

# **A New American Revolution? Associative Economics and the Future of the Food Movement**

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The American landscape has been witnessing a slow but promising revolution over the last six or seven decades. Clothed sometimes as a ‘sustainable agriculture movement’, ‘organic food and farming industry’, or ‘good food revolution’, it is really, I would suggest, the struggling emergence of a new economy in the USA, one based on a fundamentally different set of values, principles and practices from those which most of us have been raised to think of as the driving forces behind economic life.

My first taste of this revolution came back in the early 1980s when I was a sophomore at Oberlin College, Ohio, and a member of a student-owned and -run, natural food ‘dining co-op’. These dining co-ops have been a steady fixture of Oberlin College life since the 1950s – which in and of itself is a remarkable achievement, given the continuous change in the student bodies and therefore co-op leadership.<sup>1</sup>

While working together with the other students to cook and clean and manage the co-op, which fed hundreds of us three natural-food meals each day, and which was in and of itself a revolutionary experience, my real awakening came one evening after a meal, when a student stood up and read a rather long account of the fate of chickens in modern industrial-scale poultry farms. This was the first time I had learned of those deplorable conditions, and I suspect that was true for many of us young people. I distinctly remember the silence that fell on the room that day, as waves of shock, outrage, grief and compassion poured through us.

Herein lies, I believe, one of the most fundamental yet overlooked features of this emergent economic revolution – namely, that it is based, at the deepest level, on a new and growing human capacity for profound empathy and connection with other beings. Indeed, I think it could readily be argued that the driving force behind the food movement is in fact a kind of spiritual awakening, a shift in consciousness, a change of heart that results in new ways of seeing and being in the world. This inner shift can lead one to feel the Earth and her creatures as a part of one’s own essential being, and extend one’s sense of responsibility to include the whole planet. You could also call it an awakening of conscience.

It is remarkable to me that though there are hundreds and thousands – and perhaps, today, millions – of stories from farmers, entrepreneurs, activists and consumers that attest to

this awakening, this aspect or dimension of the food movement is often not explicitly recognized nor celebrated. But it is there, nonetheless, as a deeply felt reality and is, I would suggest, the hidden fountainhead of this movement.

This taste of a revolution at Oberlin became a full draught of new wine that summer when I attended a Prairie Festival at the Land Institute in Kansas, where I had my first encounters with the Kentucky farmer and author Wendell Berry and the pioneering biologist and plant geneticist Wes Jackson – two individuals who had recently emerged as key leaders of the food movement. Listening to Wendell, with his measured drawl and Lincolnesque bearing, peel back the layers of the dark heart of mainstream American values, and then Wes, like a fiery old-time preacher calling down the holy spirit of the soil, I felt the placeless landscape of my middle-class upbringing begin to fade far into the background. There was indeed a revolution afoot in America, but towards what end? And what did it ask of me, a young man studying theatre and creative writing with no previous experience or interest in agriculture?

The answers to these questions only began to take form in me in the late 1980s when I became a member of one of the first community-supported agriculture (CSA) farms in the USA. Though pioneering organic farms, natural food stores and co-ops like the ones I encountered at Oberlin had already carved out a small foothold in the landscape of America by that time, and though the atrocities of factory farms, together with the writings and work of individuals like Wendell Berry and Wes Jackson, had begun to awaken deep and dormant forces of empathy and conscience in thousands of Americans, it was only with the emergence of CSAs, I would suggest, that the food revolution began to really take root in American life, drawing thousands upon thousands of new people into the movement by bringing them into a new and more intimate relationship to the renewing life of agriculture.

### **The Radical Vision of the Early CSAs**

Though many have come to think of CSA as little more than an alternative marketing strategy for farmers, it is important to realise that for the pioneers of the CSA movement, like my friends at Temple Wilton Farm in New Hampshire, CSA represented a bold attempt to embody a radical new way of thinking about agriculture based on the economic insights of Rudolf Steiner. They felt, for example, that there was no future for agriculture unless the whole community began to take as much responsibility for local farms as the farmers themselves.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, in many of the early CSAs began the practice of forming a core group of consumers who worked with the farmers to establish the annual budget for the farm,

down to the last detail, and reach out to other possible members in the community. The vision was not one of members buying food from a local farm through an equal share price paid up front, but rather of community members committing to care for the farm as whole, in partnership with the farmers, over the long term. One could think of it as a new kind of gift economy: the members made free-will gifts of time and money to support the well-being of the farm, and the farm then offered up all its fruits as a gift to the community.

At Temple Wilton, inspired by Steiner's associative ideas, what each member could contribute to the farm had to be an individual matter. To do this day, for example, there is not an evenly distributed share price at Temple Wilton. Rather, all members attend an annual meeting each year to review and discuss the farm's total budget, and then each decides what amount they feel they can contribute to that budget. Each member then writes down his or her proposed financial offering on a piece of paper, and if those sums don't add up to meet the annual budget, the members go around again and offer additional sums until the budget is met. The process, in other words, is highly participatory, communal and transparent.

While I was a member of Sunways Farm rather than Temple Wilton Farm, I nonetheless caught this spirit of the early CSA movement, and realising the powerful role that non-farmers like myself could play in this new American revolution, I decided, incongruous as it seemed at the time, that I wanted to make agriculture the focus of my life's work.

## **The Growth and Decline of the Food Movement**

Since that time, I have had the privilege of being an active part of the food movement as a consumer activist, a community organizer of dozens of local and regional food-system projects, a facilitator of investments in organic farmland, and as a board member and Executive Director of several non-profit farm organizations. And while this movement remains somewhat on the margins of mainstream American life, the growth I have witnessed is truly astounding. Consider just a few data points:

- The number of farmers' markets across the country has nearly doubled between 2008 and 2013, from 4,685 to 8,144. In 1994, there were only about 1,755 farmers' markets in the United States;<sup>3</sup>
- Some have estimated that there are now as many as 6,000 community-supported agriculture projects in the United States;<sup>4</sup>
- Consumer demand for organic food has grown by double digits nearly every year since the 1990s. Between 1997 and 2015, for example, organic sales increased from \$3.6 billion to \$43.3 billion;<sup>5</sup>

- More than 4 million acres of US farmland are now devoted to organic agriculture, representing an 11 percent increase over two years ago. The number of certified organic farms is close to 15,000, rising just over 6 percent since 2014;<sup>6</sup>
- Many in the supply chain believe that non-GMO will be a product claim of growing importance to consumers. In 2016 some 49 percent of manufacturers planned to introduce products that are non-GMO.<sup>7</sup>

As encouraging as these statistics may seem, many challenges currently beset the further development of this movement, perhaps most notably exemplified by the recent buy out of Whole Foods supermarkets by the massive online merchandizer Amazon, not to mention the recent passage of HR 1599, The Safe and Accurate Food Labelling Act of 2015, otherwise known as the ‘Dark Act’, which makes it ever-more difficult to secure a genuine genetically modified organism (GMO) labelling programme in the USA.

But these are only the latest and most outstanding examples. For years now, in part through the transfer of organic certification to the federal government in 2002, we have witnessed a steady decline in the integrity of organic farming and processing practices, as articulated so clearly in Michael Pollan’s book *The omnivore’s dilemma*.<sup>8</sup> Even CSAs have for many farmers become just another marketing strategy or ‘box scheme’ – and for many consumers, just too much bother. In other words, the food movement seems to be bleeding integrity at every turn. What is to be done?

## **The Need for a Clear and Shared Vision**

The thesis of this chapter is that, while the food movement gives expression to profoundly good work at many levels of society, we remain a very fragmented movement and at every turn subject to erosion and the compromising of our core values and intentions, because we lack a clear vision of the future society, and especially the future economic system towards which we are working – and flowing from this vision, a clear set of guiding principles for our work. Many academics have been saying the same thing for years, for example:

...we contend that the agri-food systems change community needs to develop proactive and shared visions of what ‘should be’ and a firm agreement on the fundamental steps to make things right... These shared visions are essential to produce master frames with sufficient mobilizing capacity. Their absence is due to the multiplicity of issues and groups within the food systems change area....<sup>9</sup>

Or as Michael Shumann, another prominent leader in the food movement, once put it:

Too little is being invested today in answering a fundamental question: What exactly are we organizing for? Many of our past 'answers' are obsolete. State socialism lies in ruins, and Great Society liberalism is increasingly outmoded.... Can anyone say, with confidence, what our economic program is?<sup>10</sup>

## **Rudolf Steiner and the Emergent Economy**

Long before Otto Scharmer and others began to articulate the idea that human beings have the capacity to tap intuitively into emergent properties of the future and thus work consciously and co-operatively with the driving forces of history, in the early twentieth century Rudolf Steiner was already practising this methodology.<sup>11</sup> Steiner described it this way:

There are two ways of thinking about what ought to happen in the social sphere or in any other field. We may present a program, may form programmatical concepts; we ... think out how the world should develop in a certain field; this can be presented in beautiful words. We can swear by these words, take them as dogmas, but nothing will result from them, nothing at all!.... No statistics, no programs, however well thought out, are of any value. Only the observation of what wills to appear out of the hidden depths of the times is of value. This must be taken up into consciousness; by this the intentions of the present must be governed.<sup>12</sup>

One area in which Rudolf Steiner practised this art was in the realm of economics, and his ideas and suggestions in this field have come to be referred to as Associative Economics, or even Steinerian Economics.<sup>13</sup> It is of the utmost importance, however, to realise that Steiner's economic ideas were not a system of mental constructs to be imposed on current reality. Rather, they represent an attempt to sense into, to discern what is trying to emerge within humanity and within the economic life of our time, and from there to suggest creative forms which these emergent properties might take, or sound principles that might guide their healthy unfolding.

Using this same methodology and drawing on Steiner's economic insights, I wish to explore further the new economy that I believe is emerging within the food movement in the USA, and from there suggest ways in which these emergent properties could be given forms more capable of realising the deeper mission of this movement. While I acknowledge that today there is a whole chorus of voices calling out for and seeking to understand this new economy, I feel that Steiner's contribution is unique, and remains relevant enough and unknown enough to be worthy of the effort to add his voice to the chorus in the modest fashion I have attempted here.

For reasons of length, however, please note that in this article I will focus solely on questions of trade and will have to leave to a future article the important questions of the transformation of land, labour, capital and ownership which are also so essential to the emergence this new economy. Without new forms of capitalization and ownership, for example, our best food companies will continue to be sold to the highest bidder and their long-term integrity compromised.

## **Towards Associative Trade**

From a 10,000-feet perspective, present-day economic life already reveals itself as an immense web of collaborative, interdependent, supply chain relationships. These supply chains span the globe, producing, processing and distributing the products and services that human beings need to carry out their lives. Looked at up close, however, in the light of day-to-day realities, we can see that these supply chains are usually controlled by relatively few of the actual economic players involved. We also see that much of the genuine economic progress that could result from this global economic co-operation is undermined by self-interested goals and aims on the part of these few players, and the immense sums of the capital and governmental influence they have at their disposal.

What Steiner suggested is trying to emerge in the midst of this reality, is a method of economic co-operation or ‘association’ that transcends both laissez-faire capitalism and state socialism by empowering the producers, processors, distributors, retailers and consumers involved in the economic life of particular regions and products to work together to manage the economy out of shared insight. Steiner explained this need as follows:

Economic life is striving to structure itself according to its own nature, independent of political institutionalization and mentality. It can only do this if associations, comprised of consumers, distributors and producers, are established according to purely economic criteria.... Not laws, but human beings using their immediate insights and interest, would regulate the production, circulation and consumption of goods.<sup>14</sup>

And it was in an emerging capacity for altruism, rather than competition and self-interest, that Steiner saw the driving force of this new economy:

It is neither a God, nor a moral law, nor an instinct that calls for altruism in economic life – altruism in work, altruism in the production of goods. It is the modern division of labour – a purely economic category – that requires it.... The social conflicts are largely due to the fact that, as economic systems expanded into a world economy, it became more and more needful to be altruistic, to organize the various social institutions altruistically, while in

their way of thinking, men had not yet been able to get beyond egoism and therefore kept on interfering with the course of things in a clumsy, selfish way.<sup>15</sup>

What Steiner is seeing as a potential for economic life could be described as a kind of ‘voluntary socialism’ in which economic actors themselves, independent of the state, choose to work together through formal and informal associations in order to regulate supply and demand and facilitate the healthy production, distribution and consumption of the goods that human beings need to carry out their lives. But we should not let the term ‘socialism’ confuse us. In this vision, independent producers, distributors and retailers would not go away, nor would the kind of competition that happens when a consumer faces multiple choices on a grocery shelf. But underpinning these independent businesses and this competition would be an organized and deeply rooted network of co-operative relationships focused not on the private benefit of the players involved, but rather on shared good – for people and planet.

## **Altruism and Association in the Food Movement**

Looking at the food movement in the US today, it is remarkable the degree to which this striving is evident, for example, in the prevalence of an altruistic, mission-based, or triple bottom-line mind-set amongst farmers, consumers and entrepreneurs. As pointed out above, I would suggest that one cannot really explain the food movement at all without recognizing that a whole new value system has emerged amongst a large percentage of the population – a value system born out of new capacities for empathy with the planet and for other beings. I believe Paul Ray and Sherry Anderson were some of the first people to begin to quantitatively study this demographic, which they estimated to be 25 percent of the population, and point to its potential significance, not only as a ‘market’, as most later commentators have done, but rather as a movement for social transformation.<sup>16</sup>

But what is also remarkable is the degree to which associations of producers, distributors and consumers have come to play such an important role in the food movement.

Examples include:

- The many organic farming co-ops, small and large, such as Organic Valley, Ofarm, the Midwest Organic Famers Cooperative and the Tuscarora Organic Growers Cooperative, to name a just few;
- The dozens of member-driven farm organizations that sustain the grassroots energy of the food movement through their conferences and programmes for farmers. Some examples of these include the Maine Organic Farming and Gardening Association, Northeast Organic Farming Association, Pennsylvania Association for

Sustainable Agriculture, Practical Farmers of Iowa, California Alliance with Family Farmers and the Biodynamic Association to name just a few.

- The hundreds of consumer-owned natural-food co-ops across the USA and the larger association, the National Coop Grocers Association, to which most of them belong;
- The Independent Natural Food Retailers Association which fosters co-operation among over 300 independently owned natural-food stores;
- The Organic Trade Association and the Sustainable Food Trade Association, which includes many of the larger organic branded-food companies, retailers and distributors amongst its members;
- The Organic Consumers Association, and a host of smaller, consumer-driven, food-activist groups, not to mention the thousands of CSA farms through which thousands of consumers have allied themselves with small, local farms;
- The growing number of regional ‘food hubs’ that actively manage the aggregation and distribution of source-identified food products, and the larger association that supports their work – the Good Food Network;
- The plethora of local and regional food projects like Red Tomato, Fair Food Philly and many others that work with multiple stakeholders to facilitate the distribution and sales of locally grown foods.

As encouraging as these many examples of ‘association’ are in the food movement, by and large, with a few exceptions, these groups and associations are not yet working together to manage supply chains from farm to plate, nor to regulate regional economies in the way I would suggest is necessary if our movement is not to be subsumed by the dominant US economic ethos.

## **An Alternative Strategy**

Imagine, for example, how milk production, consumption and prices could be actively managed and harmonized, not by the government, nor by the invisible hand of ‘market forces’, nor by a few dominant companies, but rather by multi-stakeholder associations made up of representatives of farmer groups, consumer groups, traders, retailers, businesses and other logical stakeholders who would have the mandate to work together to regulate, out of economic insight and shared values, this important commodity in a fashion that benefits everyone.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, a vertically integrated co-op like Organic Valley already engages in a great deal of this very kind of activity with its own members and buyers; such activity simply needs to be logically extended to include the other economic actors in the organic dairy sector.<sup>18</sup>

Rather than seeking to influence government farm policies or programmes of one kind or another, the food movement might consider a completely different strategy: namely



working to gradually transition the federal government out of the farm economy altogether by demonstrating, within the laboratory of the food movement, how associations of diverse stakeholders could independently manage the farm economy themselves on the basis of both their business savvy and the shared values they hold for the earth and human communities.<sup>19</sup>

Steiner is also helpful in pointing out the deeper economic reasons why we need associations to work together to manage the economy. These reasons reside in the inherent complexity and fluidity of a global economy based on the division of labour. This complexity prevents any one person, business or organization from having a total grasp of the complex conditions and factors impacting the life cycle of any product at any particular time. Only when the many players involved in the economic life of particular product categories and/or regions come together and associate can such a holistic picture emerge, along with insights on how best to work together to facilitate healthy trade. Through this coming together and the trust it engenders, decisions can emerge regarding all aspects of a product category, particularly appropriate prices, that simply would not otherwise be possible, even with the best-intentioned governmental policies or the most idealistic fair-trade agreements.

We could say that it is a new human need and capacity, stimulated by the complex conditions of modern life, to come to a real picture of the economic processes at work in particular regions and in the lifespan of particular products. This need and capacity come to expression in the concept of the food system, for example, which has had such a deep impact on the food movement in the last 30 or so years. It also comes to expression at a literary level in the plethora of books and films that trace the history of particular foods or meals.

Yet this need, as Steiner suggests, is also economic in nature, and cannot be fulfilled by food-systems research or culinary literature alone. It can only be truly fulfilled when people actively at work in the economy, including consumers, come together to learn about one another's needs, harmonize their efforts and serve the wider community. It is only in this way that the self-interest which naturally attends economic life can be transformed into interest in the other – that is, into altruism:

...The moment the life of associations enters the economic process, it is no longer a question of immediate personal interest. The wide outlook over the economic process will be active; the interest in the other fellow will actually be there in the economic judgment that is formed. In no other way can a true economic judgment come about. Thus we are impelled to rise from the economic processes to the mutuality, the give and take, between human and human and furthermore to that which will arise from this, namely, the objective community spirit working in the associations.<sup>20</sup>

For me, the beauty of CSAs and other local and regional food projects is that it has allowed just this kind of community spirit to arise in connection with economic transactions, giving consumers, farmers, chefs and retailers the opportunity to experience the joy, meaning and community that emerges when the economy brings them together, rather than separating them. The question now facing us is whether we can take this kind of work to the next level so that this heightened spirit of co-operation can be embedded in higher-volume, longer-distance supply chains and thus become the guiding principle and modus operandi of the whole food-movement.

Without a concerted effort in this direction in the coming years, I am concerned that we will increasingly betray our own ideals, and the ideals of our founding farmers and pioneering entrepreneurs, by allowing this movement to be completely industrialized – and in so doing, become a caricature of itself, with little to no semblance of economic co-operation and social justice, much less truly ecological farming, behind the growing number of brands and products spouting poetic slogans about ecology, spirituality, social justice and pure food.

## **The Emergence of the Value Chain Approach**

Perhaps one of the most promising developments within the food movement in recent years is a trend among some food and farm businesses for managing their wholesale supply chains as collaborative ventures or as ‘value chains’. Whereas traditional supply-chain relationships are characterized by competition between businesses for their share of the consumer dollar, as well as by a lack of transparency and communication across the chain, in value chains, the entire supply chain is reconceived as a co-operative venture requiring shared mission, shared decision making and a great deal of transparency.<sup>21</sup>

In Oregon, for example, a wheat-growers co-op has created a ‘pricing formula’ in partnership with their wholesale buyers that modifies prices regularly based on the farmers’ costs of production as well as on impacts of inflation and volatile grain markets on both farmers and customers.<sup>22</sup> In the Kansas City area, an alliance of over 100 small and mid-sized farms and a regional grocery chain are working together co-operatively and transparently, through a written memorandum of understanding, to build up the market for locally grown food, support sustainable agriculture and set prices that are fair to all.<sup>23</sup> In the Boston area, a non-profit food broker aggregates ecologically grown apples from farms in the region and sells them to hundreds of stores, setting prices through a co-operative, ongoing process involving dialogues with both stores and farmers. These are

just a few of the many examples that have begun to be carefully documented and which are proliferating.<sup>24</sup>

Some of the key characteristics of food-value chains have been defined by the Agricultural Marketing Service as follows:

- Using co-operative strategies to achieve competitive advantages and the capacity to adapt quickly to market changes
- Emphasis on high levels of performance, trust and responsiveness throughout the network
- Emphasis on shared vision, shared information (transparency) and shared decision-making and problem-solving among the strategic partners
- Commitment to the welfare of all participants in the value chain, including providing adequate profit margins to support the business and its owners, fair wages and business agreements of appropriate and mutually acceptable duration.

In addition, farmers, ranchers and other agricultural producers in food-value chains:

- Know their production and transaction costs and are able to negotiate prices based on acceptable profit margins above those costs;
- Perceive contracts and agreements as fair, having been freely agreed to, providing equitable treatment to all partners, and including appropriate time frames;
- Are able to own and control their own brand identity as far up the supply chain as they choose. This may involve co-branding with other strategic partners;
- Participate fully in the development of mechanisms to resolve conflicts, communicate concerns about performance, and alter directions within the value chain.<sup>25</sup>

What the value-chain model and these many examples suggest is that the inherent trajectory of the food movement is indeed towards a model of trade based on supply-chain collaboration, transparency and the setting of true prices that reflect the needs of all parties involved. Through this promising effort, I would suggest, we are beginning to see some of the core values of the original CSA farms embedded in longer-distance, higher-volume trading relationships. Could a new kind of domestic fair trade be emerging, not out of the ethical imperatives of third-party certifiers but simply because it makes short- and long-term economic sense? How might we ramp up such efforts? Could whole regions, for example, establish a value-chain approach to trade and economic development? Could commodity farm programmes ultimately be replaced by multi-stakeholder associations?

## **A Possible Pilot Project**

At the Biodynamic Association (BDA), we have begun to explore different ideas for a pilot project that could advance the associative economy that is emerging in the food

movement. One of these ideas would have us build on our growing connection to the Independent Natural Food Retailers Association (INFRA), whose members have begun to show a growing interest in carrying Demeter certified Biodynamic ® food products in their stores.

As mentioned above, INFRA is an association of over 300 independently owned natural-food stores in the USA. INFRA supports the success of these stores in many innovative ways. For example, many INFRA members share all their sales data and other vital economic data with the other member stores, through a programme called Cometrics. Cometrics allows INFRA member stores to function like a virtual chain, so that, for example, if one INFRA member store is having great success with their produce marketing, another store can quickly see that through the Cometrics software program, and reach out to that store to learn more about how they are doing it. This is a truly wonderful example of an associative economic practice.<sup>26</sup>

In addition, INFRA supports their members by facilitating collective buying from vendors. INFRA staff members, each working with different regions of the country, identify product lines that the member stores in that region would all like to carry or are already carrying, and INFRA then uses this collective buying power to negotiate higher-volume, lower-cost deals from these vendors. Could we build on this existing infrastructure to foster more associative economic trading practices and support the growth of local, organic and biodynamic farmers in a given region?

What if, for example, we set up a regional, multi-stakeholder association of retailers (starting with INFRA members and perhaps food co-ops, who also, by the way, use the Cometrics system to collaborate with one another), consumers, processors, distributors and organic and biodynamic farmers in that region, along with other logical stakeholders, e.g. other non-profit food groups, University Extension Service, foundations, and so on. Focusing perhaps initially on whole products like fruits, vegetables, meat and dairy products, we could use the Cometrics system to quickly determine the current volume of purchases by these stores within these product categories.

Then we could work with these stores and their consumers to determine how much of this volume is already coming from regional sources and how much they would like to transfer to regional organic and biodynamic sources. With commitments from these stores and their consumers, we could begin to facilitate the formation of value chains across the region, from farm to consumer – value chains that would in turn be continually monitored and modified as needed by the players themselves, through the regional association we will have started. At the farm level, we would also have the opportunity to begin to explore a nagging question in the biodynamic community – namely, is it

possible for the biodynamic concept of the 'farm individuality' to be extended to several farms co-operating ecologically and economically within a region?

This represents just one idea for beginning to extend the associative-economic principles within the food movement. There are certainly many other approaches possible, and I hope readers with ideas will not hesitate to contact me.

## **Toward Convergence**

One of the most remarkable things Rudolf Steiner said about the emergence of the kind of associations I have described above is that they will only be able to succeed if those who create and participate in them feel inspired by a deeper sense of community and shared purpose:

...if any man works for the community, he must perceive and feel the meaning and value of this community, and what it is as a living organic whole.... It must be informed by an actual spirit in which each single person has his part... the whole communal body must have a spiritual mission. All the vague progressive ideas, the abstract ideals, of which people talk so much, cannot present such a mission. If there be nothing but these as guiding principles, the one individual here, or one group there, will be working without any clear comprehension of what use there is in their work, except its being to the advantage of their families, or of those particular interests to which they happen to be attached. In every member, down to the least, this Spirit of the Community must be alive and active.<sup>27</sup>

When contemplating these ideas of Steiner's, I realised that this feeling of being a part of a community of shared purpose, in a deeply spiritual and also practical way, is what I invariably feel when attending the smaller and larger conferences that make up the food movement, when visiting local, organic and biodynamic farmers, when shopping in my local co-op. Indeed, the more I have reflected on this, the more convinced I have become that the food movement is a spiritual community of the kind Rudolf Steiner described above, a community of people who feel deeply united in the effort to bring a transforming influence upon our current civilization.

What this movement needs at this point, however, after decades of immense outer expansion, is not just a host of new strategic marketing campaigns to make the deep and profound values that inform our products more accessible to mainstream America. What we need, more importantly, is to challenge ourselves to live these values more fully and more deeply in our economic practices with one another. By beginning to practise the art of economic association at the local, regional, national and worldwide levels, we can both strengthen the core of our movement and begin to demonstrate to others, in a way no

strategic marketing effort ever could, the life-affirming values and holistic worldview that inspire us, and the benefits these make possible when embedded in economic practices. In other words, we could begin to properly align or converge the values of our movement with the practices of our industry and in so doing, bring to realization the revolutionary promise that has inspired so many extraordinary farmers, entrepreneurs and activists to give their lives to this great work.

## Notes and References

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- 14 Rudolf Steiner, *Towards social renewal*, Rudolf Steiner Press, London, 1977, pp. 17–18.

- 15 Steiner, *World economy* (note 13), pp. 42–3.
- 16 Paul H. Ray and Sherry Ruth Anderson, *The cultural creatives: How 50 million people are changing the world*, Three Rivers Press, New York, 2000.
- 17 For a description of this approach to managing major commodities, see: Christopher Nye, ‘Pulling together: A new way to think about the farm price problem’, 1987.
- 18 For a good description of Organic Valley’s innovative supply chain practices, see Larry Lev and G. W. Stevenson, ‘Values-based food supply chain case studies: Organic Valley’, Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems, University of Wisconsin-Madison; available at [goo.gl/CFt7bc](http://goo.gl/CFt7bc) (accessed 15 November 2017).
- 19 While space does not permit me to discuss this further here, transitioning the federal government out of their role as certifiers would probably be another key part of this process.
- 20 Steiner, *World economy* (note 13), p. 133.
- 21 For more background on value chains, see Adam Diamond, Debra Tropp, James Barham, Michelle Frain Muldoon, Stacia Kiraly and Patty Cantrell, ‘Food value chains: Creating shared value to enhance marketing success’, US Dept of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service, May 2014; available at [goo.gl/oRt6Yb](http://goo.gl/oRt6Yb) (accessed 15 November 2017); and M. F. Muldoon, A. K. Taylor, N. Richman and J. Fisk, *Innovations in local food enterprise: Fresh ideas for practitioners, investors, and policymakers for a just and profitable food system*, Wallace Center at Winrock International, Arlington, VA; available at [goo.gl/vM2ch6](http://goo.gl/vM2ch6) (accessed 15 November 2017); and Levand Stevenson, ‘Values-based food supply chain case studies’ (note 18). 22 See Levand Stevenson, ‘Values-based food supply chain case studies: Shepherds grains; (see note 18).
- 23 Shonna Dreier and Mino Taheri, ‘Innovative models: Small grower and retailer collaborations: Good natured family farms and balls food stores’, Wallace Center at Winrock International, March 2008; available at [goo.gl/kqRT3s](http://goo.gl/kqRT3s) (accessed 15 November 2017).
- 24 See Lev and Stevenson, ‘Values-based food supply chain case studies: Red tomato’ (see note 18).
- 25 Adam Diamond Debra Tropp, James Barham, Michelle Frain Muldoon, Stacia Kiraly, and Patty Cantrell, *Food value chains: Creating shared value to enhance marketing success*, US Dept of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service, May 2014; available at [goo.gl/3TmE2V](http://goo.gl/3TmE2V) (accessed 15 November 2017). 26 For more information on Cometrics, go to <https://www.cometrics.com/>.
- 27 Rudolf Steiner, *Anthroposophy and the Social Question*, Mercury Press, New York, 1982, pp. 25–6.

