefully that is part of the payment for the person, that they get to sit down with a person who has written a book about a subject they are interested in...Also it shows that yes we can get these outside people...but there is this sort of reflected look at what we have already got here... there is this reflected thing back to the community about the capital that is already here (Interview, Tim N, 19 January 2016).

This exchange between authors and community brings cultural producers and consumers together as part of diverse economic exchanges that transcend normative framings of the creative economy, particularly the idea of larger literary festivals as ‘festival of commercialization’ that Carter and Kelly (2018) raised in their aforementioned overview of book industry trends. As Tim describes, the driving force of these activities is the intrinsic value of creative thinking:

We value creative conversations. We value mature and interesting thinking about ideas because that is valuable and it’s free and the authors are giving their time for free and we are just trying to make it all work so people can think better about stuff. It’s sort of fundamental as an economic unit there is value in creativity itself or critical thinking and I think people get that, that’s the currency being exchanged in those events and I think that’s why people come to Booktown or come to author talks because that’s worth something (Interview, Tim N, 19 January 2016).

From the perspective of community facilitators of these author talks, Booktown on Sunday provided an outlet to nurture their own creativity. For instance, Richard who runs a small publishing enterprise chaired an author discussion with Tim Fischer, a past deputy Prime Minister who was invited to talk about his new book. Richard explained that over their lunch Tim Fischer provided encouragement and tips on publishing and has remained in contact (Interview, Richard G, 26 July 2016, see Figure 7.6). The partnership with Readings has extended this network and contributed to new relationships and opportunities to connect with Vogel and Miles Franklin award listed authors (Interview, Angela, 17 July 2016).



Figure 7.6 Booktown on Sunday Tim Fischer Author Talk Advertisement (17 July 2016)

Discussion up to this point has highlighted how market activities (e.g. Clunes Booktown Festival, Booktown on Sunday events) play an important role in fostering socialities amongst a range of actors such as books, buildings, authors and community members. The marketplace created through Booktown is, therefore, more than an exchange of a commodity but a ‘space of encounter’ (Watson 2009) that brings others into the frame. Booktown activities work to break down production, consumption and distribution binaries often associated with capitalistic forms of production (such as anonymised supply chains) and in turn enact new socialities between books (beyond ‘commodity’ status) and authors in a less commercialised setting than increasingly professionalised literary festivals (Carter & Kelly 2018). These market activities not only augment relations with books but also support the livelihoods of book traders who rely upon economic activation of the Booktown commons through a supply of customers. The market relations here are not distanced or based on a rational cold idea of the market, as commensurability is fluid. In the following section I turn to how Slow Food Mildura engaged with market activities before culminating in a discussion on what these transactions mean for linking the relationality of markets to commons concerns.

7.4 Slow Food Relational Marketplace

Slow Food Mildura offers an instructive study into what types of market exchanges underpin creative economies, particularly its role fostering socialities through the ‘goods’ that are exchanged

in a creative economy and how this intersects with the commons. Slow Food Mildura's intervention in the market is shaped by the overarching 'good, clean and fair food' ethos, promoting food that is flavoursome, cleanly produced with fair returns to the producers. Growing desires for conscious consumption are also strongly evident in the turn towards Slow Food, where anxieties over industrialised food scares have led to a greater desire for traceability and provenance in a 'placeless' system (Murdoch & Miele 2004, p. 157). In offering an alternative, Slow Food works to build trust between alternative forms of production that may be perceived as less regulated than the standard desocialised food model and, therefore, risky for consumers (Pietrykowski 2004):

By promoting the social contact between producers and consumers, and making knowledge of the producer and the production process as important as knowledge of the food itself, Slow Food establishes a connection between buying food and understanding and valuing the conditions under which it is made (Pietrykowski 2004, p. 316).

Returning to Roelvink's observations discussed earlier on how Slow Food can play a role in 'reframing markets' by creating new entanglements around food, the author suggests that a key way to do this is through 'taste'. Taste can direct how relationships and ethical decisions around food consumption are considered in transaction (Roelvink 2016, p. 128). For Slow Food, the practice of taste education aims to ensure palates remain attuned to the diverse qualities of local foods (Murdoch & Miele 2004, p. 164). To this end, Slow Food convivia are encouraged to perform taste education activities such as local dinners, tours and tastings (Murdoch & Miele 2004). Slow Food has developed a 'Taste Education Kit', an instructional guide on sensory techniques to 'recognize quality food' (Slow Food International 2015). These pedagogical practices are noted by Eric Sarmiento (2017) in his review of research on alternative food networks (including Slow Food) as mobilising different bodies, subjectivities and nonhuman actors into political action in ways that expand on discursive techniques. Alongside building trust between consumers and producers, taste therefore also offers new possibilities for markets to be forged around locally-derived 'creative food' (Donald & Blay-Palmer 2006; Lee & Wall 2014) or Slow Food economies, a topic which I will explore in relation to Slow Food Mildura in the following section, followed by how these practices intersect with sustaining the commons that is created.

Despite the region's food bowl or commodity producing status, a report into food access in Mildura highlighted limitations to accessing fruit and vegetables due to the cost and supply of quality produce (Healthy Together Mildura 2013, p. 7). Barriers to local food access were identified

from both production, distribution and consumption perspectives. From the production side, poor market prices for local produce direct farmers to an export market. In turn, many farmers have exited the industry due to market downturns (particularly in citrus and wine grapes). Connectedly, there is no coordinated distribution system to capture excess produce and redistribute it locally. From a consumption side, alongside access barriers to local produce outlets, the cost of food is reported as a significant barrier, with 42.7% of the population reporting how the price of food is prohibitive in accessing the type of food they want. Taken together, these issues point to the unequal effects of the capitalist agribusiness markets that lead to the anomaly of ‘food’ deserts in a ‘food bowl’ (Healthy Together Mildura 2013, p. 14).

In a food bowl landscape ‘dominated by a productivist, neoliberal, monocultural model’ (Klocker et al. 2018, p. 22), a diversity of produce and markets are being fostered in Mildura. Burgeoning alternative markets offer a counterpoint to the agribusiness model of production and distribution. Opportunities to purchase local food are provided through a limited number of small produce stores such as Sunraysia Produce, the twice-monthly Sunraysia farmers’ market, the roadside fruit and vegetable stalls that sell cheap and fresh produce, and community gardens located at the Community House and Eco-Village sites (Healthy Together Mildura 2013). Other than the farmers’ market and annual Greek Festival of the Olive, the report points to a lack of events that ‘promote social connectedness through food and food production’ (p. 28). Recognition of Slow Food Mildura activities is absent in this report, however, along with more recent developments such as local fruit and veg swap scheme, and the Local Food Futures movement (which is led by Deb, co-leader of Slow Food Mildura), who along with the aforementioned ‘Food Next Door’ project that matches landless migrant farmers with vacant land to grow maize, the group has created a local food box scheme to augment access to locally grown and chemical free food. What these practices suggest is an inherent sociality between people, environment and the market to generate a diverse and creative or Slow Food economy rather than a singular agri-food economy. In this section I consider the role that Slow Food Mildura plays in working to foster these socialities via markets.

7.4.1 Enacting new socialities through Slow Food

Slow Food Mildura works in a number of ways to provide an alternative market in the region’s agribusiness setting. One key way this is done is by building relations up the supply chain and engaging with producers who are exhibiting different forms of creative food techniques. In this section I draw upon interviews with three producers (Elina, Tennille and Ian) who are involved

with Slow Food to elucidate the way that market socialities are being enacted within the supply chain as well as in market transactions more broadly.

Mildura's burgeoning creative food economy is preceded by a long history of innovation. Post-war migrants (particularly from Italy and Greece) lead innovation in agriculture through introducing new crops, techniques and technologies to the region, which were taken up by Anglo-Australia farmers (Klocker et al. 2018, p. 18). Elina, a key member of Slow Food, is one such migrant who travelled to Australia as a child with her family from Calabria. Elina and her husband Gino run a family enterprise called 'Table Top Grapes' cultivating diverse varieties of fresh table grapes and dried fruit such as sultanas, raisins and muscatels. Their operations have continued to evolve in response to environmental and health concerns in conventional dried fruit and table grape cultivation. Elina spoke of how their family business was moved to break from the standard chemical dipping process to experimenting with natural methods after her young daughter experienced an allergic reaction to sulphur. She reflected on the pivotal role this reaction to a chemical made in shifting production methods:

It makes you really think 'what are we putting in this fruit?' and then, that's what made us more determined that we need to find a better way (Elina, Interview, 10 December 2015).

This embodied reaction to the chemical process pushed the family to explore other production methods and they expanded into table grape growing, adapting to new water saving technologies, yet they were still motivated to change dried fruit practices.

We were still passionate about the dried fruit so we had to find some other way of drying our fruit. It was not because we were thinking of dollars, we did it because we wanted to produce a product that was natural and didn't have the chemicals. We weren't driven by what we were going to make out of it, we were driven by producing a product that everyone was going to say wow this is great...and we did you know and we changed and we started doing some dried fruit. We created our own way of doing it so we didn't have to put any chemicals in it (Elina, Interview, 10 December 2015).

By dehydrating the grapes by heat rather than chemicals, a more natural product was created and has led to innovations such as drying and selling grapes intact on the bunch (Figure 7.7). Elina recounted how this created a new product of cluster grapes and led them to registering to sell as an

individual packing shed rather than under the banner of the Australian Dried Fruits Association (ADFA)—the first packing shed in the country to do so. As a result of this experimental process of foregrounding health and the environment over profit, an innovative new product and market were created. This example also speaks to the ways that the mainstream market (and the associated regulations around distribution) were not all enforcing. Being responsive to nonhuman actors (such as chemicals) and relating to the fruit in new ways offered an opportunity for the Garreffas to ‘disentangle’ (Callon 1998; Roelvink 2016) from the conventional system and explore new more ethical and environmentally desirable possibilities.



Figure 7.7 Table Top Grapes – Dried on the vine

Similar people-environment relations have reshaped the wine industry. Chalmers Wines is a family-owned enterprise that produces wine from alternative grape varieties suited to local climatic conditions, in contrast to the region’s conventional varieties like Chardonnay. One of the daughters, Tennille explained to me how their focus is on southern Italian varieties such as Fiano or Vermentino which are more suited to the region’s Mediterranean-like conditions. Similar to Elina’s experience, Tennille stated how environmental factors are put before profit:

We are making this because this is what we firmly believe is the way forward because of the environmental factors first and foremost, because of the selection of the grape varieties, because of the climate, because of their suitability and matchability, and then you are building your clients and customers from there (Interview, Tennille, 14 April 2016).

The selection of the grape is driven by suitability to climate rather than the conventional market for ‘bulk wine’ which dictates more intensive water use as well as locking producers into a volatile market, as witnessed by the impact of the global wine glut on the region (Kiem et al. 2010, p. 4). The region’s wine market vulnerability has been exacerbated through its reliance on the ‘unfashionable’ Chardonnay variety (Askew et al. 2014, p. 252). In contrast, Tennille draws attention to how negative perceptions of the region as a ‘bulk’ producing wine area can be turned around through caring for the vines by hand rather than a machine:

It doesn’t matter which region you are from if you grow grapes with the right attitude of treating them as if you were in a premium wine growing region, with things like hand picking and hand pruning and you know more attention to detail in the vineyard (Interview, Tennille, 14 April 2016).

Tending to grapes in ways that are sensitive to the plant and its environment offer new possibilities to change perceptions of the region’s wine quality beyond bulk production. Other practices described by Tennille also contrast with industrialised wine production that relies upon a suite of tools and technologies such as laboratories to test ripeness, and computers to record and monitor data (Brice 2014). She animatedly described a technique she called ‘bucket wine’. These wines are part of an experimental project of bottling wine just weeks after harvest. Tennille described this practice as ‘R and D type wine-making’ that has evolved into a small batch label called ‘Chalmers Project’. The simplicity of this process is its novelty, which is in sharp contrast to the industrial processes underpinning bulk winemaking. Although Tennille was hesitant to call it a ‘commercial’ wine, it was attracting increasing interest locally, particularly at Slow Food events and in the metropolitan market. She passionately explains how their small-scale production process is largely shaped by instinct over scientific methods:

You are picking it or tasting it not based on its lab numbers, you are tasting it on does it taste good? Does it taste ready? You are not seeking a certain amount of sugar on the grape or seeking a certain amount of PH or acidity or that kind of thing, you are just tasting it and you are like—it tastes good, it tastes ready! It’s just a different way of looking at when you harvest. Because we are smaller producers and making our own decisions on picking times and things like that, we can do that (Interview, Tennille, 14 April 2016).

Tennille's observations highlight how their alternative wine varieties and production techniques are driven by affective sensory processes rather than directed by scientific modelling. This practice also resonates with Brice's observations on the agency of grapes in shaping the harvest beyond standardised constructs of time typical to industrial viticulture (Brice 2014, p. 960). This example demonstrates how encounters with new varieties are reframing relations with the market and the environment. Rather than being driven by (and subject to) commodity trends, relating to climatically favourable alternative varieties offers new possibilities in place. Similar to Elina's story, a new product was developed without a market, however, Slow Food events provided a way to build new market entanglements. These types of encounters will be discussed in greater detail in the next section following the third and final producer story, that of Ian and the quandong.

'An amazing journey' is how Ian described his experience of growing quandongs over the last 15 years. As we wandered around his orchard, he explained the mystifying process of growing the native fruit, pointing out the healthy trees from those which developed signs of die-back almost overnight. His desire to grow something different led him to quandongs, which he had learned about from another farmer who had little success. Starting out with around 350 trees, the crop was now down to about 100. He had to learn how to cultivate the fickle tree through a process of trial and error and had lost many trees by planting them too close to each, other with the stronger trees killing the weaker ones. He explained that their semi-parasitic composition meant that the trees couldn't process nitrogen meaning they have to latch onto a 'host' for nutrients. Finding a compatible host was a challenge because as the trees got healthier they killed the host. There had been some success in using native saltbush as a host and he was experimenting with citrus trees. I asked if you had to be creative as a grower—he agreed but added that you had to be 'prepared for failure'. Similar to Elina and Tennille's experiences above it is evident that creative food economies are underpinned by considerable experimentation and risk.

The opportunity to experiment with quandong growing was supported by Ian's full-time employment in a power company. His hobby farm was part of a long-term retirement plan and a buffer against a company restructure. The hobby status of the activity provided time to observe and adapt techniques in cultivating the 'fussy' and slow growing plant alongside the cultivation of other stone fruit (Figure 7.8). This intersects with the general profile of commercial quandong growing which is recognised as either a value-add to a larger farming enterprise or a 'weekend enterprise' (Clarke 2012, p. 48). Indeed, quandongs are regarded as a problematic candidate for transitioning from niche into broader horticultural production (Lethbridge 2016, p. 153). Although

a hobby enterprise, Ian relayed how the work was labour intensive for one person involving hand picking approximately a ton of golf-ball sized fruit every September and slicing, drying, vacuum-packing and distributing the fruit.



Figure 7.8 Quandong tree at Ian's orchard (15 April 2016)

In contrast to the specialised inputs and technologies of commodity farming (Lawrence 1987, p. 132), quandong propagation is underpinned by intricate host-plant relations. Walking amongst the orchard rows, Ian points out empty spots where trees have died suddenly and previously healthy trees are now showing signs of die-back:

See this here was one of my favourite trees. Four weeks ago it was one of my best trees. I loved this tree. It was quite interesting, this is one of the few trees that had native myoporum, it was nice and healthy and the myoporum started dying and I thought that's not good...and to me I'm not sure why, whether this tree all of a sudden need a whole input of nitrogen and it was just trying to grab it out of the host and it has killed the host...(Interview, Ian, 15 April 2016).

This exertion of ‘plant agency’ or obstinacy (Brice 2014, p. 944) has been both fascinating and frustrating for Ian. Plant agency disrupts human intention by acting in unforeseen ways, as Brice (p. 944) explains:

plants are often portrayed as subverting human designs in unexpected ways, particularly in accounts of Indigenous and European plants’ propensities to ‘abscond’ in their assigned roles within postcolonial Antipodean ecologies to produce unruly and sometimes hazardous landscapes.

The plant agency that is being exhibited in this case is suggestive of the quandong’s action in resisting domestication in an orchard setting by killing the ‘host’ it has been brought into relation with.

Plant agency provides important insights into the role of affect in understanding non-representational interactions in economic markets. Despite Ian’s referring to the quandong frequently as a ‘product’, intense emotions are attached to the experimental process of cultivation. Anderson (2009, p. 124) observes that emotional and embodied experiences contribute to a ‘relational sensibility’ or awareness of the human place in a ‘post-natural’ assemblage with nonhumans. While managing this difficult host-plant relationship has contributed to the downfall of some quandong growers (Clarke 2012, p. 47), Ian has persevered largely due to being fascinated by the ‘quandong mystique’ despite considerable losses. The cultivation of a niche product for a creative food economy thus reveals the complex web of relations involved in its co-production. The domestication of the ‘wild’ plant presents particular challenges. When I questioned whether the trees should be more productive in a ‘cared for’ environment, Ian revealed how the trees defy such logic:

We are producing this controlled environment which quandongs historically...they just don’t seem to adapt too well to being commercially grown and they will quite happily set out creating their own environment...(Interview, Ian, 15 April 2016).

This and the below quote emphasise recognition of nonhuman agency in cultivating creative food.

I’m a firm believer that the tree is in control of itself and we are part and parcel of the journey (Interview, Ian, 15 April 2016).

The unpredictability of the quandong growing process is carried over to the market. During the tour of Ian's orchard, he pointed out a light carpet of quandong kernels on the ground that serve as a reminder for produce left unharvested due to market volatility (Figure 7.9):

Ian: Because not many people grow them the supply and demand is like a wave, it's up and down. People get into it and one year you will be able to sell all of your product, no problems. The next year they haven't been able to get the supply they were promised so they will fold, and then where is my market gone? It's gone. So then you have to work out and try and find another market and sometimes you can for 12 months, it might be every second year you can find a market, and with dried product it will keep, so that wasn't a real issue but fresh product you basically have to have your market already set before the fruit ripens, so nothing much is going to waste and for many years you will see a lot of stone on the ground here.

Me: It's not worth picking?

Ian: I just didn't know what to do...I didn't know what to do, so you sold what you could and didn't worry if it dropped on the ground and that's the way growing them has been, up and down. And I was just hoping that once there they would be this sustainable seller or buyer for them to make this commercially viable because they are getting bigger trees now (Interview, Ian, 15 April 2016).



Figure 7.9 Unharvested quandong kernels (15 April 2016)

This story is indicative of the tumultuous market conditions faced by niche growers like Ian, where the variability in production is also linked to unpredictability in consumption patterns. Over time

however Ian's perseverance has led to new opportunities through Slow Food and the creation of new market agencements. Inspired by the interest from Slow Food Mildura in procuring quandongs for their events and an ensuing local magazine article documenting his story, Ian advertised the quandongs online and discovered other markets which led to the selling of the seed for jewellery making in Indonesia, emphasising new local as well as global markets. These practices point to how different types of local-global forces are at play that offer diversity to Mildura's image of being subordinated by global agribusiness. On the one hand, Ian is able to sell quandongs to a new market of those interested in local food, but he is also supplementing his income through an overseas market, disrupting the local-global binary that positions local places against the global as an all-mighty enforcer of capitalism (Gibson-Graham 2002).

The stories of these producers highlight the relational underpinning of growing creative or 'Slow Food' along the supply chain and the socialities that are involved in stories that are generally absent in industrial food systems. Furthermore, in each of these cases the producers were driven to experiment and develop a product without a pre-existing market—whether for environmental, health or material motivations. In the following section I explore how Slow Food acts to create a new market agencement with these producers and other types of food in the region and how this intersects with the commons that is being cultivated at the same time.

7.4.2 Practising a Slow Food Commons through markets

Slow Food Mildura is facilitating a number of exchanges in the market that are bringing consumers into contact with a creative or Slow Food economy through interactions with producers, plants and animals. Traditionally, this has been undertaken through events that bring chefs, producers and consumers together to encounter local food. These events include regular encounters at the Farmers' Market cooking stall where members of the convivium run food demonstrations and tastings and annual workshops like 'Slow Pig' or 'Slow Tomato'. 'Showcase' Slow Food Mildura events include the annual River Soiree as part of Slow Food International's Terra Madre Day program and the Festa della Vendemmia. At these showcase events, producers are invited to explain to the crowd their stories and provide insights into the techniques involved in cultivating creative local food.

For producers like Ian and Tennille, these events provide an important opportunity to have direct encounters with consumers, resonant with Pietrykowski's (2004) forementioned observation that building knowledge of the producer and production process is just as important as building

knowledge of the food. In our interview, Tennille explained the relational process of wine-making for the Festa, where Slow Food members get involved with picking the grapes, learning about the production process and then tasting their product shortly after (Interview, Tennille, 14 April 2016). On the night of the Festa, Tennille relayed there was a rush to purchase the wine after she explained the production process to the crowd, an encounter that helped connect a novel product to an appreciative audience. As Jon, one of the Slow Food members who was working on the bar for the event relays:

We got Tennille up, she told the story about the wine and where it came from, about the grapes, how it was made, how it was such small scale, the only wine that was made was available on the night. There was 6 dozen or something. And that's it, that's all the wine there was and people were coming up like 'man I want to buy a box. I want this, I want that' ...it was crazy (Interview, Jon, 13 November 2015)

Reflecting on her experience of the Festa, Tennille observed:

...it was nice to make that connection with people who obviously love food and wine because they are at the event anyway, they either know of Slow Food or are part of Slow Food...it was a great market (Interview, Tennille, 14 April 2016).

Slow Food events, therefore, provide key opportunities for producers and consumers to connect and strengthen the local food economy.

Slow Food Mildura also work to resocialise the supply chain by encouraging chefs to foster relations with producers directly, understanding how the local food supply chain operates differently to wholesale markets. Brad explained how the unsocial working conditions for chefs meant that they were often separated from those producing and consuming their food and this opportunity to resocialise has mutual benefits in getting out of the kitchen and mixing with both producers and consumers:

Our challenge with Slow Food is to get some of those chefs onboard and get them out of their working environment and in amongst the people as well. So first is getting in contact with growers, to not just pick up phones and bark orders down the end of it and expect to get good produce. It's actually to go out there and talk about it and understand that things don't just grow there like that... and secondly, it's the other side, get out there and tell that message to the consumer and get

the consumer to partake and take some interest just in what it is that they do and there is a lot of people who are interested in it (Brad, Interview, 13 November 2015).

As discussed in chapter 5, preparing a sustainability menu for a Slow Food event played a key role in mobilising Gio's enrolment in the collective and relating to local food as well as local producers. Slow Food Mildura also foster connections to student chefs through sponsoring local ingredients for a mystery box 'Chefs of the Future' challenge at TAFE (Figure 7.10)



Figure 7.10 *Slow Food sponsored mystery box for TAFE Chefs of the Future competition (Source: Slow Food Mildura, 10 July 2014)*

Showcase events like the Festa or River Soiree also draw together chefs from the region to prepare Slow Food, often using unfamiliar ingredients like the quandong. Deb recalled how one chef at the River Soiree event had acknowledged that his perceptions of the fruit transformed:

[One chef] said they never even considered using them because they thought they were bitter and then when they actually prepared them they thought 'these are amazing!' (Interview, Deb, 28 May 2016).

These interactions help to grow a market by providing the opportunity for people to encounter the quandong. As Ian observes:

A lot of the bush tucker you would hardly know that they were fruit. You would think 'I wouldn't eat that'! But once they go through a process—and the Slow Food crew do a magnificent job of turning this bush tucker into something which is just delicious! (Interview, Ian, 15 April 2016).

Ian's connection with the Slow Food Movement offered a timely new market for quandongs at a time when he had begun to 'lose interest' in persevering due to market volatility and cultivation difficulties.

It's a tough road, but Slow Food Mildura has given me another market and we'll work together because I want them to grow and they obviously need a product, so if they can get a local product, we can work together on that and make something happen and promote the area and the bush tucker (Interview, Ian, 15 April 2016).

In turn, Deb observed how the success had, in turn, led to a reduced supply:

this year for the Festa, we couldn't get any quandongs from him—he sold out [of stock]! ...we like to think that's because of us, because we had been using them for 3 years at our events and talking to chefs....(Interview, Deb, 28 May 2016).

This quote also emphasises how interdependencies between producers and Slow Food Mildura need to be ethically negotiated, taking into consideration the survival needs of others (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013, p. 104). Ian requires a stable market for the unpredictable quandong to survive into the future and Slow Food require a supply of local food, requiring negotiating and working together, in contrast to the conventional market regulated by quotas and contracts.

Alongside the breaking down of production-consumption binaries, Slow Food relations also bring attention to nature-culture divisions. For instance, Charlotte Craw (2012) has argued that the bush foods industry advances nature-culture binaries through separating native or 'wild' foods from their cultural relations through packaging and marketing. This speaks to Ian's observation that bush foods can be indiscernible as food to non-Indigenous people. Craw (2012, p. 19) highlights how the parts of the bush food 'commodity' industry respond through packaging where 'unfamiliar foods are rendered more palatable through nationalist narratives and the romance of the bush', rather than more nuanced representations of culture and place. Slow Food Mildura work to

introduce Indigenous food to other palates in a way that supports local growers directly and it is embedded in a broader activist objective of the Ark of Taste program that seeks to catalogue Indigenous food that is relatively unknown or in danger of being lost. While this program works to maintain the ongoing culinary commons (as discussed in chapter 6), broader tensions around cultural appropriation also need to be addressed in the Slow Food movement more broadly (Donati 2005). This demonstrates the ethical responsibility of the market in affording more possibilities for Indigenous growers.

Outside of large events, the fortnightly Sunraysia farmers' market provides a central point for Slow Food Mildura to connect consumers with producers through their cooking stall. These connections support options for growers outside of the supermarkets, particularly for produce that fails to meet their strict aesthetic standards. For instance, at one market I observed Gio display zucchinis he was preparing for a risotto that were bruised in a hailstorm, informing the crowd how they were still tasty and good to use (Figure 7.11). This 're-mattering' of food not only highlights the importance of taste but that of relations between consumers and producers in building new agencements around Slow Food, taking into account the livelihoods of producers into the market transaction (Roelvink 2016, p. 128).



Figure 7.11 Gio at Slow Food demonstration at Sunraysia Farmer's Market highlighting zucchinis damaged by hailstorm (19 November 2016)

The cultivation of a Slow Food commons in Mildura provides insights into how new socialities with food are being reconfigured through culture. Commons researcher David Bollier observes the pivotal role that culture plays in shaping the commons, stating how ‘world-making’ communities are ‘animated by their own values, traditions, history and intersubjectivity’ (2016, p. 7). The Italian culinary traditions prevalent in Mildura allowed the roots of the movement to take hold. The Garreffa family has provided an important step in putting the Slow Food commoning principles to practice through taste education, where participants are what Bruno Latour describes as ‘learning to be affected’ through evoking sensory awareness to difference (Latour 2004b). In the workshops, participants are guided by Elina Garreffa who teaches the group:

All the things that could go wrong and the things that are right, and the things that are good about the sauce. There’s a good sauce and a bad sauce like there is a good salami and a bad salami, so once the group recognises that they can see it... And they go out and they know the difference (Interview, Elina, 10 December 2015, see Figure 7.12).



Figure 7.12 Slow Tomato Workshop (Source: Slow Food Mildura, 25 April 2015)

The appreciation of others in active participation or learning by doing, not just consuming, demonstrates the role that Slow Food Mildura plays in generating knowledge around and connections to local food culture.

Every year is different and that’s the beauty of it and you know it should be because it’s a different pig every year. You know it’s not the same pig and it’s not treating meat like it’s meat...you are

what you are eating is eating and how is that being influenced, and its breeds and who is looking after it (Interview, Brad, 13 November 2015).

This ‘mattering’ of meat resonates with Evans and Miele’s (2012, p. 301) concept of ‘foodsensing’ as ‘a lively process, where most of the action occurs in between the consumer and consumed—the sensor and sensed’ in and doing so, bridges a disconnection with nonhuman welfare to ‘make animals matter’. The power of these material actions also resonate with Bennett observing (2007, p. 134):

Human and nonhuman bodies re-corporealize in response to each other; both exercise formative power and also offer themselves as matter to be acted upon. Eating, then, reveals not only the interdependence of humans and edible matter, but also a capacity to effect social change inherent in human and nonhuman bodies alike.

For Deb, such activities comprise part of the politics of ‘disguised activism’ as discussed in chapter 5, where people are learning about food system issues by getting involved in the production process in a fun and non-threatening environment. In this way these workshops act as a place where markets can therefore be reframed:

I like to think that as people are becoming more aware of who we are, that they are becoming more aware of what our message is and what we stand for. And that will modify how people choose to eat and that’s what has the potential to change the world (Interview, Deb, 14 November 2015).

Deb considered these types of hands-on activities as disguised activism since ‘everyone relates to food’ (Interview, 14 September 2015). Such activities also help to narrow production and consumption binaries by getting people to participate in provisioning local food and how Slow Food works to cultivates these relations through fostering a sense of taste, community and place and in turn, building ethical decisions into consumption practices (Roelvink 2016, p. 128).

7.5 Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter sought to explore what types of market exchanges underpin rural creative economies and how these exchanges articulate with the commons that is being created through Booktowns and Slow Food. Both Clunes Booktown and Slow Food Mildura foster ways to exchange goods outside of capitalist commodity markets by providing opportunities for producers and consumers to encounter each other directly. Opportunities for encounter are provided through an alternative

market of workshops, secondhand book and farmers' markets, festivals, workshops and author/producer talks and local retail outside of desocialised corporate supply chains (e.g. Amazon or major supermarkets). From a diverse economies perspective, these activities not only show a plethora of market-based activities outside the sphere of capitalist commodity markets, but also show how these activities work in complement with global supply chains such as Booktown traders sustaining their living through selling books online, or Ian finding a market for quandong kernels in Indonesia. These activities not only challenge local-global binaries depicting local areas as suppressed by omnipotent global forces (Gibson-Graham 2002), but also shows how supply chains can be reconfigured as 'links across difference', part of an alliance of producers, consumers and goods that can disrupt all-powerful notions of global capitalism (Tsing 2012a).

Clunes Booktown and Slow Food Mildura play a pivotal role in disrupting commodity supply chains. These groups work to 'reframe' the market (Roelvink 2016) by entangling consumers around the material properties of the 'book' and 'food', along with fostering relations up the supply chain through encounters with producers, chefs and distributors/traders. For Clunes Booktown, market socialities are created through emphasising the physical qualities of the printed book versus e-books and its compatibility with the built heritage of the town. Through this physical marketplace, consumption-production-distribution binaries are replaced by face-to-face encounters between books, consumers, book traders and authors and mount a challenge to assumed lack of viability of printed book trade and 'declining' goldfields towns. For Slow Food Mildura, the experiences of the producers demonstrate how a range of nature-culture relations are animated through creative food production processes, particularly how innovation is inspired through learning from the vine or plant rather than industrialised techniques or scientific modelling. The producers profiled in this chapter illustrated how 'being affected' by the vine or plant drove ongoing creativity and experimentation without a pre-existing market. The novelty of these goods makes building a general market a challenging process. Through showcasing these niche foods on menus, at the farmers' market cooking stall and inviting the producers to speak at events, Slow Food Mildura helps to foster a new market and teach consumers to also be 'affected' by food and highlight a diversity beyond industrial food systems (Latour 2004b).

Rather than the market acting as a force to enclose the commons, this chapter suggests that practices of commoning are possible through market exchanges. For instance, immaterial resources like stories and knowledge are traded at author talks and Slow Food workshops. These practices help to sustain the Booktown and Slow Food commons through market-based activities. While

some of these events are free to participate, others like the Booktown Festival and Slow Food workshop charge a fee, which returns surplus to the ongoing production of the Booktown through monthly author talks or is used to pay a fair price for good and clean produce used at Slow Food events. Volunteer labour and community participation in these market-based activities further add to rather than draw down the commons, which is contingent upon use for survival. In doing so, the commons and market are interdependent and co-constitute each other (Bollier 2016; Cameron 2015; Healy 2018). This interdependence requires careful navigation in terms of maintaining ongoing production. For instance, in Clunes, the Booktown concept needs on ongoing supply of customers and demand for books to be sustainable, with insights from Booktowners showing difficulties in maintaining a Booktown seven days a week. In Mildura, growing demand for niche products has exhausted Ian's supply at times, yet this could also open the doors to a more expansive Indigenous food economy for Indigenous growers to enter the market. Despite these tensions, such actions demonstrate how markets, when viewed relationally, animate local assets and sustain the commons.

Overall, this chapter showed how creative economy markets can be conceived as social entities that contribute to action and sustain the commons. In doing so, Booktowns and Slow Food play a role in resocialising markets by building a 'relational marketplace' that takes into account the sociality of the commodities that are exchanged and the livelihoods of those behind their production and distribution. By understanding this relational marketplace, we get a better understanding of how the rural creative economy can strengthen rather than separate social, economic and environmental relations and re-suffix place to market.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This thesis problematised the creative economy as a solution to decline, based on the standard neoliberal formula foregrounding the creative class as leading agents of regeneration. I commenced this study by discussing how scholarship on the creative economy was at a crossroads due to growing tensions surrounding its framing according to capitalist economic logic. This has particular implications for place, with scholars such as Jamie Peck pointing out how the coupling of creative economies with place regeneration, as epitomised through the creative class, is not an innocuous pairing. Instead, this concerning trend is found by Peck and other cultural and political economists, to foreground a neoliberalised typology of a creative class, generally in knowledge economy and tech occupations, and the (mostly urban) places that cater to their lifestyle and consumption preferences. The introduction of rural areas to these ideas similarly positions post-industrial (or post-productive) places as needing to be saved by attracting a heroic creative class, validating their status as ‘vibrant’ and claiming a position on creative leaderboards. These ties to entrepreneurialism and capitalism puts places in competition for funding and attracting skilled workers, perpetuating a divide between creative versus uncreative places, and exacerbating concerns around decline.

Interventions in creative economy research are exploring the ways that a reframed creative economy could enable new possibilities rather than disempower local people and places. Postcapitalist scholarship is positioned as providing timely opportunities to address the growth agenda of the entrepreneurial city (North & Nurse 2014) and also delink the creative economy from ‘unbridled virtues of the market and capitalistic growth’ (Banks & O’Connor 2017, p. 649). Engaging with the postcapitalist scholarship of J.K. Gibson-Graham and community economy colleagues who are rethinking the economy broadly, and creative economy specifically (Hwang 2013; Templar Rodrigues 2018), I have sought to explore how rural creative economies might be constituted in ways that enable new possibilities in rural places—across identities, sectors and capitalistic measures. To achieve this aim, a qualitative ethnographic approach was undertaken in

the rural Victorian towns of Clunes and Mildura to explore how collectives were engaging in creative economic activities in response to local concerns around decline.

In this concluding chapter, I return to the research questions and reflect upon the contribution this thesis makes to knowledge on rural creative economies along with considerations for future research. Finally, I discuss implications for policy, academic scholarship and community action.

8.2 Revisiting the thesis rationale and questions

The thesis sought to address tensions in creative economy research by moving away from attempts to map and measure creative economy responses to rural decline through the heroic creative class as a proxy. Building on the growing emphasis towards *relational approaches* to the creative economy as discussed in chapter 2, a case was made for exploring the creative economy through a diverse and community economies theoretical framework for three main reasons. Firstly, based on its rejection of essentialising the economy as capitalist and therefore confined to specific actors and sectors, this theoretical approach offered a conceptual reframing of the economy. This provided an important entry point to explore rural creative economy actors and activities outside of conventional techniques such as census data occupation and income measures. Secondly, Gibson-Graham's framework offers an instructive approach to studying economic dynamics *in place* where alternative and noncapitalist practices of economic experimentation are left open for analysis rather than instinctively rejected as noneconomic or uncreative. Thirdly, Gibson-Graham's emphasis on economic relations focuses strongly on the sociality of the people and things that comprise an economy, offering insight into the dynamic ways that creative economies might be drawn together in place. This theoretical approach, therefore, provided a useful frame to explore how the economic experiments undertaken by Booktowns and Slow Food can be considered as part of a creative economy and challenge normative urban capitalist framings.

Many cultural and economic geographers highlight the rural as an instructive site for uncoupling the creative economy from its urban capitalist metrics. Rather than conceiving the creative economy as serving GDP, scholars have pointed out how nonmarket desires and exchanges foreground social rather than capitalistic values in rural creative economies (Hwang 2013; Waitt & Gibson 2013). Others have shown how rural creative economy activities take place in people's spare time and as part of community-driven activities such as music (Gibson & Gordon 2018) or postcard production (Mayes 2010). Furthermore, the resources that underpin rural creative

economies are often drawn from a shared cultural stock endowed by place (Scott 2011), rather than individual property. Such insights problematise the individualistic and capitalistic framing of the creative class, along with challenging perceptions of creative economies as reified to urban creative clusters and districts (Edensor et al. 2009; Gibson & Robinson 2004). Instead, through communal expressions of culture and creativity, rural areas offer understanding into how creative economy networks form across multiple actors and places.

Scholarship on rural creative economies, particularly the work of Chris Gibson, Leo Hwang, Susan Luckman and Abby Templer Rodrigues, offer important insights into their relational and non-market dynamics. This thesis built on this work by focusing on how the creative economy is constituted in place as an outcome of collective action. In this thesis I therefore looked to the possibilities of rural creative economies in addressing concerns for local resources such as heritage buildings, rivers and land. Looking to new possibilities required reframing the creative economy beyond its restrictive container where action is limited to discrete occupational categories or social class positions, and an opening into thinking differently around how rural creative economies are constituted and addressing decline. Gibson-Graham's diverse and community economies approach was supported by actor-network theory as a methodological framework in looking to how relations between entities shape action rather than privileging agency in a singular actor. The strength that this approach provided is a turn away from humanistic and rational approaches to change, allowing the material effects of place to also be considered through its nonhuman constituents. This opened up a broader perspective on how place is an active rather than passive participant in responding to decline.

The thesis was shaped by four research questions that sought to elucidate:

- RQ1. How are rural creative economies emerging in place?
- RQ2. Who is enacting change through rural creative economies beyond a creative class?
- RQ3. How are place-based cultural resources utilised in rural creative economies in response to concerns for decline?
- RQ4. What types of market transactions underpin rural creative economies outside of commercialisation and GDP?

8.2 Key Findings

RQ1. How are rural creative economies emerging in place?

This research question was the focus of Chapter 4 which explored the context of place in generating creative economy responses to decline. Literature on the creative economy positions it as a new paradigm to solve economic decline in cities and rural areas alike. Decline has manifested itself in rural areas partly through the effects of economic externalities and restructuring, which have imparted an infrastructure of unutilised spaces, degraded resources, and social challenges. The overt emphasis on the creative economy as a neoliberal policy prescription, however, posits a formulaic toolkit of solutions to foster a creative economy tied to consumption and growth, without addressing the problems that were created through this system in the first place. By asking, how rural creative economies are emerging in place I sought to firstly understand the existing conditions that foster rural creative economies in Clunes and Mildura.

Exploring how place histories are intertwined with broader political ideologies and events, this chapter highlighted how narratives of decline were shaped in relation to progress, particularly through productivist and capitalistic use of resources. Clunes and Mildura's pivotal place in mining and agricultural booms and busts was identified. This chapter provided insights in how previous productivist 'matters of fact' of maximising output and profit were being reshaped into 'matters of concern' around resource use and sustainability. In Clunes and Mildura, this is evidenced through groups gathering around issues of decline by connecting with the movements of Booktowns and Slow Food to reimagine the use of local resources.

The contribution of this chapter is that rather than being subjugated to national and global economic externalities and accepting decline as 'fact', rural places are finding inspiration in remobilising local economies around concerns for local resources. This is visible in Clunes through the repositioning of the economy around books in activating and protecting its heritage streetscape, which is also used as a bulwark against the reinstatement of mining. Similarly, in Mildura, the amplifying of local food culture is driven by concerns for environmental decline, namely the loss of water, and the devastating social effects of fickle commodity markets upon growers. This chapter showed how rather than the creative economy acting as a generic fix for decline, it is evident that decline is influencing the fix and enabling new economic possibilities in place. This leads into the following chapter that questioned who is enacting change in a rural creative economy?

RQ2. Who enacts change in rural creative economies?

Chapter 5 explored who was enacting change *in place*. Predominant approaches to the rural creative economy have focused overtly on the role of the creative individual in generating economic activity by exercising their human or creative capital. Following Richard Florida, a wide body of literature has gravitated around the idea of the creative class as leading change agents. This idea has extended into rural areas as ways to identify how economic change is led by entrepreneurial, or ‘cosmopolitan’, outsiders who are mapping their new visions and tastes upon place, thus presenting the existing community as passive receivers of change. These views discount the layered histories of change and innovation that have underpinned rural community life. Furthermore, global networks like Booktowns and Slow Food are associated with revolutionary founders as driving change. These tensions between individual versus community, therefore, lead me to bring who is enacting change into focus.

Findings illustrated how in both Clunes and Mildura action could not be attributed to one heroic individual, with both central figures Tess Brady and Stefano de Pieri describing themselves as ‘conduits’ for change, using their knowledge and networks to draw together people and resources to mobilise action around concerns linked to decline and the millennium drought. To respond to concerns through ‘Booktowns’ or ‘Slow Food’ required mobilising social and material relations in place to engage in economic experimentation.

The concept of the hybrid collective (Callon & Law 1995) provided analytical insights into tracing the constitution of a relational network. Findings showed how agency was distributed through each network, stemming from concern of decline and drought as a driving impetus for each network, to the roles of various members of the collective (e.g. producers, consumers and distributors) engaging in experimentation around the Booktown and Slow Food concept. These hybrid collectives showed how nonhumans played a pivotal role in economic change, bringing books in relation to buildings and beings, and food in relation to bodies and environmental concerns. These fluid relations demonstrated how interdependencies between people and place drive collective action around a rural creative economy, highlighting the importance of supporting diverse relations that are tied to place rather than attending to a particular occupation or sector. This chapter also raised the question—if place resources are part of the collective, how are they being utilised as part of this new vision of an economy? This question was the focus of the following chapter.

RQ3. How are place-based cultural resources used in a rural creative economy?

Scholarship on the use of resources in rural creative economies highlights both opportunities and tensions in considering how cultural resources are being used for economic change. The creative economy is recognised for its role in commercialising cultural commons, comprising both material resources such as traditional food, regional landscapes or heritage structures, along with immaterial property (e.g. knowledge, stories, recipes and practices). These property forms are increasingly recognised as a local commons of shared resources that require protection from overexploitation by commodification or privatisation or conversely, threats of disappearance due to underuse. For Booktowns and Slow Food, concerns over the decline of such cultural resources motivate their mobilisation. The fragility of these cultural resources, therefore, requires careful attention to how they are used and managed, which lead me to question ‘how are cultural resources used in a rural creative economy?’

Findings from chapter 6 showed how Booktowns and Slow Food intersect with the idea of the commons due to their visions for repurposing community resources away from corporate control and building a new economy around alternative forms of local resource use, access, benefit, care and responsibility. To stage a Booktown Festival involves sharing property that is empty or normally confined to businesses, institutions and specific groups (ranging from real estate agents to schools), along with repurposing the main street as an events space. For Slow Food Mildura, a range of property forms were drawn together in providing an alternative to agri-food such as the open-source floodplain, accessing private property to glean from local growers (such as olives) and sharing private homes for food workshops. The creative economies enacted through Booktowns and Slow Food drew both existing residents and external networks together to leverage material and immaterial property together through festival and events-based commons that worked to perpetuate local knowledge commons and resource stewardship. This was done by leveraging a diversity of material (private business, state institutions and public land) and immaterial property (stories, knowledge, cultural practices) for broader benefit by enlarging Clunes’ potential as a Booktown, or Mildura’s alternative to agri-food. Findings demonstrated that these examples of book and food commons are not without tension around who has access to the commons created, the problem of free riders, and elitist perceptions of such activities. This tension is taken up further in the following chapter which explores practices of commons cultivation through market activities.

RQ4. What types of market transactions underpin rural creative economies

Literature on the creative economy emphasises the market potential of creative resources. This is driven by a focus on the creative economy as perpetuating the commoditisation of cultural and creative resources to boost GDP. Market-based approaches to the creative economy thus typically emphasise its neoliberal framing based on competition and individual profit maximisation. A growing number of scholars have shown however how nonmarket interactions in creative economies allow spaces for people to interrelate, shape ethical actions and account for broader community benefit and wellbeing. This also resonates with the founding philosophies of Booktowns and Slow Food in their attempts to reframe the market around local and ethical interrelations. In this chapter I therefore sought to understand ‘what types of market transactions underpin rural creative economies’?

Chapter 7 findings showed how the commons created through Booktowns and Slow Food are sustained through market practices. This was underpinned by alternative and nonmarket forms of exchange that emphasised the sociality of markets by demonstrating the interrelations between people and resources in creative economies. This was evidenced through Booktown and Slow Food market activities that facilitate new encounters between producers/consumers and humans/nonhumans via cooking workshops, author talks, and festivals celebrating books and food. These relations draw attention to the cultural resources that are being maintained (such as local food), by teaching others to be affected by culture and place and the fragile resources that constitute these economies. By understanding this relational marketplace, we get a better understanding of how the rural creative economy can strengthen rather than separate social, economic and environmental relations and reaffix place to markets.

Overall, findings from this study bring into focus the possibilities afforded by place in enacting creative economic response to decline. Rather than being perceived as passive victims of change or uncreative places, Clunes and Mildura have provided key insights into how rural areas are contending with the uneven effects of economic restructuring and capitalism’s ‘spatial fixes’ that have left a residual infrastructure of social, built and environmental decline. By turning to the creative economy in response to decline, Clunes Booktown and Slow Food Mildura are showing how new relations are being drawn together through concerns, outside of occupational groupings or identities such as a creative class. Demonstrating how the rural creative economy is constituted through place via concerns, collectives, commons and markets offers new understandings into ideas of place vibrancy and the possibilities of creative economies in building on the inherited

assets of place, drawing upon creativity that is already there and leveraging creative economy activities for wider ends rather than individual benefit. While this is not without ‘friction’, these activities point to a more ethically robust understanding of creative economy change beyond capitalocentric and anthropogenic idealisations of the creative class.

In the following section I consider further what these findings taken together mean along with further implications.

8.3 Reflections, Implications and Future Considerations

On a personal level, this research journey provided important insights into creative economies specifically and rural economic change more broadly. Before commencing this research I assumed that the creative economy was a discrete category that could be applied and measured in rural areas using the creative class as a proxy. I therefore accepted the outside/entrepreneurial creative class as ‘fact’ and an importable ‘solution’ to place concerns. From attending the Regional Institute of Australia presentation towards the end of this thesis, it appears that although my view of creative economies has changed, policy interest in validating places as creative and ‘vibrant’ through a creative class presence still ensues. This makes the case for reconceptualising the rural creative economy timely and important.

Through undertaking this research I have found that a diverse and community economies reframed approach to rural creative economies presents a more holistic and complex picture of economic change. Rather than seeing rural communities as passive subjects of globalisation and decline, it is evident through Clunes and Mildura that place is an active author in the rewriting of economic futures. In these sites creative economies do not follow a prescribed pathway as formulaic solutions driven by a creative class and an empty creative cities ‘brand’. Instead, rural creative economies offer the potential for wider community engagement around visions for a local economy and the ability to draw together actors from an array of traditional sectors such as agriculture in creating cultural commons.

The contribution of this thesis lies in explaining how the constitution of rural creative economies in place provides new understandings into the range of economic actors that enact a creative economy—including the nonhuman elements of place. Creative economies are embedded in place through valuable (and fragile) cultural and environmental resources such as buildings, stories, food,

land and recipes that require careful negotiation to maintain the ongoing production of the cultural commons that is being created. These commons are in turn not viable without a community who are sharing their own resources, skills and knowledge and building a relational marketplace that works to strengthen connections to place. Thus, when viewed outside of its normative capitalist framing, the creative economy can be understood as an *outcome* of relations between people and place, rather than a top-down policy device that is associated with perpetuating inequality and division. This provides important insights into how the creative economy can shift from a tool that divides and commodifies, to emerging from care of people and place.

The thesis offers three main contributions and considerations for future scholarship, policy and practice. Firstly, it seeks to contribute to the new ethical direction for creative economy scholarship that is concerned with how it can respond to rather than exacerbate contemporary social and environmental challenges (Banks & O'Connor 2017; O'Connor 2017). By looking to place, this thesis has shown how rural creative economies can be underpinned by concerns for social and environmental challenges and offers opportunities for future scholarship to take the concept of the cultural commons further in exploring relational and ethically driven approaches to the creative economy in both rural and urban areas.

Secondly, for policymakers the thesis has investigated the potential for communities to work outside sectors and silos in undertaking economic experimentation and drawing together new relations. These relations are tenuous however and based on an economy that is being created largely through leveraging people's spare time, property, skills and good will. I argue that privileging local knowledge and investing in these relations rather than creative class aspirations provides a more durable approach for regional economic development. The thesis underscores the belief that rural communities are active rather than passive agents of change and that by investing in these relations rather than individuals or sectors provides a truly place-based approach to regional economic development.

Finally, in considering implications for practitioners, this thesis has shown that despite the middle-class perceptions of cultural networks, collective action through culture has the potential to bring together old and new, reimagine local resource use and sharing, and inspire market sociality. However, it also requires a genuine process of ethical negotiation around who can access and benefit the cultural commons that is created.

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