Repairing Work, Repairing Ourselves: Experimental Urban Commons in Ōtautahi, New Zealand

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THESIS ABSTRACT

In Aotearoa New Zealand, waged work is a big part of many people's lives. Like other places where people have been separated from historical commons, waged work provides many people with the income to sustain themselves and workplaces are where people meet and friendships form. However, the way that waged work is configured in this context gives rise to the problems of overconsumption and alienation. This is seen in the millions of products sold and wasted each year and the increasing reports of a lack of meaning in work. I argue that reconfiguring workspaces as sites of commoning provides a means to address the problems that arise from the current organisation of work. I use a diverse economies approach and draw on my participation and interviews with people from two field sites: Ōtautahi Repair Revolution (a repair café) and the Understorey (a coworking space), both located in the city of Ōtautahi Christchurch, New Zealand. Through my participation I investigate the collective repair labour performed by participants at repair cafés and the collective care labour performed by members of the Understorey. I theorize both kinds of collective labour as practices of commoning that arise in two layers. The first layer of commoning creates important resources for commoners in the form of a repair knowledge commons and a coworking commons. The second layer of commoning produces a repair sensibility and worker wellbeing. These layers of commoning are what enable repairers and coworkers to embody new work subjectivities that can redirect from ecological crisis and alienated work.

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STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICATION

I certify that the work in this thesis has not been previously submitted, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

I also certify that this thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research and in the preparation of this thesis has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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ABBREVIATIONS USED

AI	Artificial Intelligence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

GLOSSARY

This is a glossary of te reo Māori terms used in this thesis. I have drawn on Te Aka Māori Dictionary[1] as a source to provide definitions for these terms but have made amendments to some of these definitions to create definitions that reflect the context that these terms were used in during fieldwork. As with any translation between languages, the interpretation and meaning of these terms can shift across contexts.

Aotearoa	New Zealand
Hui	Meeting/gathering
Kai	Food/to eat
Kaupapa	Project/purpose
Koha	Gift/contribution
Mamae	Pain/hurt
Marae	Meeting grounds, including the main building called the wharenui.
Ōtautahi	The Māori name currently used to name the land more commonly known as Christchurch.
Reo	Language

[1] Te Aka Māori Dictionary was originally a book written by John Moorfield and has since become a website. I have drawn on the website which can be found at: https://www.maoridictionary.co.nz/

Ranginui	Sky Father
Pākehā	The name for European settlers who came to Aotearoa and is commonly used to describe those who have this ancestry.
Papatūānuku	Earth Mother
Pepeha	A speech that describes where you come from, including ancestors, land, rivers and mountains among others.
Tangata	Person/people
Tangata Tiriti	A person of the treaty
Te reo Māori	The Māori language. Often shortened to ‘te reo’.
Te Tiriti	The Treaty of Waitangi
Tino rangatiratanga	Māori self-determination
Tuarua	Second
Tuatahi	First
Tuatoru	Third
Whakamana	Empower, give prestige or authority to.

Whakapapa	Genealogical connection. In this thesis it is predominantly used in reference to Māori ancestry.
Whenua	Land

Chapter One: Introduction

For many of us, overconsumption is known as one of the major problems we face as a collective species. Overconsumption relies on the extraction of many crucial resources to fuel the mass production of consumer goods that are often wasted. This is reflected in the staggering 1.6 million packages that online retailer Amazon delivers globally per day (Kaleyra, n.d.; Winkie, 2022) and in global waste streams that are as hefty as 2.2 billion tons per year (Rodrigues & Pahwa, 2023; United Nations News, 2018). This reality of consumption hit home for me at my first waged job. During my shifts working for a shoe retailer, customers would often bring pairs of shoes back into store. The customer would communicate their dissatisfaction to a staff member and ask for a replacement pair or a refund. As a result, many of the returned shoes were regarded as faulty and became unsellable. Part of my job as a sales assistant was to retreat to the stockroom to cut the shoes up with scissors, making them completely unwearable. After wrapping the pair of cut-up shoes together with a rubber band and attaching a docket, I would throw the shoes into a deep bin that sat in a corner of the stock room. As my shifts went by these shoes would form a tall pile and would wait in the bin to be sent for processing and disposal.

During one of my shifts, I spoke on the phone to the head manager of the company I worked for. I asked if we could do something else with the shoes. If we could label them somehow so employees could distinguish them from sellable stock and send them overseas as a donation. The manager responded earnestly that people would find a way to get a hold of these shoes and bring them back into our stores for a refund. I sat with the phone to my ear feeling perplexed by his swift response. Was it so obvious that this string of events was to be expected? Would people really hunt down these shoes to score a free refund? Once the call had ended, I was asked by my store manager to deal with a new batch of shoes. I took the shoes into the stockroom and stood under the harsh fluorescent lights that hung above me. I was among hundreds of boxes of product, stacked on rows of wooden shelves that rose up to the ceiling. I breathed in their smells of glue, leather, plastic and cardboard, a distinct scent of coming to work. I stood there with a pair of scissors in my hand and proceeded to slice through the clean and supple brown leather of an unworn men's dress shoe. As I did so, I noticed a small, discoloured mark at the toe.

This experience of cutting shoes in the stockroom left me feeling disconnected from my work and from the decision-making of the business I was a part of. As I clocked into work I was being asked to clock out as an ethical subject. In many ways I played the part of a sales assistant whose role was to convince and assist the public in consuming goods. As many goods as possible at that. But I was increasingly unsettled by the ideas that informed the valuing of my skills, the strangers I served, the company I represented and the materials I handled. What was clear to me was that my experience as a worker was being heavily shaped by the consumer culture that surrounded me. What I did at work reflected a commitment to keep costs low and sales high. It meant turning perfectly good shoes into waste and converting my interactions with strangers into the swipe of a card. Two kinds of challenges with work arose from this experience: first, the *material* problems of production and consumption. In this sense I think of the piles of unwanted fast fashion, including sliced shoes, that are sent to sit in landfills and contribute to the tons of waste made per year. Secondly, the *relational* problems with work. Here I think of many workers' separation from the decision-making processes of their workplaces and a lack of meaning in the tasks they perform. My experience of working at the shoe shop inspired a curiosity about the ways people work, a curiosity not only for the places people work as employees, but for all the spaces they work. I started with two questions: why is waged work not treated as a site of ethical action? And where is the space for enacting a different kind of work culture?

1.1 What is Work?

Work is diverse and includes a range of different kinds of labour that can be paid, unpaid, formal, informal, for ourselves and for others. However, the term 'work' has often been associated with one type of labour: waged work. This focus on waged work is problematic because it privileges waged work over the other kinds of work that enable us to create a livelihood. This focus on waged work not only crowds out other kinds of work, but it also causes waged work to dominate in ideas of what economies ought to look like. This is particularly true for a set of countries who share a specific history and are often grouped together as the 'Anglosphere'. These countries are often grouped together as they share strong historical ties to the British Empire, have a dominant use of the English language and have overlapping cultural values (Peters, 2023). The Anglosphere includes countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia and New

Zealand[2] (Peters, 2023). Emerging from a British-colonial history, the people in these countries experienced a large shift when most were disconnected from their traditional commons and forced into waged work, shifting from collective forms of labour to become individualised workers (Bollier, 2024; Chatterton & Pusey, 2020). As a result, waged work has often been treated as an economic necessity in this context, despite a range of problems caused by its current configuration and the possibilities of other kinds of work subjectivities present in other places.

Anti-work theorist Kathi Weeks (2016) captures this dynamic in her idea of the 'work society'. She identifies three interrelated dynamics that frame and perpetuate waged work as a social and economic necessity. First, waged work is often framed to be morally necessary. Moral value is attached to waged work as work can provide a source of growth, fulfilment and social status for an individual (Weeks, 2016). Secondly, waged work is often framed as a right to citizenship, where work enables workers to become "independent individuals of the liberal imaginary" (Weeks, 2016, p. 8). Thirdly, waged work is framed as the purest way to participate in wider society, with work represented as a social duty and a "collective ethical obligation" (Weeks, 2016, p. 11). As a result, large numbers of people in the Anglosphere are stigmatised as 'non-economic' because they are not the ideal worker – whether they have a chronic illness, are on a benefit, or have their time taken up by participating in unpaid work (Healy, 2018a). The work society is reproduced when job creation is assumed to be 'good', and unemployment 'bad', despite the quality of jobs. The work society is reproduced when evaluating migration applications is led by employment prospects and receiving social benefits is mediated by the goal of employment. The work society is also reproduced when low unemployment rates are used to claim the economic and social health of a society, rather than the number of food banks in demand or the number of counselling appointments booked.

For those who live in the countries of the Anglosphere, making a livelihood usually means having to enter waged work. In New Zealand, the necessity of this work is clear because meeting basic

[2] To be clear, while these countries emerged from a British-colonial history, I use the term 'Anglosphere' to reference this linkage in full acknowledgement that Indigenous populations, histories and self-determination are not subsumed into this completely, but that the current legal and cultural context in these countries reflect shared norms that have arisen from shared influences.

needs such as housing, food and healthcare largely require an income. Not everyone can alter the conditions of their waged work as easily as others and achieving a sound quality of life can mean working longer hours and devoting more time and energy to a job that may not provide deep rewards. This is also concerning because of the prevalence of exploitation in waged work. Specifically, the way that value is extracted from the labour of workers and from nature and is appropriated by others (Marx, 1867/1990). As a result, workers often do not control the total value of their labour and nature is stripped away without being replenished. This 'capitalist social relation' has had a significant influence on the organisation of work in the Anglosphere context through the prevalence of particular forms of enterprise and particular market relationships (Gibson-Graham & Dombroski, 2020). The combination of the work society and the capitalist social relation creates a prevalent work culture in the Anglosphere that is oriented around individualized economic responsibility and the accumulation of private wealth. This includes compelling notions of productivity and profitably that overcrowd other meanings of work and their role in economies. However, this is simply one way to negotiate the creation and distribution of resources and one way to conceptualise work. The landscape of waged work in the Anglosphere context has changed significantly over the past five years and with this change comes new problems and possibilities.

1.2 Why Work Matters Now

There are four major motivations for why we should think about work in the Anglosphere right now. These include pressing environmental collapse, worsening cost-of-living crises, increases in mental illness and the impact of COVID-19. First, it is widely known that humans are facing large environmental changes which are and will continue to affect our homes and everyday lives in ways that natural disasters have already shown (Solnit, 2010). These environmental changes are largely driven by approaching 'the environment' as an infinite resource to serve human needs. This extractive approach to land has formed particular ways of interacting with land that destroy complex ecosystems and threaten the survival of human and more-than-human species. This approach to land is dominant in the Anglosphere context and is integrated into certain work practices, with many people working jobs that have an intense environmental impact. For example, in New Zealand 50% of land is used for agricultural purposes (Hipgrave, 2021) with agriculture

and livestock producing nearly half of New Zealand's total greenhouse gas emissions, alongside a range of other environmentally harmful impacts (Agriculture & Investment Services, n.d.; Ministry for the Environment, 2023). In 2023 approximately 360,000 people were employed in the New Zealand agriculture industry, contributing by the nature of their work to these environmental impacts (Ministry for Primary Industries, 2024). Another example on a global scale is the fashion industry which is responsible for 10% of global carbon emissions and for 20% of global clean water pollution from textile production (McFall-Johnsen, 2020). Approximately 430 million people, 12.6% of the world's working population, work in fashion, clothing and textile production (Common Objective, 2018; McKinsey & Company, 2025). It is not only the kind of industry a worker belongs to that can have environmental consequences but also the length of their work hours. Fremstad and colleagues (2019) have found a correlation between high workload lifestyles and unsustainable consumption (think of plastic wrapped instant meals and other conveniences) (Fremstad et al., 2019). Studies that have assessed the environmental impacts of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries estimate that reducing working hours in these countries by a quarter could reduce their carbon footprints by as much as 30% (Stronge & Lewis, 2021; see also Knight et al., 2013). For many workers this looks like working a 4-day work week (Stronge & Lewis, 2021). Therefore, it is crucial that work in the Anglosphere takes our embeddedness in and dependence on the Earth's ecosystems seriously.

The second major motivation for thinking about work in the Anglosphere are the worsening cost-of-living crises around the world (The Guardian, 2022). A cost-of-living crisis has been present in many parts of the world in the 2020's (Grailey et al., 2024). In New Zealand, the cost of living for the average household rose by 7% in 2023 alone with rising food and housing costs contributing the most to this increase (Stats NZ, 2024a). A rising cost-of-living is a crisis because families are cutting back on essential items and services and are even withdrawing from their KiwiSaver (retirement) funds in an attempt to meet the rising costs (Prasad, 2024). Despite working multiple jobs or living in a multiple income household, many cannot secure what they need to live well (Sadler, 2023). Therefore, it is crucial that waged work can provide people with the means to secure a decent living.

The third major motivation for thinking about work in the Anglosphere is the increasing mental health issues caused by the current conditions of waged work. Anxiety, stress, fatigue and burnout

are significant mental health issues caused by waged work in the Anglosphere context (Gallup, 2024). In 2019, of those surveyed one in five New Zealand workers reported always or often being stressed by work (Mental Health Foundation, n.d.). In 2021, of those surveyed one in five New Zealand workers had experienced work-related depression and nearly one in three workers had experienced anxiety in the previous 12 months (Worksafe, n.d., 2021). Almost 56% of these workers took time off from work as a result (Worksafe, n.d., 2021). Work-related mental health issues can be caused by unreasonable workloads and unclear expectations but also by isolating work conditions and hostile work relationships (Worksafe, n.d., 2021). It is important that waged work fulfils the human need for connection and social relationships as well as the rest required for maintaining balanced wellbeing.

The fourth major motivation for thinking about work in the Anglosphere is the impact that the coronavirus pandemic has had on work in this context. The coronavirus pandemic contributed to the issues of environment harm, to the cost of living and to workers mental health. For example, the pandemic caused a dramatic intensification of the use of single-use products such as masks, testing kits, and protective equipment and saw global plastic pollution soar (Sarkodie & Owusu, 2021). The pandemic created extra pressure for low-income families who had to borrow more money to cover everyday costs and disrupted many of the mechanisms for navigating life on a low income such as accessing less expensive grocers, charity shops and free services like public libraries (Brewer & Patrick, 2021). The pandemic also negatively impacted people's mental health, particularly medical workers who were overworked during this health crisis (Stuijfzand et al., 2020), but also for workers from a range of sectors due to the anxiety surrounding the deadly virus, the stress of rebalancing work commitments and expectations during the shift to new work conditions and the isolation brought by lockdowns (Khan et al., 2022). But what the pandemic also caused was a pause to daily life that sparked shifts in work culture.

Coronavirus shook up the work lives of people across the globe. The widespread loss and disruption caused by the pandemic led people in the Anglosphere and elsewhere to reflect on how their jobs brought meaning to their lives and what their work environment asked of them (Hymes, 2021). In some countries, like the United States, the brief protection of stimulus checks and frozen student loans provided a temporary cushion that allowed some people to break away from their

usual work routines (Collins, 2020). For many workers, the disruption of the pandemic led them to make a major change. In August 2021, one million Australians voluntarily resigned and switched jobs, in the United Kingdom 400,000 workers quit their jobs and in America 4.3 million workers quit their jobs (Susik, 2021). This rapid shift in employment has been named 'the great resignation' and due to its scale, the great resignation has been likened to an informal labour strike. The pandemic prompted a consideration for what a meaningful life is, and many people were dissatisfied with their jobs. This dissatisfaction continued throughout employer's desperate call for rapid staff-scale ups following the reopening of cities in late 2021 and many employers struggled to hire (Hymes, 2021). New Zealand had one of the strictest lockdown processes and did not experience a large resignation as experienced by Australia, the United Kingdom and America. Despite this, the pandemic still had an impact on perceptions of work in New Zealand. In May 2020, 35% of New Zealanders who were surveyed intended to quit their jobs and by November 2021, that number had risen to 52% (Shepherd, 2022).

While the lockdowns of 2020 were for many people a rare instance in which their working lives were disrupted and space for reflection was opened, for others their job became life consuming. The designation of 'essential work' in response to COVID-19 revealed the types of work that governments believed would maintain 'the essential'. Essential jobs included grocery staff, medical respondents, cleaners, carers, and delivery people (Reid et al., 2021). These jobs are often lowly paid and taken for granted as part of a functioning society (Reid et al., 2021). The workers who had these jobs were under immense pressure during the height of the pandemic, on top of the ordinary stresses and inequalities that are part of these undervalued forms of work (Gaitens et al., 2021). Lockdowns across the world revealed the time, space and energy that is required to keep people alive and well. The New Zealand government's more thorough withdrawal from formal work during this time revealed an even clearer sense of the kinds of work which could not be stopped. This provides a useful reference for how different forms of work are evaluated when collective wellbeing is at the centre of decision-making. Of the 529,000 essential workers that continued to turn up to work during New Zealand's major lockdown, 150,000 of these were health care and social assistance workers and formed the largest category of essential workers in the country (Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment, 2020). Many of these workers experienced high degrees of overwork as they responded to the demands of the pandemic and

provided a large portion of the formal care work that the country required. Simultaneously, thousands of jobs were named non-essential, bringing into question the relevance such jobs have and to whom (Graeber, 2021). While not all these shifts have lasted, it is important that the sparks of a different work culture offered by the pandemic are fostered in the move towards more sustainable, supportive, fair and healthy work lives.

In knowing the broken parts of work in the Anglosphere, how do we start to repair them? An important starting point is to insist that work can and should create collective benefits. This involves resisting the assumption that work's purpose is limited to creating individual economic independence. Despite the emphasis on the individual, many other meanings and configurations of work are out there. They are found in social enterprises that pour into local communities, in the exchanges of time and skills through time banks, and in the care of maintaining marae. For years scholars in the discipline of geography have argued that collective action is necessary to create more environmentally and socially just livelihoods (Bollier, 2014; Gibson-Graham, 2006; St. Martin et al., 2015). This collective action involves people working collaboratively to create and distribute resources and their benefits. Building on this, I argue that reconfiguring workspaces as sites of commoning provides a means to address the problems that arise from current configurations of work in the Anglosphere. This thesis will explore two collectives who are engaged in practices of commoning and in working together, help to repair some of the brokenness of work.

1.3 Reclaiming Commoning

To understand 'commoning', we first need to understand commons. Commons are collectively managed and used resources. These resources can be in the form of widely held commons like the atmosphere and oceans or in specifically held commons like knowledge and cultural commons. Commons can include material and non-material resources. The word 'resource' can be a counterintuitive or at times inappropriate term to describe some commons, such as living systems like land (Bollier, 2021). But the idea of the commons as resources (or a form of wealth), helps to capture the idea that what we rely on to make a livelihood can be approached in a collective manner, for collective benefit. However, commons are much more than mere resources, they are social.

Commons involve how people organize themselves around resources (or wealth) and how they care for and use them. Therefore, commoning is the ongoing practice of collective labour which cares for a collective resource (Huron, 2018). Each commons involves a variety of different kinds of practices specific to the commons at hand and this has been described by commons theorist David Bollier as a living process of commoning (Bollier, 2014, 2021).

The process through which a resource becomes commonly managed is not necessarily intentional or smooth and relationships are significant to the success of a commons (Bollier, 2014; Waliuzzaman, 2020). These relationships often require complex layers of engagement and negotiation (Dombroski, 2024b; Waliuzzaman, 2020), but through this process of commoning a community forms. This inessentialist understanding of community does not focus on a fixed identity to define or assume the existence of a community. Instead, this understanding of community focuses on the act of commoning as the means through which a community is established. Although commoning is about sharing and collaborating, a commons community is still specific and there are boundaries of who is included or excluded (Dombroski, 2024b). In summary, a commons is "a resource plus a defined community and the protocols, values, traditions, and norms devised by the community to manage it" (Bollier, 2021, p. 9).

In order to analyse commons, we must identify a responsible and caring community and their commoning practices. From their research on commons and community, Gibson-Graham, Cameron and Healy (2013) developed their 'commons identi-kit' (see Table 1). They understand commons as a property, practice or knowledge, in which:

- Access is shared and wide
- Use is negotiated by a community
- Benefit is widely distributed to community members (and beyond)
- Care is performed by community members
- Responsibility is assumed by community members.
- The formal or legal ownership of the commons can take any form (p. 135)

Table 1

Commons Identi-Kit

Access	Use	Benefit	Care	Responsibility	Property
Shared and wide	*Negotiated by a community*	*Widely distributed to community members (and beyond)*	*Performed by community members*	*Assumed by community members*	*Any form of ownership (private, state, or open access)*

Adapted from Gibson-Graham et al. (2014)

I draw on Gibson-Graham, Cameron and Healy's (2013) commons identi-kit to analyse the commoning practices taking place at the two field sites of this research. The commoning practices I study are those enacted by two groups, each responding to different problems with work in their contexts. First, Ōtautahi Repair Revolution is a repair movement in the form of local repair cafés in Christchurch. Ōtautahi Repair Revolution push back against norms of throwaway culture and work to upskill themselves as they share skills of repair. They respond to problems of production and consumption where overconsuming and constant disposal has become normal. As they do so, they create and care for a repair knowledge commons. Secondly, The Green Lab's Understorey is a coworking space in Christchurch city. Members of the Understorey resist norms of productivity and build a wellbeing-focused work culture as they care for each other and their workspace. They respond to problems of exploitation and alienation in work where work becomes a burden rather than a means of support and where work often lacks meaning. In doing so, they create and care for a workspace commons.

Commons theory is brimming with interest in a range of different aspects of the commons. Some who write about the commons are interested in how to define a commons (Bollier, 2021), others on the effect that different forms of property have on the ability to common (Feinberg et al., 2021), or how to reclaim and learn from commons of the past (Linebaugh, 2014). Others who write about the commons work to understand how commoner subjectivities can arise in unlikely places (Dombroski et al., 2019; Dombroski et al., 2023; Stavrides, 2012), or how commons enable us to

reproduce ourselves and provide our material needs (De Angelis, 2014, 2017). As commons are particular to place, it is important that a move to 'return to' the commons in the Anglosphere recognises how commons in settler colonies occur on a 'colonial base' (Coulthard, 2014). I am interested in the commons as a way for people in the Anglosphere to collectively address the material and relational problems with work in their own contexts. What a commons approach allows me to do is to recognize the ways that different economic subjectivities can be fostered through collective care of commons (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy, 2016). In this research, I ask what factors have enabled a commons to emerge in post-quake Christchurch? How can these commons inform theories of work? And what new perspectives can be gained by theorizing the two field sites from a commons perspective? The answers to these questions can help to address the problems with work.

1.4 Ruptures and Experiments

This research takes place in the city of Ōtautahi Christchurch, located in Te Wai Pounamu, the South Island of Aotearoa New Zealand[3]. Christchurch experienced a significant period of natural disaster in 2010 and 2011 due to the Canterbury earthquakes. The Canterbury earthquakes shaped the city in significant ways and their impact has been theorized as a 'rupture' for social change (Cloke et al., 2023; Cretney & Nissen, 2023; Pickles, 2016). Alongside a physical rupture to the surface of the city with the demolition of homes, schools, and blocks of central city buildings, there was also a significant rupturing of the narratives and practices that underpinned the city (Cloke et al., 2023; Pickles, 2016). Many have highlighted the affective space that was created by the rupture of the earthquakes (Cloke & Conradson, 2018; Cretney, 2019; Dombroski 2024b). This affective space inspired different ways of engaging with the city and this included forms of collective action, including commoning. These were experimental and participatory projects that sprang up in the newly demolished spaces of the city and with them emerged alternative expressions of what the city could look like (Cloke et al., 2023). They included temporary urban greening projects built in cleared lots in the city created by the organisation Greening the Rubble. Greening the Rubble was later named The Green Lab and in 2021 The Green Lab experimented

[3] Alongside one interview I conducted with a member of a repair cafe in Palmerston North, New Zealand.

with creating a coworking space called the Understorey, a field site of this research that is explored in Chapter Five.

As a result of the earthquakes, the 'red zone' has become a significant space for the experimental culture of placemaking in Christchurch (Cloke et al., 2023). The red zone is the result of many suburbs in the eastern part of the city along the Ōtākaro/Avon River becoming 'red-zoned' as they were no longer suitable to be used as a residential area. This included more than 7,000 dwellings that were uninhabitable and demolished (Cloke et al., 2023). After the displacement of residents from the suburbs and the demolition of their houses, the land has been dedicated largely towards restoration and community projects. Located in the red zone is the Richmond Community Garden and their post-quake Riverlution Ecohub has become the home of monthly repair events by Ōtautahi Repair Revolution, another field site of this research that is explored in Chapter Four. In these ways, the impacts of the earthquake's ruptures can be traced. The post-quake projects were for some simply short-term 'gap-fillers' that would ultimately reside once the formal rebuild of the city commenced (Cloke et al., 2023). For others, they were temporary but transformative opportunities to engage in collective placemaking, whose influence carried with people beyond their presence in the city (see Dombroski et al., 2019; Dombroski et al., 2023).

The experimental response to the Canterbury earthquakes resonates with an experimental approach to social theory. Jenny Cameron (2015) notes that the state of the Anthropocene is the result of many experiments, of inventions and methods of living whose impact on the Earth were not fully understood. In a world whose future is now even more unknown through environmental change, Cameron (2015) proposes that social research also take on a more experimental approach. Such research is an open experiment that can offer new and unexpected ways of living. Unfortunately, many of the stories in films and books that try to predict the future seem to head in the same direction, whereby environmental and social chaos intensifies, and humanity dies out (Solnit, 2016). Too little, too late, enough of us realize we must stop our destructive and polarizing behaviour and work together. This story is redrawn again and again. Its imagery etching deeper and deeper into our visions of the future and leads to a simple conclusion: that we are doomed. Similarly, theories of the future in social science can also create this effect. The large and 'universal' problems of today are said to be too large and much too embedded to shift. Unsurprisingly, this

does not provide a lot of hope. Perhaps a more generous question is to ask: what could possibly go right?

1.5 Research Approach and Questions

My approach to research draws on the experimental approach used by diverse economies. The diverse economies approach to research focuses on what is already at hand and strategically builds on this. Acknowledging the dominance of capitalism in economic theory, J.K. Gibson-Graham (2006) use the term 'postcapitalist' as a lens to understand economies as already more-than-capitalist (Dombroski et al., 2023; Gibson-Graham & Dombroski, 2020). This begins by decentering capitalist practices and opening up space for economic difference. The diverse economies approach acknowledges capitalist processes as one of many economic possibilities. This reading for economic difference rather than the dominance of capitalism, creates a lens that seeks more-than-capitalism as it exists in place and takes it seriously as an economic reality (Gibson-Graham & Dombroski, 2020). This research uses a diverse economies methodological approach to explore the ways collectives are already forming and experimenting in response to the problems with work. As these collectives are already putting their time and energy towards new ways of being in the world, this research seeks to understand the outcome of their actions. Within the context of two different field sites – a local repair movement and a coworking space – I examine their commoning practices through the following two research questions: what factors have enabled a commons to emerge in post-quake Christchurch? And how can these commons inform theories of work?

1.6 Thesis Overview

In engaging with the current state of work in the Anglosphere, I have identified four major factors that raise the important question of what the role of work is or should become in the 2020s. I have identified commoning as my focus for addressing the problems with work and have outlined my two research questions. I now turn to the overall thesis argument to provide a guide in navigating the chapters to come.

In Chapter 2, *Mapping the Problems with Work,* I begin by thinking with a diversified definition of work set out by feminist economists and economic geographers. In the first part of the chapter, I explore in more depth the shared historical context of countries grouped as the 'Anglosphere' and the impact this history has had on informing the dominant work ethic shared by these countries. I then address four problems with work in the Anglosphere context. In doing so, I reflect on the material consequences of dominant approaches to production and consumption. Here environmental limits and limits of time emerge as the two most critical points of focus in transforming cultures of production and consumption in the Anglosphere. Following this, I address the relational consequences of the work society (Weeks, 2016) where exploitation and alienation emerge as the two significant issues to overcome in order to transform cultures of work in the Anglosphere. In this chapter I argue that productivity should not, and in many cases, cannot continue to dominate work in the Anglosphere. In search for answers to these problems, I look to different types of action that have been taken to address them. This includes individual and policy action that has tried to respond to the problems of production and consumption and the problems with work in the Anglosphere. However, I find that both individual action and policy action lack the collective support and feedback they require to succeed. This transitions my focus towards the role of collectives and leads me to theories of commoning which I unpack in the second part of the chapter. I draw on Gibson-Graham's (2006) inessentialist definition of community to understand how commoning communities arise. I finish by laying out my theoretical framework, drawing on theories of diverse economies and commoning as well as the commons identi-kit which help me to think about the collective labour of repair and coworking in a way that seeks possibilities for transformation.

In the third chapter, *Seeking Economic Diversity,* I discuss my methods for engaging in and describing practices of commoning. This begins with exploring the strengths of feminist methodologies for conducting research. The ethical commitments of feminist methodologies are a significant anchor for me in a whirlwind of speedy and 'all knowing' artificial intelligences which has been a significant wave of change that took place over the time of this PhD. The offerings of feminist methodologies provide me with important groundwork for approaching economic research through a diverse economies' lens. Drawing on the contributions of feminist methodologies, diverse economies scholars provide a 'weak theory' approach for researching

economies. This approach disrupts dominant ideas of who counts as an economic actor and what economic change looks like. To engage in and research practices of commoning, I use ethnographic-inspired participant observation and semi-structured interviews. Overall, this chapter discusses my methods for conducting research on work and the commons.

Chapter Four, *Resisting Throwaway Culture,* explores the strategies of planned obsolescence that are causing our stuff to break. Many governments and communities around the world are working hard to change this normal practice of manufacturing by moving towards circular production and consumption, creating legislation proposals that demand the repairability of items. One form of pushback against planned obsolescence is seen in the development of repair cafés. Although repair cafés are partly a response to prominent throwaway cultures, participants at repair cafés arrive for a multitude of reasons. I explore a night of repair, documenting the ways Ōtautahi Repair Revolution are collectivising repair labour. I use the commons identi-kit (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013) to argue that Ōtautahi Repair Revolution are commoning a repair knowledge commons. Through detailing their collective practices, I highlight the creation and care of a repair knowledge commons. However, there is another layer of commoning taking place at the repair café. I identify a first layer of commoning that focuses on the 'resources' that are commoned at the repair café, that of a repair knowledge commons. I then identify a 'deeper layer' of commoning a repair sensibility at the repair café which has important implications for repairing the brokenness of production and consumption in the Anglosphere. The use of 'deeper' as a descriptor is not intended to create a binary of shallow or deep with the implication of one layer of commoning being valued over the other. Rather than a hierarchy of importance, I use 'deeper' to suggest a hidden layer of sensitivity that affects and is affected by material (or 'resource') commons.

Chapter Five, *Resisting Productivity*, explores the significance of shared workspaces for freelance and creative workers in the Anglosphere as well as the context of Christchurch as a city made of diverse but often marginalised groups. The Green Lab is an organisation who responded to this context through creating the Understorey coworking space. I explore a typical week working in the Understorey, documenting the ways Understorey members collectivise care labour at the coworking space. Again, using the commons identi-kit (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013) I argue that Understorey members are commoning a workspace commons. Detailing their collective practices,

I highlight the creation and care of a workspace commons. I also identify a second 'deeper' layer of commoning taking place at the Understorey. I identify a first layer of commoning that focuses on the 'resources' that are commoned at the Understorey, that of a workspace commons. I then identify a 'deeper layer' of commoning worker wellbeing which has important implications for repairing the brokenness of work in the Anglosphere. Again, I use 'deeper' to suggest a hidden layer of sensitivity that affects and is affected by material (or 'resource') commons.

In Chapter Six, *Deeper Commoning*, I argue that space, time and care are the three most important factors that contribute to creating these commons, answering my first research question. Next, I use the concept of learning to be affected (Cameron et al., 2011; Dombroski, 2018; Latour, 2004) to understand the deeper layer of commoning that is happening at the repair café. This deeper layer of commoning is the commoning of a repair sensibility. I argue that participants at the repair café are learning to be affected by the objects at the repair café and are able to attune to the process of repair. As a result, a repair subjectivity is fostered, one that is more likely to repair objects than to throw them away. I use this to argue that the repair of objects is a way of healing the metabolic rift, the socioecological disconnect of generations of humans from the natural systems that sustain them (Goburdhone & Dombroski, 2023; Moore, 2000). I then move from thinking about the affect of repairing objects to thinking about the affect of repairing workspace. I use Black feminist theories of self-care (Hersey, 2022; Kim & Schalk, 2021; Wiens & MacDonald, 2021) to understand the deeper layer of commoning that is happening at the Understorey. This deeper layer of commoning is the commoning of worker wellbeing. I argue that because Understorey members are paying attention to the embodied experience of work and to diverse bodies, this enables them to centre wellbeing over productivity. This care for bodies acts as a form of resistance to 'grind culture' and as a result, a wellbeing subjectivity is fostered, one that shows us what it is to work beyond productivity. I use this to argue that this collective care for worker wellbeing is a way of protecting against exploitation and alienation.

The empirical contributions of this thesis include the fieldwork of two urban commons in Christchurch. From this fieldwork, I contribute to commons literature through highlighting space, time and care as the key factors of commoning in post-quake Christchurch. The main theoretical contribution of this thesis includes the development of the concept of 'deeper commoning'. I

extend Gibson-Graham and colleagues (2013) commons identi-kit framework to decipher between a ‘resource’ and ‘deeper’ layer of commoning. This enables me to flesh out commoning as a multi-layer process and to recognise new subjectivities. To apply the concept of deeper commoning, I build on Latour’s (2004) concept of ‘learning to be affected’ to identify the creation of a repair subjectivity at the repair cafe. In doing so, I contribute to circular economy literature by demonstrating the importance of ‘messy’ repair labour for circular economies and degrowth circularity (Savini, 2023). I also build on Hersey’s (2022) concept of ‘rest as resistance’ to identify the creation of a wellbeing subjectivity at the Understorey. In doing so, I contribute to work literature by theorizing care as a form of collective resistance and worker solidarity.

While the two field sites of this thesis exemplify the commoning of two quite different communities, each provide important insights into the ways that commoning can create and support different kinds of work culture in the Anglosphere. The repair cafés provide an opportunity to attune to the process of repair and to repair the rift between ourselves and the reality of the Earths limits, offering a different way to produce and consume. The Understorey offers an approach to workspace that prioritizes wellbeing and care for others, protecting one another from exploitation and alienation and offering a different relationship to work. It is in these ways that commoning helps commoners to repair work.

Chapter Two: Mapping the Problems with Work

An estimated 3.5 billion people engage in paid work worldwide (Torkington, 2024). An estimated 2 billion of these workers work in informal economies and are making a living 'off the books' (International Labour Organisation, 2024; Torkington, 2024). Outside of this work, many people are spending large quantities of time caring for family members and participating in unpaid community work. For example, in New Zealand parents spend approximately 10 hours a day caring for their children (OneChoice, 2024) and more than one million New Zealanders undertake volunteer work each year, producing approximately 159 million hours of formal volunteer labour annually (Volunteering New Zealand, 2020). As these figures show, people's working lives are made up of hours dedicated to a mixture of diverse commitments and relationships. However, economic discourse continues to focus on one type of activity: waged work (Clement-Couzner, 2020). Many feminist activists and scholars have reframed and revalued the range of work forms people perform and this has led to economic analysis which sees waged work as one of many kinds of work that interacts, collides and supports one another (McKinnon, 2020; Mitchell et al., 2003; Waring, 2018). Ethan Miller's (2019) concept of an ecological livelihood is particularly useful to put this into perspective. For Miller, a livelihood involves a trio of what we receive, make and provide. When the creation of a livelihood is seen as only *making* a living, such as through a job, this ignores so much of what makes a livelihood possible. Instead, making a living is entangled in what we *receive* from others (energy and matter, birth, microbiome, support) as well as how we *provide* a living for others (decomposing, parenting, caring for things and places) (Miller, 2019). A diverse view of work sees our world as the collective product of hours of diverse work forms: paid, unpaid, unacknowledged, subconscious, by accident, in kind, and for survival (Clement-Couzner, 2020). This diversified definition of work is what I draw on when thinking about the problems of current configurations of work in the Anglosphere.

Although many activists and scholars understand that what makes a livelihood is more than a job, many people's lives are still dominated by paid work. To understand why this is the case, it is useful to trace back to a set of events that have made paid work central in the Anglosphere context. The enclosure of traditional commons through the English enclosure movement and further

through colonisation, forced many people into a wage relation and to rely on wages to secure their livelihoods (Marx, 1867/1990; Scobie & Sturman, 2024). The enclosure of the commons involved a forced removal from the use of common land and mass migrations into cities and contributed to a 'metabolic rift' in which people's connection to natural systems was weakened (Goburdhone & Dombroski, 2023; Moore, 2000). The enclosure of the commons also informs a specific work ethic, one that shapes an individualised economic subject (Weeks, 2016). These disconnections inform a set of problems with the current configuration of paid work in the Anglosphere context. This collection of problems can be understood as the material and relational problems with work which I have briefly introduced at the beginning of Chapter One. As this research seeks to understand how collectives are working together to respond to these problems with work in the Anglosphere, there are two bodies of literature that are useful for this endeavour. To explore what the material and relational problems with work are, I draw from literature on work. This allows me to map the material and relational problems with work and understand their contemporary contexts. In order to understand the ways collectives are responding to these problems, I draw from literature on the commons. Literature on the commons enables me to understand how commoning communities arise and helps me to analyse the collective labour of repair and coworking as commons, leading me to my specific research questions: what factors have enabled a commons to emerge in post-quake Christchurch? And how can these commons inform theories of work?

This chapter is structured as follows. In the first section of the chapter, I discuss the enclosure of traditional commons as a significant historical connection across the Anglosphere that involved the creation of a metabolic rift and a specific productivist work ethic with the introduction of the wage relation. I then discuss four significant problems with work in the Anglosphere that require attention. This includes environmental limits and time, which I classify as material problems with work. And exploitation and alienation, which I classify as relational problems with work. I classify environmental limits and time as 'material' problems because environmental limits relate to how we act in the physical, ecological world and because (linear) time shapes how work is measured and performed, thereby influencing how workers engage with the world. I classify exploitation and alienation as 'relational' problems because they capture the emotional and social dynamics of how workers relate to one another and to their work. I finish this first section with a discussion on theories of postwork. In the second section of the chapter, I discuss the three main approaches

taken to respond to the issues with work. These include individual action, policy change and collective action. In doing so, I identify collective action as the most fruitful form of action to investigate, which brings me to theories of community and of the commons. I define my understanding of community through the inessentialist notion of community as bound through collective care labour (Dombroski, 2024b; Gibson-Graham, 2006) and engage with literature on the commons. Different theories of the commons each hold a different focus on specific aspects of the commons. The approach of diverse economies provides a useful framework for understanding the ways collectives negotiate around a set of ethical coordinates and how commoning practices can be identified through the commons identi-kit (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013). Therefore, the commons identi-kit provides me with a framework for studying commons and commoning for this research. In this chapter, my aim is to understand how current configurations of work in the Anglosphere are impacting people's ability to make a connected and meaningful livelihood. Drawing on the work of feminist geographers, economists, and anthropologists, I argue that productivity should not, and in many cases, cannot continue to dominate configurations of work in the Anglosphere.

2.1 Enclosure and the Metabolic Rift

A dependence on waged work in the Anglosphere has often been linked to the disruption of autonomous self-provisioning (Marx, 1867/1990). This disruption took place largely through enclosures of commons, whereby access to the natural resources that people lived from such as woodlands, waterways, and open fields, were closed off from use. This is traced back to the English enclosure movement which took place most prevalently between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries (Bollier, 2014; Neeson, 1996). During the English enclosure movement, those with the most power (royalty, aristocrats, landowners) privatised common property, often under the guise of progress and efficiency (Bollier, 2014). To enforce these enclosures, enclosers would evict commoners from the land, often through force and sometimes with formal sanction of Parliament and enabled enclosures through changes of law such as the passing of the Inclosure Act of 1845 (Bollier, 2014; Turner, 1990; UK Parliament, n.d.). To keep commoners out, enclosers would create barriers to restrict access to the land and would patrol land (Bollier, 2014). As a result, land that was commonly held and shared became individually owned or rented plots (UK Parliament, n.d.). This shift caused large disruption to people's way of life and led to deep economic inequality

(Bollier, 2014; Neeson, 1996). The enclosure movement extended further through the enclosures of lands and peoples through colonialism (Huron, 2018; Scobie et al., 2024). The enclosure of faraway lands, including Aotearoa, partly presented as a solution to the unrest of working classes in Europe (Scobie et al., 2024). Such enclosures involved violent disruption to Indigenous communities and their lifeways and are part of the colonial processes that Indigenous peoples have and continue to resist today (Scobie & Sturman, 2024; Scobie et al., 2024).

Karl Marx described this process as 'primitive accumulation' in which a series of enclosures forced people off the lands they relied on as a means of subsistence, leaving many people with little choice but to engage in capitalist economies (Huron, 2018). The separation of people from commons involved their dispossession of the means of production. Marx (1867/1990) understood this separation and dispossession as a process of coercion, where workers only have their labour power to sell on the market and must enter the capitalist social relation to survive. Alongside these enclosures and dispossession were processes of commodification where an artificial price is placed on goods for sale (Marx, 1867/1990). This is an artificial price because the unique social value of necessities such as food, medicine and land is reduced to a monetary price (Polanyi, 2001). Through the process of commodification, many goods became privatised and to gain access to these goods in these instances involves exchanging money for them. Therefore, in places where self-provisioning is limited and money is required to access life necessities, many people require an income to live and earn this through working in formal and informal economies. The enclosure of commons and the continued privatisation of the necessities of life in many parts of the world requires many people to engage in waged work to survive.

For Marx (1867/1990), the wage relation is the key site of exploitation, where surplus value is extracted from workers to capitalists. Although workers receive a wage for their time and effort, they are not compensated for the total value of their labour and this surplus is taken as profit by the capitalist (Marx, 1867/1990). Worker exploitation can be located at the moment of appropriation: when the surplus value produced by a worker is taken and used by a non-worker (Cameron, 1996). Marx argued that this process causes four specific kinds of alienation. This includes the alienation of the worker from their activity, from their products, from their fellows, and from their species-being (Marx, 1932/1964; Ollman, 1971).

The first component of Marx's theory of alienation is the alienation of the worker from their productive activity. For Marx, a worker is not able to develop freely as they are coerced into labouring for an employer. This is because workers are separated from the means of production, and they labour in exchange for a wage rather than directly satisfying their own needs. Instead of having the freedom to choose how and when they work, workers work within the conditions of their employer. As a result, the workers' labour power becomes the private property of the capitalist who determines the form their labour takes including the conditions of their labour (Ollman, 1971). In the context of Marx's writing in thinking about industrialisation, work was repetitive and was focused on one part of a larger production line and lacked creative reward.

The second kind of alienation Marx articulates is the alienation of the worker from what they produce. This alienation is due to the product existing outside of the worker and outside of their control because what they have produced is not owned by them. The only way a worker can get the product back is through spending their wage for it (Ollman, 1971). The third form of alienation Marx articulates is the social alienation between the worker and the capitalist. Marx explains that this relationship is inherently antagonistic as the capitalist retains wealth through the continual appropriation of surplus value created by the worker (Ollman, 1971). The capitalist's interest in this exploitation places the capitalist in opposition to the worker and workers are also in opposition to one another as they compete for jobs in labour markets. The fourth form of alienation Marx articulates is workers alienation from their species-being. For Marx, work within capitalist social relations distorts or prevents a recognition for, or the expression of, worker's species-being (their human nature) (Morgan, 2018). Species-being describes humans as social, creative and conscious beings (Marx, 1964). For Marx, (1964), alienated labour disrupts the sociality between humans and estranges workers from their bodies, spiritual activity and relationships to nature. Marx's theories of alienation capture a sense of estrangement or disconnection from an autonomous livelihood, from meaningful work and from other workers. But the enclosure of the commons has created another kind of disconnection. This disconnection is between people and land and is captured by theories of the metabolic rift.

The disconnection of humans from their environments is most evident in the current human-driven climate crisis. The sixth Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) assessment report

published in 2023 demonstrates that human-caused climate changes are affecting every region across the globe (IPCC, 2023). This includes sea level rise, heat waves, droughts, tropical cyclones, and irreversible loss of ecosystems and species (IPCC, 2023). As a result of these climate changes, there are increases of climate related diseases, reduced food and water security, destruction of infrastructure, loss of property and income, and adverse effects on gender and social equity (IPCC, 2023). There are approximately 3.3 to 3.6 billion people living in contexts that are highly vulnerable to climate change and the losses and damages, both human and environmental, are unequally distributed across regions (IPCC, 2023). Historical and contemporary contributions to climate change and their related ecological crises are unequal (IPCC, 2023). As the IPCC report, the Global North is driving ecological overshoot whilst the majority of the world's population still need an increase in their material living standards to live well (IPCC, 2023). While the United States has the largest gross domestic product (GDP) in the world ($27360.94 USD Billion in 2023) it would require 5.1 Earths for everyone to live like the average American (Earth Overshoot Day, n.d.). Furthermore, the IPCC report that the top 10% of households with the highest per capita emissions contribute 34–45% of global consumption-based household green-house-gas emissions while the bottom 50% of households contribute 13–15% (IPCC, 2023). As a consequence, climate change is impacting nations unfairly, where those who have contributed the least are disproportionately affected (IPCC, 2023). What is clear is that there is a disconnect in countries of the Global North, including New Zealand, in the way they live and their impact on Earth.

The 'metabolic rift' captures the socioecological disconnect of generations of humans from the natural systems that sustain them (Goburdhone & Dombroski, 2023; Moore, 2000). This rift is linked largely to processes of urbanisation, including the disconnection from traditional commons. The most potent example of the metabolic rift is in the disconnection from food growing practices but also includes "the wider loss of other forms of exchange between humans and nature, including (. . .) using commons, where a relatively close or tight 'circular economy' of production and waste was retained" (Goburdhone & Dombroski, 2023, p. 128). These rifts are both material and relational as they are rifts in the ways people are physically connected to the Earth as well as how people relate to the Earth (Goburdhone & Dombroski, 2023). Fortunately, there are cultural paradigms that are still attuned with Earths life-giving systems. In Aotearoa this is sustained through Māori familial relationships to land. For example, the practice of returning human placenta

(whenua) to be buried in the land (also whenua), is one example of the integrated relationship that maintains reciprocal care between land and human life (Murphy, 2013; Scobie et al., 2024). Such guardianship responsibilities between human and more-than-human beings are also echoed in other Pacific relationships to land (Scobie et al., 2024).

However, Western science has had an important role to play in obscuring these relationships to land. Western science has long placed 'humans' and 'nature' in a hierarchy that elevates human beings above the rest of nature and has been influential on approaches to land and resource management (Plumwood, 2001). This has led to a sense of ownership and dominance where humans can control and extract from natural systems while abandoning the regenerative needs of these natural systems (Plumwood, 2001). However, Western science has begun to shift towards a more-than-human understanding of human life. This includes recognising how human life is intrinsically reliant on natural systems, how non-human beings are essential to supporting human life, and the reciprocal relationships this requires (Barron & Hess, 2020; Gibson-Graham, Hill & Law, 2016). For example, Miller's (2019) concept of an ecological livelihood works to demonstrate the interconnection of economy, society and environment through three interrelated moments: of making one's living, making livings for others and being-made by others (Miller, 2019). Such concepts recognise how human lives are made possible through the activities of more-than-humans and natural systems.

However, the metabolic rift still requires repair. The disconnection that arose between people and land following the enclosure of the commons in England also happened in Aotearoa. The enclosures of Māori land during the colonisation of Aotearoa caused the mass removal of Māori from their whenua but has subsequently led to an influential cultural norm of private and individual 'ownership' of land that largely informs peoples connection to land in Aotearoa today. The enclosure of the commons in England and later in (Anglo) settler-states has caused a rift in people's connection to land, has led to waged work becoming an economic necessity for many living in these places and informs a particular work ethic that is loosely shared throughout the Anglosphere.

2.2 The Problem with Work

There are many kinds of work ethics and subjectivities globally that shape the way people work. These work ethics are largely shaped by cultural values. For example, some cultures prioritise a sense of collectivism, leading to a focus on cooperation. For example, in Indonesia work is traditionally performed collectively around shared goals (Charina et al., 2022). Other cultures emphasize personal achievement and independence. For example, work in China and in India typically involves much longer work hours in comparison to other countries and these long work hours are considered a sign of dedication (Ellis-Petersen, 2024; Hruby, 2018; Yip, 2021). In Japan, loyalty, formality and hierarchy in work are highly valued, often leading to long work hours. This value reaches to such an extent that the Japanese term 'karoshi' was coined in the 1970s which translates as "work to death" and describes the significant phenomena of workers dying from overwork (Demetriou, 2020).

For some cultures, notions of work-life balance shape the typical work culture. For example, in Denmark standard work hours reflect a prioritisation of time spent with family. A typical workday in Denmark aligns with childcare hours, reflecting an emphasis on dedicated family time to follow the workday (Ruggeri, 2024). For others, environmental conditions play an important role in shaping work ethic. For example, in Spain, traditional workdays begin from around 8:30am and include a one- or two-hour siesta (afternoon break), with the workday ending at 7 or 8pm (Ruggeri, 2024). Siestas were historically a way to cope with high heat, particularly for agricultural labourers, but inform office workdays too. However, there has been a shift towards a 9-5pm workday to align with the rest of Europe (Jones, 2016). Therefore, workers commitment to their work can be deeply enmeshed in cultural expectations of work and ideas of a sound work ethic. These cultural expectations can push workers to tolerate large amounts of pressure within their waged work. Cultural expectations are also influential for workers in the Anglosphere.

Weeks (2016) discussion of the work society and the productivist work ethic in the United States can help us to understand the problems with work in the broader Anglosphere context. Weeks (2016) draws on Max Weber's work on the Protestant work ethic and highlights the individualisation of work in capitalist economies. Unlike the collectivity necessary for working the commons, waged work involves a contract between an individual worker and their employer.

The individualisation of work creates individual economic subjects and dissolves responsibility for livelihood and wellbeing down to the individual (Weeks, 2016). Alongside this are the productivist values that underpin this work ethic, which "assume that productivity is what defines and refines us" (Weeks, 2016, p. 170). This productivist work ethic is reflected in the individualised responsibility for economic security, in notions of waged work as a signal of workers contribution and in a hyper focus on productivity, creating a 'productive subjectivity' (Weeks, 2016). As Singh (2017) discusses, the enclosure of the commons was not just a physical enclosure but a process of homogenising subjectivities. As the shift to waged labour has been exported to other countries of the Anglosphere following the enclosure of commons, I suggest that the individualist and productivist work ethic described by Weeks (2016) in reference to the United States, informs the shared contemporary culture of waged work in the Anglosphere.

There are many places in the world where this individualist and productivist work ethic does not hold, and this is important to remember when thinking about the possibilities of different ways of working in the Anglosphere. It is also important to note that there are other work ethics that continue to be present throughout the Anglosphere, such as forms of labour rooted in Māori work ethics (Henare, 1994; Mika et al., 2022; Mika, 2024). I highlight the productivist work ethic as one work ethic that exists among many others, but that informs the contemporary problems with work in the Anglosphere. These problems include the environmental harm caused by overproduction and overconsumption, the discrepancies in access to time, the risk of exploitation in waged work and the increasing sense of meaninglessness, or alienation, in waged work. To explore these in more detail, I begin by discussing the material problems with work.

2.2.1 Overproduction and Consumption

Generations of scientists and activists have communicated the risks of ignoring environmental limits (Meadows et al., 1972). Environmental limits bring into focus the finite state of Earth's resources and highlight the large consequences that ensue when ecosystems are not able to maintain themselves as pressure is placed on them (Ministry for the Environment & Stats NZ, 2023). As this pressure has compounded over time, this has led to drastic environmental degradation, species extinction and knock on effects (IPCC, 2023). After a long battle against

climate denial, acceptance of the dire state of planet Earth has become mainstream (Carson, 1962; Klein, 2015; Thunberg, 2024). It is now widely understood that all ecosystems are under threat due to climate change and environmental degradation (IPCC, 2023). Global surface temperature has increased faster since 1970 than any other period over the last 2000 years and in 2019, atmospheric CO2 concentrations were at their highest in the last 2 million years (IPCC, 2023). The IPCC have confirmed that human activity, specifically the emissions of greenhouse gases, have caused these changes. Global greenhouse gas emissions have continued to increase, with ongoing contributions from unsustainable energy use, land use, lifestyles and patterns of consumption and production across regions (IPCC, 2023). This includes how humans produce power, manufacture goods, grow food and the forms of transport they rely on (IPCC, 2023; Ministry for the Environment & Stats NZ, 2023). Emissions are the driver of climate change, but environmental destruction is also caused by other harmful practices related to the production of goods, such as cutting down crucial carbon-absorbing forests that are also the habitats of many species (Ministry for the Environment & Stats NZ, 2023) and the creation and dumping of waste that is leeching into oceans (UN Environment Programme, n.d.).

The impact on the environment is also linked to human consumption practices (IPCC, 2023). Mass consumerism has become possible throughout the world through the invention of fossil heavy production technologies. Consumption is encouraged in the Anglosphere through the daily influx of mass advertising and enabled by the affordability of goods made by cheap labour and the ease of on-the-day delivery. Although many businesses are working to transition towards environmentally-conscious business models, many have been caught ‘greenwashing’, conveying a false impression that they are environmentally friendly. For example, Coca-Cola have spent millions of dollars to promote that their bottles are made of 25% ‘marine plastic’ (plastics retrieved from oceans) but fail to mention that they are the world’s largest plastic polluter (Break Free From Plastic, 2021; Laville, 2022). The rampant consumption of consumer goods is leading to environments that encompass a legacy of non-regenerative waste and the long-term contaminants they produce (Hawkins, 2006). How do those in the Anglosphere ensure that they live and work within environmental limits? Part of this is figuring out ways to move away from environmentally harmful practices and reorient towards caring and restorative practices. A number of theorists can help us to think about this.

Environmental limits have been conceptualized in different ways. For example, in 1972 'The Limits to Growth' report was published. A team of researchers examined five factors: population increase, agricultural production, non-renewable resource depletion, industrial output, and pollution generation; and used a computer model to understand the outcomes of multiple scenarios (Meadows et al., 1972). These scenarios tested what would happen if each of the five factors continued and were left unchanged. They found that the limits to growth on planet Earth would be reached within the next one hundred years, causing a "sudden and uncontrollable decline in both population and industrial capacity" (Meadows et al., 1972, p. 23). Their report states that humans can live indefinitely on Earth if they impose limits on themselves and their production of material goods to create a state of global equilibrium with population and production in a careful balance (Meadows et al., 1972). Their report calls for a transition from growth to global equilibrium (Meadows et al., 1972). This extrapolation exercise has limits of its own, making predictions without the foresight of the massive changes to come over the succeeding decades. However, the report does capture an important consideration for the material requirements of economic growth. In 2009, an international team of transdisciplinary scientists created their framework of nine planetary boundaries (Richardson et al., 2023; Rockström et al., 2009). These planetary boundaries have since been incorporated into economic frameworks, such as Kate Raworth's (2017) Doughnut Economics where the planetary boundaries act as an ecological ceiling that economic activities should remain within (Raworth, 2017). Through applying environmental limits to economic theories, the aim of continual growth is starkly unobtainable on a finite planet.

Chasing economic growth, particularly in measures of GDP, has oriented many economies of the Anglosphere (and beyond) around a growth imperative. With continual growth as a key motivator, business as usual involves expanding markets to increase profit (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013). As a result, the speed of extraction-production-consumption is pushed to become quicker and quicker to meet this aim and what has resulted are rapid processes of resource extraction and production that have climate-altering impacts (IPCC, 2023). Degrowth perspectives have theorised how to decouple economies from continual economic growth, resource consumption and energy use (Kallis & March, 2016; Saito, 2020/2024; Savini, 2023; Schneider et al., 2010; Singh, 2019). As Singh (2019) explains, degrowth is not about reaching "less of the same" but about fostering different kinds of social and economic relations (p. 138). She argues that degrowth movements,

which are most prevalent in the Global North, often strive for "new ways of life" and have important links with Environmental Justice struggles, more prevalent in the Global South, that often defend "old ways of life" (Singh, 2019, p. 138). As economic growth has had a large role to play in informing the way economists, governments, businesses and many others in the Anglosphere relate to the Earth, part of reconnecting to Earth's limits involves addressing prevailing ideologies regarding socio-economic-environmental relationships.

The disconnection between production and consumption practices, people, and the Earth is captured by theories of the 'metabolic rift', described at the beginning of this chapter (Foster, 1999; Marx, 1867/1990; Moore, 2000; Schneider & McMichael, 2010). The metabolic rift captures the socioecological disconnect of humans from the natural systems they rely upon. This metabolic rift also informs the way that waste is defined and managed. While there are always multiple rationalities of waste present, a 'throw-it-away' response to waste has become standard practice in New Zealand (Diprose et al., 2023). In this sense, the way people are most likely to 'deal' with what they no longer want is to throw it out of sight and do not face the consequences of its disposal. Gay Hawkins (2006) highlights that within commodity culture, continual consumption is framed as a part of personal freedom and self-expression. She argues that this also allows for a freedom to be wasteful, to discard even what is still usable (Hawkins, 2006). Many products are not made to be re-absorbed back into the Earth or to be reused, and most products are abandoned in landfills (Blumhardt & Prince, 2022; Diprose et al., 2023; United Nations Environment Programme, 2021). These throw-it-away practices are a reflection of the metabolic rift where the accumulation of consumer goods is largely disconnected from the issues that surround their production and disposal. Those in the Anglosphere are not only separated from the lands from which their goods are coming from, but also from the people involved in production and the conditions of their lives (Goburdhone & Dombroski, 2023). Healing this rift requires fostering a different, more caring relationship to nature, and practicing material maintenance.

Circular economy approaches have been proposed as a way to address the environmental concerns of current production and consumption within and outside of the Anglosphere. Creating circular economies is about using resources in ways that regenerate them for future use. This looks like creating closed loops between the taking of resources, their use, and their reuse in the form of

another product or back into the Earth (Corvellec et al., 2022). However, Savini (2023) notes that much of circular economies thinking does not think enough about downsizing economies. Circular economy approaches largely focus on creating circular flows of materials that do not always disrupt the growth imperative. Therefore, Savini (2023) suggests a 'degrowth circularity' which involves reducing production and consumption and downscaling economies. A degrowth circularity requires labours of reuse, repair, and refusal as well as networks of relationships to form well-connected circular economies (Llorente-González & Vence, 2020; Savini, 2023). Furthermore, Saito (2020/2024) argues that a focus on shifts in lifestyle and consumption is not enough to tackle the climate crisis and stresses a focus on changing the nature of production to slow down and decelerate[4] (p. 186-188). What is needed is different ways of extracting, producing and consuming that encompass environmental limits.

Creating different ways to produce and consume requires thinking about distributions of time. Currently those in the Anglosphere are increasingly separated from the realities of their environment with many people spending less and less time in nature (Kellert et al., 2017; Khajehzadeh & Vale, 2017). Waged work is playing a part in this as many workers in the Anglosphere are spending long hours working, including upwards of 9 extra unpaid hours of work a week (Unions NSW, 2024). Worker's time is also taken up once they arrive home, with obligations such as housework and childcare. However, women take on more unpaid domestic, childcare and caring labour on average and when it comes to environmentally conscious efforts, women are also participating more in everyday environmental practices than men on average (Bhuta & Muralidharan, 2020; Fry et al., 2023; Mezzadri, 2022; Organo et al., 2013). Transforming harmful production practices, (re)connecting to the environment, and engaging in conscious consumption practices in the Anglosphere requires time. Similarly, attending to the other important obligations in life requires time and a reconfiguring of time to distribute this workload fairly (Nedelsky & Malleson, 2023). If the time taken to perform crucial care work - environmental and human - is currently unequally distributed, how can it be redistributed?

[4] Through five pillars: An economy based on use-value; shortening work hours; satisfaction in work; democratizing production processes; prioritizing essential work.

2.2.2 Taking Back Time

Data from Statistics New Zealand shows that the number of people working a second job is increasing. In 2023, 216,300 New Zealanders were supplementing their primary job, an increase of 5.2% from the previous three months (Taunton, 2023). In 2024, a Workplace Wellbeing survey found that nearly 20% of their respondents had looked for a second job due to financial stressors (EMA, 2024). But this is not only the case in New Zealand. In Australia, a record of 961,400 people were working more than one job in June 2024 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2024). In the United Kingdom, an estimated 5.2 million workers took on an extra job to cope with the cost-of-living crisis (Cameron, 2022). In America, the 'poly-employment' trend has increased significantly and is also linked to increasing cost-of-living pressures (Deputy, 2024), with the largest report of 8.9 million American workers holding multiple jobs in 2025 (Castrillon, 2025). A larger trend of 'overemployment' in the Anglosphere is also increasing as more people hold multiple full-time jobs without their employers knowing (Westfall, 2022). A number of 'overemployed' groups have even been created on social media, with users advising each other on how to navigate company regulations (Chandonnet, 2024). Overemployment comes with the risks of exhaustion in taking on more labour, the possibility of underperforming or being caught out, as well as new challenges around the rules of engaging in multiple jobs (Westfall, 2022). But the promise of increased income is too great for some to pass up. Many state that their engagement with overemployment is due to a rising cost-of-living and an unstable economy (Chandonnet, 2024). The cost-of-living crisis is having an impact on the number of hours people in the Anglosphere are working to survive and people living in some of the highest consuming countries in the world are having to work more just to make ends meet. However, working more is not only due to financial stress but can also be the result of the changing nature of work.

In the Anglosphere, mainstream work-life balance has long been imagined as a confined workday (often a 9-5 workday), situated in a fixed location, that has a clear beginning and end (Brydges, 2024; Richardson, 2024). However, for many this clear timeframe has eroded as new technology has become a part of work life. The internet, email and smartphones changed not only the way workers performed their work but have also shaped the span of the workday (Morgan, 2023; Richardson, 2024). Many workers have become reachable at all times, and their work has become more accessible to them through the digitalisation of work, causing long work hours to increasingly

become part of work culture in the Anglosphere (Worth, 2024). This puts workers at risk of overworking and has fed into the formation of hustle culture which has intensified expectations of workers with many workers doing more than their set hours. For example, a 2024 Australia-based report from Unions NSW surveyed multiple industries and found that 86% of workers surveyed perform unpaid extra hours as part of their job (Unions NSW, 2024). On average respondents reported working over 9 hours of unpaid work each week (Unions NSW, 2024). The majority of survey respondents believed that refusing a request to perform unpaid overtime was career limiting (Unions NSW, 2024). In the United Kingdom, 3.5 million people did unpaid overtime in 2022, working an average of 7.4 unpaid hours a week (Rahman, 2023). In 2024, two out of five teaching staff in the United Kingdom worked 26 unpaid hours (Adams, 2024). For some workers, doing this extra unpaid work is a way to get ahead in their career, for others they feel it is part of an unspoken expectation from their employer (Tatum, 2022). In both cases, workers are contributing excessive hours of value to their employer, leaving them with less time for life outside of their waged work (Marx, 1867/1990).

But what about the work being performed outside of the workplace? Although the work society would lead us to believe that it is only the paid hours of work that keep us afloat, hours of unpaid work are incredibly important to creating livelihoods. What is significant is that this work is highly gendered as women do the majority of unpaid work. This is a problem in the Global North and in the Global South (Bhuta & Muralidharan, 2020). This unpaid work includes housework, childcare, and the care of sick and elderly people. In the Global North, women do 1.2 to 2 times more unpaid care and domestic work than men (Equimundo & Men Care, 2023). The last Time Use Survey undertaken in New Zealand was in 2009/10 and found women spent nearly two hours more on unpaid work than men per day (Statistics New Zealand, 2011). A 2019 Australian survey found that women do 21 hours more of unpaid work than men a week (Convery & Henrique-Gomes, 2021). In the Global South, women perform 3-7 times more caregiving tasks than men, including housework and childcare (Equimundo & Men Care, 2023). Because this work is often assumed to be undertaken along gendered lines, rather than negotiated, the benefits produced by this work can be more easily appropriated by non-workers (Thébaud et al., 2021).

This is evidently problematic when women continue to bear the burden of unpaid work despite also entering paid work. A 2023 American study by Pew Research center found that women's financial contributions to the household as paid workers have increased over the last fifty years, but they continue to do more unpaid work (Fry et al., 2023). Despite American heterosexual couples becoming more equal financial contributors to their households, the way their time is divided between paid work and unpaid work is unbalanced (Fry et al., 2023). The American study found that women carry a heavier load when it comes to household chores and caregiving responsibilities, while men spend more time in paid work and leisure activities (Fry et al., 2023). This was true when spouses earnt approximately the same in their paid work and when a woman was the primary earner (Fry et al., 2023). The only instance that men spent more time in a caregiving role was when their female partner was the sole earner (Fry et al., 2023). However, in these instances the couple spent approximately the same time per week on household chores (Fry et al., 2023). Despite a considerable increase in dual-earning families and women's engagement in paid work throughout their lives in America and more broadly in the Anglosphere, women continue to undertake the majority of unpaid work (Baxter & Tai, 2016). This is also applicable for women in the Global South where women who have paid work are still tasked with an unequal burden of domestic and care work (Bhuta & Muralidharan, 2020; Folbre, 1994; Hanna et al., 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic revealed how this gendering of unpaid work is still prominent. During the pandemic it was found that across the Global South, women's unpaid care and domestic work increased (Mezzadri, 2022). It was also found that some women in the United Kingdom and in China lost their jobs due to an increase of domestic and care responsibilities (Mezzadri, 2022). This gendered increase of work has been understood as an extension of the high levels of unpaid labour that women in many places performed before the pandemic. As a result, many women were overwhelmed because of the gulf between women and men when it comes to care work responsibilities.

Part of this issue of the unequal distribution of unpaid work is that unpaid work is often not considered to be 'work' at all (Folbre, 1994). 'Work' has commonly been associated with waged work which is the most formally valued form of work, through wages or salary, and is considered 'productive' as it contributes to the formal economy and the creation of profit. 'Productive' work has often been placed in a binary with 'non-productive' work, such as unpaid care, child and

housework. This means that in many accounting frameworks seemingly none of this 'non-productive' work is taking place and remains unaccounted for in most economic analysis (Waring, 1988, 2018). The 'working person', typically pictured as the employee, is not representative of the entirety of the working population as many people do not participate in employment (children, retired people) but this does not mean they do not work. This framing of work disguises the many types of work that people do and has been countered by feminist economists (Folbre, 1994; Gibson-Graham, 1996; Waring, 1988).

Social reproduction is a useful concept that feminist scholars have developed for explaining the role of women's everyday labour in sustaining capitalist economies. Mitchell et al. (2003) describes social reproduction as all the work that is done to get the worker back at the factory gate the next day. This includes caring for the workers needs such as cooking food, doing laundry, keeping a home, caring for the worker's dependents, and reproducing workers literally through the birth and care of children. An important contribution to social reproduction theory was the Wages for Housework movement (Berg, 2014; Federici, 1995). The Wages for Housework movement in the 1960s worked to show the value of housework. Their demand of wages for housework recognised housework as work and enabled women to recognise themselves as workers who could refuse to perform housework. They argued that women's unpaid labour was a source of exploitation, specifically a branch of capitalist production and contributor to surplus value (Federici, 2014; Ozkazanc-Pan & Pullen, 2021). Such activism identified this gendered work as a structural and institutional issue (Ozkazanc-Pan & Pullen, 2021). The movement critiqued women's marginalisation within the family unit and their exclusion from the paid workforce (Mitchell et al., 2003).

For Marxist feminists, the work of social reproduction is a site of exploitation that fuels capitalist labour power (Dalla Costa & James, 1972; Federici, 1995; Fortunati, 1989). They argue that unpaid socially reproductive work, traditionally performed by women, plays a critical role in sustaining the reproduction of labour-power and goes unrecognised and uncompensated. For others, social reproduction is not just reducible to the production of paid labour-power but is distinct in the way it encompasses a plethora of activities vital to life in spite of the creation of commodities (Mitchell et al., 2003). Mitchell et al. (2003) introduces 'life's work' as a way to

reframe the relationship between 'social reproduction' and 'production' and work through these binaries by highlighting the contradictions between these spheres. For Mitchell et al. (2003) 'life's workers' move across these spheres, permanently mobilized, their workplaces and spaces of domesticity moving everywhere with them (Mitchell et al., 2003). Mitchell et al. (2003) focus on practices of life's work and identify how people produce value in all domains of their lives, in many cases within the same space and hour. Feminist geographers have also argued that lives are not neatly separated into spheres but intersect and overlap in the many spaces of life, in the home, workplace, community spaces and beyond (Carr, 2023; Gibson-Graham, 1996).

In this way, social reproduction does not just have to reproduce capitalism. Morrow and Dombroski (2015) argue it is in the realm of social reproduction that other economies can be produced too. While practices of life's work can reproduce capitalist social relations, they can also undermine these relations (Morrow & Dombroski, 2015). For example, circular economies require social reproduction through the work to recycle or source environmentally friendly items that a household needs. Organo et al. (2013) describe how in the Australian context, most of this work in the form of the everyday implementation and habit-changing is done by women but that men contribute through project-based work like building chicken coops or compost infrastructure. What this reveals is how *time* can be gendered. In their study, Organo et al. (2013) found that sustainable practices are incorporated into specific temporal and spatial contexts of households. The women in their study engaged in part time paid work and they were also stay at home parents. They implemented many of the sustainable practices of the household and experienced work time, care time and leisure time as overlapping whereby 'habitual time' was more available to women (Organo et al., 2013). In comparison, the men in their study "retained the idea of work and leisure time as temporally and spatially discrete" (Organo et al., 2013, p. 572). The men largely understood sustainability as a leisure practice, and they were often responsible for the vital upfront labour and time needed to invest in starting a sustainable household project. Men contributed to sustainable practices through project based, leisure-type activities in longer blocks of time and so 'block time' was more available to men (Organo et al., 2013). The responsibility to enact the sustainable practices on an everyday basis commonly fell to women to change habits or maintain a household project. Women were initiating and maintaining the sustainable practices while men supported and participated on a less habitual basis (Organo et al., 2013). The structure of men and women's paid

work in this Australian study had influence on the meaning and structure of their time. It is these specific gendered relationships to time, rather than a gendering of the work itself, that led to these differences in this social reproduction. As the gendering of social reproduction is already prevalent in the Anglosphere, I suggest that a similar gendering of time and sustainable practices likely occurs in other countries of the Anglosphere, including New Zealand.

In this section I have explored three important issues of time. First, many workers in the Anglosphere are working more hours in their paid role and are even taking on another job as they experience increasing financial and workplace pressure to work more. Second, theories of social reproduction highlight the time required to tend to important unpaid work and whose time has been taken up with the task. Third, time can become gendered in the Anglosphere and plays a significant role in the distribution of social reproduction, including household sustainability. In order to shift towards more regenerative forms of production and consumption in the Anglosphere, time needs to be redistributed so all people can participate in important work inside and outside of the workplace. Keeping within environmental limits and redistributing time is essential for working and consuming differently and to create economies that revolve around acts of care and repair.

Beyond these material problems with work, current configurations of waged work in the Anglosphere create two relational problems that are important to address. First, workers can be at risk of different forms of exploitation in their waged work and second many workers are experiencing a disconnection from a sense of meaning in their work. These themes of exploitation and alienation are what I discuss next. It is worth noting here that studies and commentaries of workers in the Anglosphere often place emphasis on office work. Office work is a prevalent representation of work in the Anglosphere, and the office and its links to the corporate world are often highlighted. However, for a country like New Zealand, physically laborious work makes up a large proportion of the work people perform, and the majority of the workforce is not engaged in office-based roles (Infometrics, n.d.). In New Zealand many people work in service, construction and healthcare sectors (Infometrics, n.d.) and the experience and worker-identity of a construction worker or farm worker who works outdoors and performs physical labour is likely different to the office worker sitting indoors at a desk. These workers are likely to experience different kinds of work pressures related to exploitation and alienation and have different

attachments to and meanings for their work (Worth, 2024, p. 233). As representations of work culture in the Anglosphere often surround office work and the corporate world, statistics available also reflect this focus and lead me to discuss issues and shifts in work that is reflective of this specific experience.

2.2.3 Avoiding Exploitation

Increasingly more workers in the Anglosphere are working beyond their set hours, spending extra time on work related tasks outside of their paid work hours due to pressure. For some this looks like 9 hours or even 26 hours of extra unpaid work each week (Adams, 2024; Unions NSW, 2024). This is not just an issue of how work is encroaching on people's time but reveals something more sinister. Some people are overcommitting themselves to work, not because they want to, but because they are concerned that their employers will respond negatively if they do not. This threat of losing employment brings us to the issue of exploitation. Broadly, exploitation is the act of treating people badly and unfairly to benefit from their labour. The bad treatment of workers is often possible because workers rely on their waged work to live. For Marx (1867/1990), all waged labour within capitalist social relations is exploitative because of this coercion and because the total value workers produce is not in their control. In this section I will explore these different kinds of exploitation in waged work.

Working overtime for an employer may be a naturalised part of work culture but there are also more explicit forms of exploitation that workers can face. This includes the use of child labour (Silvia, 2024a) and vast migrant worker abuse that teeters towards modern slavery (Kagan, 2024; NZCTU, 2024). For example, in New Zealand migrant workers report that they have not received their wages or wage records, that they are not paid adequately for their long work hours, that they live in crowded and unsafe places and that they are verbally and physically assaulted (Human Rights Commission, 2024). For example, a worker at a bar in Alexander, New Zealand, felt like a prisoner as she was working 60 hours a week but was only being paid for 30 hours and felt she could not speak out because her accommodation was part of her employment agreement (Edmunds, 2024). Workers in Tauranga, New Zealand, had to sleep on the ground in a garage and were paid between $12-$15 an hour for their work harvesting kiwifruit (Stuff, 2024). The relative agency of

migrant workers is also diverse, such as migrants who are limited to work in particular industries because of their visa status or migrants who can or cannot easily cross borders (see Worth, 2024). A coerced or forced overcommitment to work for non-migrant and migrant workers alike is a significant problem of work in the Anglosphere. How do we ensure that work in the Anglosphere is not exploitative in the way workers manage themselves or others?

The potential for worker exploitation is seen in the everyday intensification of work in the Anglosphere. Much has been written on the growing intensification of work where many workers are now expected to be not only engaged but intrinsically motivated in their work and are expected to put in extra hours to maintain their role and to gain promotion (Granter et al., 2015; Kremer et al., 2021; McCann et al., 2008; Niazi et al., 2024; Van Dyne & Ellis, 2004; Vigoda-Gadot, 2006). In some cases, these expectations have become so embedded in productivist work culture that workers internalize these expectations and experience anxiety because of it (Bolino & Turnley, 2005; Jensen et al., 2013). Workers with jobs that are higher status often carry the expectation of long hours as simply part of the deal and this is used to justify the little free time some workers have (Moen et al., 2013). There is also an assumption that workers in education or healthcare sectors have enough passion for the job to happily commit overtime (Nogues & Tremblay, 2023; Vigoda-Gadot, 2006). A 2021 survey of healthcare workers in the United Kingdom found that three quarters of workers took on extra unpaid hours due to pressure of goodwill and commitment to their role (Royal College of Nursing, 2021). The pressure to go above and beyond can also affect workers differently depending on their positionality. A 2017 United States study found that women are more likely than men to accept requests to take on extra tasks that have low promotability (Babcock et al., 2017) and a 2021 United States study found that black employees were considerably more likely to feel they had to work harder than their white colleagues to achieve an equal level of progression (McKinsey & Company, 2021). These intersections of capitalist exploitation and racial oppression and their impacts on wellbeing have been written about by Black feminists (Hersey, 2022; Kim & Schalk, 2021). Some link the increasing intensification of work to the evolving nature of jobs where work roles have changed over time and have become more complex and multifaceted, making them more difficult to define (Kremer et al., 2021). With these blurry boundaries comes the risk of ‘work creep’, the expansion of tasks an employee is expected to complete (Bolino et al., 2018; Van Dyne & Ellis, 2004).

The aim of employee engagement within an organisation is to improve worker productivity and develop a workplace culture that inspires workers to be enthusiastic in their work (Johnson et al., 2018; Vigoda-Gadot, 2006). This is not necessarily a bad thing and there is a body of research that shows that engaged employees are more satisfied and committed to their work and experience higher levels of happiness and wellbeing (Johnson et al., 2018). However, this focus on employee engagement can perpetuate an over-commitment to work and another body of research has found a strong link between higher levels of engagement and taking on extra work hours and discretionary tasks (Sharafizad et al., 2020). What's more, worker wellbeing is often framed as the responsibility of individual workers, creating more strain on workers to manage their performance (Murtola & Vallelly, 2022; Rosenbaum & Tamlor, 2022). Although high worker engagement is valuable for employers and managers, pressure to overcommit to work can come with large risks for workers.

A 2021 global study showed that overwork is killing workers (Pega et al., 2021). People who work more than 54 hours a week were shown to be at major risk of dying from overwork, specifically from ischaemic heart disease and stroke related to long working hours (Pega et al., 2021). This crisis of overwork is estimated to be killing three-quarters of a million people each year and overwork was identified as the single largest risk factor for occupational disease globally (Pega et al., 2021). While not all workers undergo life threatening pressure, there is considerable evidence that the intensification of work has large mental health consequences for workers (Kremer et al., 2021; Mental Health Foundation, n.d.; Worksafe, n.d., 2021). In response to the encroaching pressures of work, workers in Australia are now legally protected if they ignore their bosses' emails and calls after work hours thanks to a new 'right to disconnect' law (Silva, 2024).

The COVID-19 pandemic also sparked a mass revaluation of work in the Anglosphere through the 'great resignation' where workers resigned or changed their job to prioritize work-life balance. Following the pandemic, the 'quiet quitting' phenomena began where workers refused to work beyond the hours and tasks they are paid to do and maintain the minimum requirements of their role, much like the 'working to contract' union tactic (Formica & Sfodera, 2022). The quiet quitting phenomenon reflects how normalised it has become for employers to expect workers to exceed what is required for their role.

At the best of times, waged work can provide an outlet to pursue fulfilling and meaningful creative, intellectual and skilful tasks. Workers in these conditions may pour extra time into their work in a way that is fulfilling and meaningful (Vanderkam, 2015). But at the worst of times, waged work can trap workers within exploitative relationships where they are pushed to work harder and longer, while often reliant on an employer to provide them with an income. Not everyone can alter the conditions of their work as easily as others and achieving a sound quality of life can mean working longer hours and devoting more time and energy to a job that may not provide deep rewards. This renders workers who are highly dependent on their waged work particularly exploitable.

Another important analysis of worker exploitation is found in distributions of surplus. Marx (1867/1990) considered all waged labour to be exploitation because workers are coerced to engage in waged labour when separated from the means of production and because the total value workers produce is not in their control but is taken from them by the capitalist. For Mitchell and colleagues (2003) coercion into waged labour may involve processes outside of or in excess of those associated with the separation of the individual from the means of production, with the relations between employers and workers operating "within a dense social network of obligations and ties" (p. 422). Alongside what causes workers to engage in waged labour, tracing distributions of surplus value reveals what control workers have over the value they produce and can highlight worker exploitation.

Marxist analysis of waged labour identifies the processes through which workers create but do not control the value they produce. Like Marx, critical economic theory is interested in the way that value is appropriated from workers by nonworkers. Here, the way 'surplus value' is distributed is an important point of analysis. Building from Marxist thought, Gibson-Graham et al. (2000) develop a language of class to trace the variety of directions that surplus value may move. Gibson-Graham et al. (2013) reiterate that many workers create enough value within their working hours to cover their 'survival payment' (wage) but have no claim to the surplus wealth they create. Worker exploitation can be located at the moment of appropriation: when the surplus labour produced by a worker is taken and used by a non-worker (Cameron, 1996). In many organisations, the surplus made by workers flows into the hands of those positioned at the top of the organisational hierarchy who decide how it is used (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013). In capitalist

organisations much of the surplus that workers produce is appropriated by the business owner (the capitalist) and is taken as personal wealth. This flow of the distribution of surplus is commonly justified as the natural reward for those who express entrepreneurship and have taken the risks of becoming a private business owner (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013). But surplus can be distributed differently.

For example, Healy (2018b) showcases the heterogeneity of capitalist enterprises. In his example, shareholders may not always pay themselves out and instead profits may be used to create pay rises for workers (Healy, 2018b). In another example, for many Indigenous enterprises in the Pacific, surplus distribution is aimed towards a collective sense of wellbeing and surplus is used to fulfil spiritual, cultural, and environmental wellbeing (Vunibola et al., 2022). If such enterprises no longer functioned, the surpluses distributed and invested in these diverse ways would continue beyond the organisation's lifetime (Vunibola et al., 2022). From these examples, there are two important moments to think about surplus. The first is the moment surplus is appropriated. The second is to whom that surplus is distributed to (Cameron, 1996; Vunibola et al., 2022).

Although Marx was focused on capitalism and the capitalist class process in relation to the development of capitalism, his theories of non-capitalist class processes have provided useful grounds for Gibson-Graham, Resnick and Wolff (2000) to theorise diverse forms of surplus distribution. The non-capitalist class processes outlined by Marx (see Table 2) were described as processes predating and leading to capitalism. For Gibson-Graham, Resnick and Wolff (2000), these processes have always coexisted with capitalist processes. What distinguishes non-capitalist class processes from the capitalist class process is the way that surplus is produced, appropriated and distributed (Gibson-Graham et al., 2000).

Table 2

Table of Class Processes

Capitalist class process	Workers produce surplus labour, which is then appropriated and distributed by the capitalist. Workers are given a wage, but the remaining surplus is not within their control.
Feudal class process	Workers produce surplus labour which is then appropriated and distributed by the feudal 'lord'. Workers are not paid a wage but produce what they need as well as produce more than what they need. Part of their surplus acts as rent.
Slave class process	Workers produce surplus labour which is then appropriated and distributed by the slave owner. They produce much more than they are given to live. These workers are unfree.
Ancient (or independent) class process	A worker produces surplus labour which they self-appropriate and distribute.
Communist (or communal) class process	A group of workers produce surplus labour which they jointly appropriate and distribute. An example is a worker owned cooperative.

Table is authors own, adapted from Cameron (2020) who outlines a diversity of class processes

These different class processes showcase a variety of conditions under which workers produce value. However, even without a capitalist social relation, these class processes can be exploitive and undesirable (Morrow & Dombroski, 2015). But the class processes show how surplus can be distributed differently and can be distributed in non-exploitative ways. Overall, these class processes provide a useful basis for fostering the kinds of work contexts that enable workers to gain more control over the value they create and to identify and avoid forms of worker exploitation.

In this section I have explored how worker engagement and productivity are large drivers of organisational management and are reflected in broader work culture in the Anglosphere. Although worker engagement can create a satisfying work life for workers, there is a risk of overwork and its negative health outcomes. This pressure to overcommit to work is one form of worker exploitation I identify in this section. I have also discussed how Marxist theorists identify worker exploitation in the way that surplus value is appropriated and distributed by non-workers. However, workers in the Anglosphere and beyond are pushing back against the increasing intensification of work through 'quiet quitting' trends and the creation of new laws that protect workers from boundless work lives. On top of this, many workers are also seeking meaning in their work, and I explore this next.

2.2.4 Preventing Alienation

Some people find their job deeply meaningful (Vanderkam, 2015) but there are reports that many workers in the Anglosphere feel that what they do at work has no meaning at all. In 2013, a survey of 12,000 professionals found that half of those surveyed felt that their job had no meaning and significance and half of those surveyed also felt that they could not relate to their company's mission (Bregman, 2017). In 2015, a survey of United Kingdom workers found that 37% felt that their job did not make a meaningful contribution to the world (Dahlgreen, 2015). A 2021 survey of more than 9,000 working Americans found that 22% felt their job was not making a meaningful contribution to the world (Ballard, 2021). Fifty-six percent of those who felt that their job is not meaningful also reported that they are not personally fulfilled by their work, with 27% of this group reporting that their job is not fulfilling at all (Ballard, 2021). Sociologist Simon Walo (2023) found that workers in the United States who worked in 21 different types of jobs reported that they never or rarely feel that their work makes a positive impact on community or society or that they feel they do useful work. A global report published in 2023 found that workers are experiencing large amounts of dissatisfaction, disengagement and unhappiness at work (Gallup, 2024). Only 23% of people reported feeling engaged in their work while 62% reported not being engaged and 15% were actively disengaged (Gallup, 2024). Workers reported daily negative emotions including stress (41%), anger (21%), sadness (22%) and loneliness (20%) and over half of the respondents were actively seeking a new job (Gallup, 2024). A 2024 New Zealand workplace wellbeing survey

found that 56% of respondents were worried about their own mental health and 52% were concerned about the risk of burnout at work (EMA, 2024). What is reflected in these statistics is a widely felt dissatisfaction and lack of meaning in work.

This increasing sense of meaningless work in the Anglosphere may correlate to the contents of people's jobs as many jobs have become cluttered with meaningless tasks. A United States survey from 2016-2017 found that the amount of time American office workers devoted to their actual work duties declined from 46% in 2015 to 39% in 2016 (Graeber, 2018). This decline was attributed to an increase of time spent dealing with emails, administrative tasks, and 'wasteful' meetings (Graeber, 2018). Anthropologist David Graeber has written about the phenomena of 'bullshit jobs' and argues that in recent times there are many objectively meaningless jobs. He invited people to submit their confessions of having a bullshit job by creating the Gmail address "doihaveabsjoborwhat@gmail.com" and gathered the anecdotes into his book *Bullshit Jobs* (Graeber, 2018). He found that many jobs have become cluttered with meaningless tasks and discusses the increase in managerial roles, where more people's jobs involve managing other workers' management of their workloads. Or worse, managing other managers management of other workers workloads. Despite their high earnings, Graeber (2018) argues that the different forms of bullshit he identifies in his book are partly the cause for so many jobs to lack meaning. He also argues that bullshit jobs are psychologically destructive when they are embedded in a work culture that associates work with self-worth. In response to the increasing meaninglessness of jobs and major world events like the COVID-19 pandemic, it appears that workers priorities have swung towards meaning and work-life balance.

Recently, the search for a healthy work-life balance has been widely reported and studies have found that work-life balance has become an even higher priority for some workers than pay. In 2021 data from a survey of more than 9,000 United Kingdom workers showed that 65% prioritised work-life balance over pay and benefits (Randstad, 2021). A 2022 survey by FlexJobs of 4,000 United States respondents showed that 63% would choose work-life balance over better pay (Howington, n.d.). Meaningful work has also become a priority. A 2018 survey showed that nine out of ten American professionals would trade a percentage of their earnings for work that felt more meaningful (Achor et al., 2018). On average, these workers would be willing to pass up 23%

of their entire future earnings to have a job that was always meaningful (Achor et al., 2018). The search for meaning is especially clear amongst younger workers as job site *Monster* conducted a survey of Generation Z workers which found that 70% of respondents ranked purpose as more important than pay (Morgan, 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic has also had an impact on the importance of meaningful work for workers in the Anglosphere. A United States employee survey found that two thirds of respondents felt that COVID-19 had caused them to reflect on their purpose in life (Dhingra et al., 2021). Nearly half said that they have reconsidered the kind of work that they do because of the pandemic (Dhingra et al., 2021). Work-life balance was also a major motivator for those who were part of 'the great resignation'. Microsoft's 2022 Work Trend report showed that many workers who quit during the pandemic did so due to a lack of work-life balance or flexibility (Microsoft, 2022). Over half of employees said they were more likely to prioritise health and wellbeing over work than before the pandemic and nearly half of employees said they were more likely to put their personal life over work than they were before the pandemic (Microsoft, 2022).

What workers are grappling with are forms of alienation. Alienation captures a sense of estrangement or disconnection between workers and their work, particularly in the context of the capitalist mode of production (Øversveen, 2022). Karl Marx's (1932/1964; Ollman, 1971) theory of alienation describes the effects of capitalist production on workers, and he articulates four specific kinds of alienation that I have described at the beginning of this chapter. These include the alienation of the worker from their activity, from their products, from their fellows, and from their species-being. Worker's alienation in their work is reflected in the reports of a lack of meaning and connection for workers with their work, such as workers who sense that their job is meaningless, some of whom are resigning, switching jobs or becoming self-employed as a result. Workers alienation from their species-being is reflected in the narrow focus on waged work as the central means to develop moral value and to contribute to an economy and society as captured by Weeks (2016) notion of the 'work society'. This alienation is also seen in the metabolic rift and is linked to the separation of people from traditional commons that results in a disconnection from land and lifeways. Marx's theories of alienation are useful for thinking about the current state of work, within and beyond work in capitalist enterprises. Many workers are seeking meaningful

work that prevents at least part of the alienation Marx expressed. Many workers are also seeking some kind of work-life balance that they feel they lack. For workers to gain a sense of meaning in work, the 'meaning' they are looking for will be uniquely defined. However, Chatterton and Pusey (2020) suggest that enclosure, commodification and alienation can be overcome by creating commons, and focusing on socially useful production, and useful doing. On a collective level, alienated work could be tackled through disrupting the influence of the work society in the Anglosphere to redefine the purpose of work and reorganise the creation and distribution of value.

The impacts of a work-focused society are well documented: Chronic overwork, devastating impacts on health and wellbeing and environmentally catastrophic patterns of production and consumption. So far, I have identified a range of material and relational problems with work in the Anglosphere. Next, I turn to theories of 'postwork' where scholars imagine different and sometimes conflicting pathways to move away from a work-centric culture.

2.3 Imagining Postwork

For many decades, scholars (anti-work theorists, philosophers, sociologists, futurists, organisational studies, economists) have tried to predict the end of work, pointing to a time where human labour will become so efficient that humans can offload from a life of work. Here 'work' largely refers to paid work within a formal job. In 1883, Paul Lafargue wrote an anti-work manifesto called 'The Right to be Lazy' that envisioned an overall decrease in labour in the future (Lafargue, 1975). In the 1930s, economist John Maynard Keynes predicted that within 100 years most people would work no more than 15 hours a week (Keynes, 1931/2010). A 'postwork' world has begun to be theorized. As a political agenda, postwork is rooted in anti-work sentiments that argue for the abolition of waged work (Weeks, 2016). Anti-work questions the unrelenting embrace of productivity and employment and works to denaturalise work (Black, 1986). Postwork is a move towards the de-normalisation of employment, challenging assumptions of the indispensability of employment and problematizes the link between waged work and survival (Acaroglu, 2020; MacLeavy & Lapworth, 2020). Theories of postwork share similar goals to many degrowth perspectives that work to disrupt the normalization of continual productivity (growth) and consumption from economies (Saito, 2020/2024; Savini, 2023; Singh, 2019).

Theories of postwork vary in their visions of what a postwork world looks like and how to get there. Many point to the developments in labour technologies to suggest that a time will come where human labour becomes obsolete to automation. Accelerationist approaches see the acceleration of technology as a way to 'complete' the necessary evolution of capitalism, creating a path towards a post-work future (Williams & Srnicek, 2013). From this perspective, the end of work can be achieved through large scale automation and the adoption of a Universal Basic Income (Williams & Srnicek, 2013). Accelerationism has been criticised as an anti-human, pro-machine philosophy that fetishizes technology over attempts to build new forms of social reproduction from below (Dinerstein et al., 2016). For Dinerstein et al. (2016) accelerationism may sever the reliance on employment, but it risks a particular dependence on the state without creating efforts to cultivate more-than-state dependencies. Furthermore, an accelerationist end to work is at odds with feminist struggles to revalorize social reproduction (MacLeavy & Lapworth, 2020). As the human subject and their emotions are a significant characteristic of this work, much of this work cannot be replaced by automation (Saito, 2020/2024). This highlights the invisibility of particular forms of work in notions of postwork and how these forms of work remain even if employment were to be 'offloaded'.

For techno-pessimists, automation is one of the largest threats to workers livelihoods (Ford, 2015; Armstrong, 2014). The main concern of techno-pessimists is that workers skills and their ability to make a living through those skills, is threatened by increasing robotic automation (Fleming, 2019). In 2017 the McKinsey Global Institute reported that half of the paid work activities people participate in globally are technically automatable through adapting current technologies (McKinsey & Company, 2017). However, Fleming (2019) notes that in many cases it is not economically worthwhile to automate jobs given that cheap labour is available instead. In both cases, workers can be left vulnerable to replacement by automation or the undervaluing of their labour. Fleming (2019) points to the strength of unionization where workers are most powerful against threats of automation. However, in some cases, companies have attempted to use automation in order to neutralize or eliminate such strike-prone workforces (Fleming, 2019). In other cases, human workers have proven to be more desirable in a range of work forms as seen in the discomfort of pilot-less planes or the frustration of human-less call centres (Fleming, 2019). As Fleming (2019) argues, the integration of automation is therefore bound by a range of socio-

cultural factors. But the threat of replacing human labour with various forms of technology is even more potent with the rapid rise of artificial intelligent technologies.

What about putting technology towards emancipatory ends? Four considerations arise from this aim. First, it is important to protect worker's skills to ensure that new technologies do not erode worker's bargaining power surrounding what skills they have to offer, only enhance it (Flemming, 2019). Second, it is important to rebuild forms of collective power between workers as the individualization of workers, particularly through contract work and forms of self-employment, risks undermining their collective power, creating more vulnerability around the introduction of automation (Acaroglu, 2020; Fleming, 2019). Third, it is important to decenter the dominant conceptualizations of work more generally through strategies like shorter work weeks and universal basic income (Chamberlain, 2018; MacLeavy & Lapworth, 2020; Nedelsky & Malleson, 2023). Fourth, it is important to consider that the natural resources required to create most work-saving technologies means that automation comes with heavy environmental costs (Saito, 2024, p. 192-193; see also Baker, 2018; Fleming, 2019). What is important is that the efficiency gained from automation converts to more free time for workers, not increased profit for employers through the reduction of jobs (MacLeavy & Lapworth, 2020). Automation could be a strength for workers if the control over and scale of production is to their benefit (Saito, 2024, p. 196). One suggestion is to create workers councils and engage in participatory budgeting as ways to begin democratizing the use of these technologies (Reeves & Sinnicks, 2023). One question that emerges is: who does the technology liberate?

Feminist takes on the postwork imaginary are cautious of the promise of worker empowerment built around technology and production, drawing on the failure of advanced household technologies to shift the burden and division of domestic labour (Baker, 2018; MacLeavy & Lapworth, 2020) as well as concerns of the reproduction of gender stereotypes in technologies (Hester, 2017). The move to full automation without the consideration of feminist struggles for gender equality could see a decrease in formal work but a continued gendering of domestic work (Baker, 2018; MacLeavy & Lapworth, 2020). Weeks (2016) acknowledges that there is no end to the need for socially reproductive work and advocates for more non-work time for all kinds of workers. The postwork imaginary requires addressing how work and non-work time is linked to

the public-private and productive-reproductive divides that continue to inform distributions of unpaid work (MacLeavy & Lapworth, 2020). This feminist approach to postwork brings forth a broader, diverse definition of work that includes forms of work in the realm of social reproduction. A feminist postwork perspective argues for the reshaping of power relations and a reorganisation of work that is fair and for collective benefit. Technology and automation will likely have specific roles to play in this approach but cannot eliminate work.

With this broad definition of work in mind, postwork could be achieved in the Anglosphere through de-normalising employment as a prerequisite for life and rejecting the current obsession with productivity. It is not a question of whether there is a future of work, because 'work' in its most broad sense will always be a part of human life. Instead, it is whether there is a good future in the current culture of work in the Anglosphere, and what role waged work has in this future. Theories of postwork suggest that we need more nonwork time and feminist theories of postwork argue for work time to be oriented around particular needs. In this sense, postwork can already be found in alternative conceptualisations of work (for example, see Diprose, 2020). People in the Anglosphere are already experimenting with ways of working differently and are responding to the material and relational problems with work in various ways. This includes strategies which focus on individual, policy and collective change. I discuss these next.

2.4 Responding to the Problems with Work

In this section I will discuss examples of the ways people have responded to the problems with work through individual and policy level change. First, I discuss how individual and policy level approaches have been used to address material problems of production and consumption and secondly how individual and policy level approaches have been used to address exploitation and alienation. In doing so, I identify collective action as an important focus for my research, which brings me to theories of community and commons.

Addressing the material problems of production and consumption through individual change is most prominent in the adoption of eco-conscious habits. For example, low waste living has become a booming trend across social media platforms and involves practicing household recycling,

mending and making items and transitioning away from plastic packaging (Ramjaun, 2021). These changes are part of a move towards a lifestyle that is more considerate of overconsumption and its impact on the planet. These changes in individual habits are important as they challenge normalized behaviours of consumption and help to uncover the limits of current infrastructure in supporting sustainable habits (Diprose et al., 2023). However, individual lifestyle changes can require a large investment in time and resources that not everyone can afford (Hobson et al., 2021). For example, time is required to research which materials are recyclable and to wash, dry and sort items for recycling (Lindsay et al., 2024; Llorente-González & Vence, 2020). Moreso, individual habit shifts do not address continual production. Individual households can work to close their own loops of consumption and disposal, but to strengthen and multiply this action requires the coordination of larger circular loops that start at the beginning of product design. Despite this, individuals who are already shifting their habits can hold important insights for the kinds of action that are needed to make these lifestyles more accessible and the kinds of infrastructural barriers that need to be overcome (Gibson et al., 2015; Dombroski, 2024a).

Addressing the material problems of production and consumption through policy change has been an important strategy for formalizing environmental protections. These policies provide guidelines to remain within environmental limits and create a form of accountability. Policies that protect the environment include emissions targets and eliminating the ordinary use of disposable materials such as plastic bags (Macintosh et al., 2020). These policies can influence shifts in consumption practices on a range of scales through a top-down approach. However, it is important that policy reflects a range of stakeholder positions and requires continual feedback from a range of stakeholders to ensure they are effective (Macintosh et al., 2020). Many environmental policy changes require corresponding shifts in everyday practices to create their intended impacts, which are not always accessible or easy to manage (Diprose et al., 2023; Hobson et al., 2021). For example, policies that work to transition transport infrastructures away from a reliance on fossil fuels requires individuals to shift their transportation choices towards the use of bike lanes and forms of public transport. These policies can help to coordinate shifts towards more environmentally conscious practices, but they rely on businesses, households and individuals to implement them.

Similarly, addressing the relational problems of work has also been approached through individual and policy level change. Individual change is most prominent in the quest to find one's dream job. 'Do what you love' has become a popular strategy adopted by many individuals in attempts to take control of one's work life and avoid alienated labour (Sandoval, 2018). Doing what you love promises that work becomes a joyful task that does not feel like work at all and can involve becoming self-employed or reaching the top of an organisational hierarchy. The issue with this rhetoric is it places the responsibility of experiencing fulfilling work on the individual and removes the demand for any structural change (Graeber, 2018; Sandoval, 2018; Walsh, 2018). The stress caused by work then becomes the fault of a worker's reactivity to their work conditions rather than the conditions themselves (Walsh, 2018). Gaining enjoyable work can also involve becoming the capitalist who takes the surplus of others or engaging in an independent class process at the risk of exploiting oneself (Chung, 2022). Chung (2022) describes the 'flexibility paradox' that can occur where workers gain more control over their work conditions, such as through self-employment or flexible work arrangements, but become more at risk of self-exploitation. Self-exploitation can be understood as "a socioeconomic device employed by workers to increase their labour market competitiveness by depreciating their labour power" (Vieira, 2023, p. 495). This depreciation of their labour power is often expected to be a temporary sacrifice to improve their outputs and economic success but can involve sacrificing wellbeing (Vieira, 2023). What makes self-exploitation unique is the high degree of consent from workers. As Vieira (2023) explains, many of these workers are:

> "calling upon actions, commitment, and rationalisation seemingly close to an entrepreneurial investment in which early detrimental conditions are expected to pay off somewhere along the road (. . .). Consequently, it creates 'a spiral of increased competitiveness among workers, shifting the work culture to become more competitive'" (pp. 495-496).

In this case, breaking free of the 9-5 can mean self-exploiting through boundless workdays. If it is simply a matter of entering 'enjoyable work', who will do the un-enjoyable and, in most cases, low paid work? (Loehnen, 2023). This individualised strategy for finding fulfilling work can abandon the wellbeing of other workers and the state of work conditions more broadly.

Addressing the relational problems with work through changing policy has been an important strategy for formalizing worker protections in the Anglosphere. Policies that protect workers include minimum wages and compulsory breaks which have been crucial to protect workers from forms of exploitation. Popular future policy changes to address the problems with work include shorter work weeks which are widely proposed to regain more nonwork time (Saito, 2020/2024; Stronge & Lewis, 2021). For example, employees at the New Zealand company Perpetual Guardian underwent a trial of a four-day working week with significant positive results as 78% reported they were able to achieve a better work-life balance (Haar, 2018). Shorter formal working weeks could also contribute to alleviating the material problems with work in gaining more time to, for instance, walk rather than drive and self-produce essential items rather than rely on vast networks of transport and imports (Saito, 2020/2024). A universal basic income is another popular policy proposal because of its potential to remove the need to take part in waged work in order to make a livelihood (Chamberlain, 2018; Healy, 2018a). Having a basic income could open up more nonwork time and lay off the pressure to engage in waged work in order to pursue different kinds of work (Chamberlain, 2018).

Creating effective policies requires individuals to both implement and provide feedback on the success of policies and individuals rely on effective policies to support their interests of living more sustainably or working in non-exploitative conditions. The interaction of individual and policy level change is key and an effective interaction between individual action and public policy requires some kind of connecting collective body. It is not enough for only some individuals to shift their habits and find fulfilling work, nor is it enough to write and implement policies without meeting the needs of people on the ground. Instead, addressing the material and relational problems with work requires collective action and therefore a form of community.

Community is found in between private and public interests and between individual and policy action. But what defines a community? ‘Community’ is a familiar term that is often used to describe groups of people through a significant commonality: the *gay* community, the *local* community, the *sewing* community (Gibson-Graham, 2006). This use of ‘community’ highlights a shared quality (such as shared identity, geography or interest) and often creates the sense of a positive wholeness (Gibson-Graham, 2006). Used in this way, ‘community’ categorically binds a

group of people together but does not necessarily convey if and how members interact with one another. For philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy (1991), this use of the term 'community' is concerning because it assumes some kind of pre-determined and constructed oneness. For Nancy (1991), community is set in the present and argues that there is "no common being, but there is being in common" (p. 4). Similarly, philosopher Giorgio Agamben (1993) understands community as an "inessential commonality, a solidarity that in no way concerns an essence" (p. 19). Rather than a fundamental essence that creates a community identity, community is brought to life through action. These perspectives have influenced J.K. Gibson-Graham (2006) who also defines community in an inessential manner. They "use the term 'community' as an empty signifier, one that can be filled with any manner of collective" (Dombroski, 2024b, p. 32). For them, community is never complete and rather than a common sameness, this inessentialist notion of community is a lively and activate process of 'being in common' (Gibson-Grahan, 2006). For Gibson-Graham, being in common is about *doing,* and they argue that collective care labour is what brings people together into commonality (see Dombroski, 2024b, p. 32). In other words, the creation of community takes place through some form of collective action.

A significant form of collective action is the creation and care of commons through 'the doing' of commoning. Broadly defined, commons are a collective resource that is maintained through practices of commoning (Huron, 2018). As commons are based on principles of sharing and care, they provide an alternative mode of organising to capitalist organisational structures and can provide useful examples of communal class processes of creating value and distributing surplus collectively (Chatterton & Pusey, 2020). Commons have been of great interest to scholars and activists for their means to create cooperative relationships and horizontal negotiation (Gibson-Graham & Roelvink, 2010). This focus on commons has been important because mainstream economic theory has often reproduced a particular economic subject, a selfish individual who is focused on utility, who is not embodied, nor acts in response to their relationships with other people (Bollier, 2014, 2021; Gibson-Graham, 1996). As Bollier (2021) explains, part of the impact of commons research and theory is "rethinking the premises of standard economics (. . .) by showing how social cooperation as a human archetype actually works" (p. 19). Therefore, commons are of interest to me in thinking about how to tackle the material and relational problems of work in the Anglosphere as collectives and through the care of commons. The next section will explore key

theoretical perspectives of the commons as well as outline the commons perspective I use in this thesis.

2.5 Commons and Commoning

A commons can be in the form of property, practice or knowledge which is shared by a community and is replenished or degraded depending on how that community cares for or neglects it (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013; Huron, 2018). Researching the commons has often focused on commons as 'resources' but has since been theorised as a resource intertwined with the social practice of commoning (De Angelis, 2017; Huron, 2018). Commoning is understood as the process through which a commons is created and maintained. Commoning is therefore a verb: it is an ongoing practice of collective labour which creates a collective resource, and through which communities are established (Bollier, 2014; Huron, 2018). Rather than a commons community as a group with a fixed identity, an inessentialist understanding of community is used to understand community as created through doing, specifically through actions of commoning. In this way, a commons cannot exist without a community of commoners to care for it and a commoner community cannot exist without a commons to care for (Mies, 2014). Just as inessentialist notions of community understand community as an open process that is never complete, commons are also always in the process of being maintained and cared for (Gibson-Graham, 2006). In this section I will discuss the key characteristics of the commons and significant theoretical contributions to the commons literature.

There are many different political perspectives on the commons. Each perspective on the commons arises from a particular concern and focuses on specific themes of the commons. These perspectives on the commons are not definitive. Similarly, commons themselves are always evolving. Commons are diverse because humanity itself is diverse and there is no blueprint for commons, only shared patterns and principles (Bollier, 2014; Bollier & Helfrich 2019). Historic commons are often imagined as natural resources such as woodlands, waterways, and open fields that people lived from, and are what I have named as 'traditional commons' in the beginning of this chapter. A classical Marxist take on the commons understands historic commons as pre-capitalist spaces and is interested in the commons as an alternative to market capitalism. The idea

of commons as pre-capitalist spaces relates to Marx's concept of 'primitive accumulation' in which a series of enclosures forced commoners off the lands they relied on as a means of subsistence, leaving many people with little choice but to engage in capitalist economies, including the enclosures of lands and peoples through colonialism (Huron, 2018; Scobie et al., 2024). For Indigenous peoples this involved a dispossession of their land and self-governing authority (Scobie & Sturman, 2024). However, Indigenous peoples have and continue to resist these processes (Scobie & Sturman, 2024; Scobie et al., 2024). Therefore, commons have significant historical and political connections to decolonial and Indigenous sovereignty struggles.

Understanding contemporary commons has been influenced by ecologist Garret Hardin's essay 'The Tragedy of the Commons' (Hardin, 1968). In his essay, Hardin entertains a thought experiment on the use of open-access resources. He associates commons with ecological disaster, arguing that a commons will ultimately be depleted and degraded due to competitive individual use (Hardin, 1968; Huron, 2018). For Hardin, privatisation or state control are the only solutions to avoid the eventual degradation of a commons (Huron, 2018). His theory has been challenged through two significant commons theories since the 1980s; the institutionalist approach and the alterglobalisationist approach.

An institutionalist approach focuses on the collective governance of a commons by the community who use and depend on it (Huron, 2018). Political economist Elinor Ostrom (1990) notes that commons are not 'open access' as Hardin theorised but are specifically bound. First by the physical boundaries of a commons (a gated field, a swimming pool) and second by the specific membership of a commons (Huron, 2018; Ostrum, 1990). Ostrom drew on her empirical material on the commons to understand how commoning worked and succeeded. In fact, her four decades of commons research alongside her work to assemble an international community of commons scholars, earned her the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize for economic sciences (Bollier, 2021). Ostrom's research included fieldwork of commons in multiple countries. She began by focusing on 'common pool resources', resources which do not have private property rights such as ground water and fisheries (Bollier, 2021). Ostrom's work demonstrated that commons can be managed effectively without state or private control (Huron, 2018).

A key issue with Hardin's 'tragedy of the commons', beyond not having any empirical backing, is that it understood commons as mere resources without considering the social practices of commoning. Instead of describing a commons, Hardin was describing "an open access regime without constraint in which everything is free for the taking" (Bollier, 2021, p. 13). However, a commons involves a distinct community of people who care for it and ultimately commons are *managed*. This is not to say that a commons cannot fall to mistreatment or come into conflict, but to push back on the assumptions of the tragedy of the commons, a lasting myth that has been used to dismiss commons as a failed paradigm for managing shared wealth (Bollier, 2014, 2021).

The Ostrom-inspired institutionalist approach is interested in the micro politics of commons and focuses on how rules are made, how to know if rules are followed and what happens when they are broken (Huron, 2018). The institutionalist approach is less interested in the origins of commons or the reclamation of commons and does not formulate a distinction between capitalism and the commons (Huron, 2018). A shift from the original focus of natural resources towards knowledge and cultural commons sees institutionalists sharing interests with the alterglobalisationist commons approach (Huron, 2018).

The alterglobalisationist approach stems from the alterglobalisation movement of the late 1990s. This approach is deeply critical of capitalist forms of globalisation and their consequential inequality and environmental devastation (Huron, 2018). The alterglobalisationist approach has a particular concern for the enclosure of commons and is focused on reclaiming commons that have been enclosed, as well as supporting the extension of active commons (Huron, 2018). Enclosures involve turning commonly held resources into exclusive resources, often through processes of privatisation and commodification. From an alterglobalisationist perspective, commons are the opposite of spaces of enclosure in the form of private property or state-controlled spaces (Brandtner et al., 2023; Harvey, 2011; Wagenaar & Bartels, 2024; Waliuzzaman, 2020). For them, commons and enclosures are in a constant fluid state of potential transformation (Waliuzzaman, 2020).

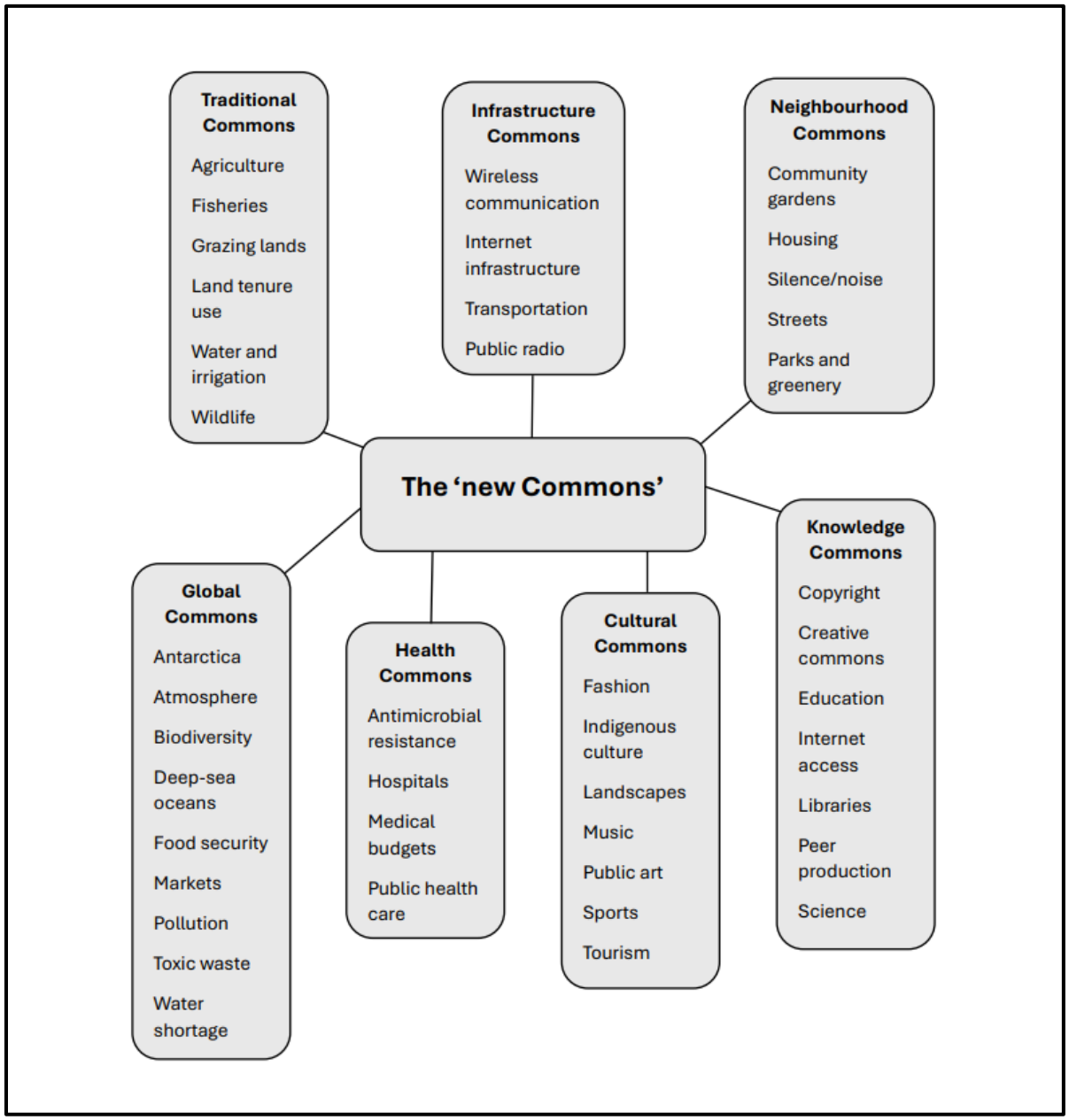
The alterglobalisationist approach is focused on the larger political and economic context of the commons rather than the function of contemporary commons within this context or the material

outputs of commons (Brandtner et al., 2023). Alterglobalisationists are interested in defending and creating commons to counter capitalist enclosures, to assert the existence of value creation outside of capitalist markets, and to reclaim commons in order to refuse wage labour (Bollier, 2021; Brandtner et al., 2023; Federici, 2018; Huron, 2018).

While institutionalists are clear that a commons is only open to specific members, Huron (2018) warns that alterglobalisationists risk romanticising the commons as something that is freely available to all, regardless of many commons being specific and sometimes closed communities. Both institutionalist and alterglobalisationist approaches to the commons can be found interwoven into contemporary studies of the commons, with consideration for the micro workings of commons and their macro implications. The questions posed by alterglobalisationist scholars of the broader political climate that commons exist within, have contributed to the concept of urban commons. As commons research has continued, more of the commons that are studied go beyond natural resources and involve the care of cultural goods, knowledge, and infrastructure, to name a few, many existing in urban settings. Feinberg et al. (2021) build on Hess' (2008) mapping of these 'new commons' (see Figure 1) and captures the diversity of commons. This diversity of commons includes different forms of ownership from open access to private property.

Figure 1

Mapping the 'New Commons'



Adapted from Feinberg et al. (2021) who focus on the new commons in the urban context and draw from Hess's (2008) mapping of 'new commons'

This inventory of commons continues to expand as different kinds of commons are created and researched. Significantly, over half of the world's population live in urban areas, with expected increases in global urban populations in the coming decades (United Nations, 2018) and as a result more commons are situated in urban settings. Peter Linebaugh argues that the political motivation for cultivating commons cannot be limited to rural fields, forests and rivers and that the city itself must therefore be 'commonized' (Linebaugh, 2014). To expand commons beyond rural areas, scholars like De Angelis (2017), Harvey (2012) and Stavrides (2015), argue that urban spaces require fierce defence against capitalist enclosure to ensure commons can survive. Therefore, urban commons have become increasingly important to commons studies. There is debate of what defines an urban commons and what makes urban commons different from other kinds of commons (Kip, 2015). To understand what makes a commons urban, I draw on Amanda Huron's (2015) definition:

> "The urban commons (. . .) is marked by two traits that set it apart from the commons more broadly understood: the urban commons is enacted in saturated space, by which I mean space that is already densely packed with people, competing uses, and capitalist investment; and the urban commons is constituted by the coming together of strangers" (p. 963).

Another significant distinction in theories of commons is the shift from commons as resource-based to commons as relational. Following a focus of commons as resource-based (such as Hardin, 1968 and Ostrom, 1990), critical commons perspectives describe the commons as inherently social and relational (Brandtner et al., 2023; De Angelis, 2017; Gibson-Graham et al., 2013; Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy, 2016). For them, commoners are connected through collective decision-making and the communal labour that defines commoning and they also understand commoning-communities as more-than-human (De Angelis, 2017; Gibson-Graham, Cameron, & Healy, 2016; Nieto-Romero et al., 2019). Bollier and Helfrich (2019) understand commons as living systems and do not try to define what a commons is. Instead, Bollier and Helfrich (2019) identify familiar 'patterns' of commoning that have been found in diverse contexts. They note that the nature of a commons influences how commoners organise themselves around it. For example, particularly depletable commons such as land require different treatment to the sharing of a

software code (Bollier, 2021). Bollier and Helfrich (2019) organize their patterns of commoning into three spheres of activity: provisioning, peer governance, and social life and call this the 'triad of commoning'. Additionally, scholars have theorised a commons-based political economy (Wagenaar & Bartels, 2024). This has involved thinking of ways to connect commons through horizontal networking and systems of support that retain commons at their appropriate scales (Wagenaar & Bartels, 2024). Similarly, Bollier and Helfrich (2019) use their idea of the 'commonsverse' to theorise the collective power of commons and the commoning of many projects and organisations around the world (see also Bollier, 2024).

Alongside efforts to link commons projects together, scholars have also paid attention to the creation of new subjectivities through the commons (Singh, 2017). As García-López, Lang and Singh (2021) argue, "commoning is not just about sustaining common 'resources', but also involves sustaining or generating other-than-capitalist subjectivities, relations and imaginaries" (p. 1206). At times a focus on commons as a means for creating life's resources and interest in the commons as generative sites for different subjectivities have stood separately. However, Ruiz Cayuela (2021) brings together De Angelis' emphasis on the materiality of commons for "expanding the autonomy and reproductive capacity of the commons" (p. 1550), with Stavrides focus on commoner subjectivity, whereby "the sustainability of specific commons is not a priority as long as the practices of sharing bring about a change in the subjectivities of as many as possible" (p. 1552). As Ruiz Cayuela argues, both of these interests – of reproducing life through commons and increasing the number of politicized commoners – ultimately complement each other.

An important consideration within commons theory is the role of the state in commons. There are concerns that the governance of commons is threatened by an involvement of the state and that there is potential for the state to constrict possibilities of commoning (Feinberg et al., 2021; Wagenaar & Bartels, 2024). However, Waliuzzaman and Alam (2022) highlight how state bodies can act as collaborative and supportive partners and can be seen as a commoner itself (see also Bauwens & Kostakis, 2015; Bauwens & Ramos, 2018). As an example, Bollier and Helfrich (2019) envision the role of the state as providing "time, space, assistance, legal authority and organizational systems for people to devise their own solutions to problems" (p. 291). To ensure the state does not constrict the possibilities of commoning, Kip (2015) highlights that the challenge

is “for commons not to become dependent on the state, but rather, in reverse, to be continually able to push the state to do certain things” (p. 55).

But does a commons need to be permanent to be successful? Dombroski, Diprose and Boles (2019) agree that ownership is important in how it enables the practices of commoning to take place and that common ownership can be an effective way to common over time. However, they highlight how commoning can occur as a temporary practice or in between other forms of property use, and how such temporary commons still foster important commoner subjectivities (Dombroski et al., 2019). For Stavrides (2012), the ability for a commons to affect the subjectivities of as many people as possible is more important than the longevity of the commoning project itself (as cited in Ruiz Cayuela, 2021). Others like Feinberg et al. (2021) argue that the use and access of a commons are more relevant than their ownership and Brandtner et al. (2023) place emphasis on social infrastructures of commons, focusing on their accessibility and maintenance rather than ownership. By delinking property ownership from successful commoning, attention can be paid to the short-term instances of commoning, where a resubjectification as commoners and significant commoner skill development is taking place but are currently dismissed (Dombroski et al., 2019).

However, this does not mean that the ownership of commons property is irrelevant. Commons and commoning are particular to people and place. In Aotearoa, long term and sustainable commons are crucial to tino rangatiratanga (Scobie & Sturman, 2024; Waitoa & Dombroski, 2020). ‘Commoning’ in a Māori context is about specific relationships to whenua and whakapapa. A move to ‘return to’ the commons, particularly commons most directly connected to land, must recognise that commons in settler colonies occur on a ‘colonial base’ (Coulthard, 2014). Therefore, commons research requires a recognition of colonialism and its historical and ongoing effects.

What commons theories can mutually agree on is the importance of maintaining and reclaiming space to common (Huron, 2018). The resounding question that is being asked by commons scholars is how can we make the commons more common? How can we make it more possible to create shared livelihoods through practices of commoning and how can situated practices of commoning help to advance theories of the commons? This is where a diverse economies approach is helpful for thinking about the commons. A diverse economies perspective on the commons is

interested in the daily life of commons management (an institutionalist focus) as well as the creation of commons and how people work collectively with and beyond capitalist processes (an alterglobalisationist focus) (Huron, 2018). The diverse economies perspective draws on inessentialist notions of community where community arises through doing, specifically through collective care labour and through negotiation and ethical decision-making around a set of ethical coordinates:

- What is *necessary* to personal and social survival;
- How social *surplus* is appropriated and distributed;
- Whether and how social surplus is to be produced and *consumed*;
- How a *commons* is produced and sustained (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. 88, emphasis in original).

In order to identify a commons and a commons community, Gibson-Graham, Cameron and Healy (2013) created their commons identi-kit (see Table 1: Commons Identi-kit, p. 10). Gibson-Graham, Cameron and Healy (2013) recognise the negotiation that creates a community through the access, use, benefit, care, and responsibility of a commons. Their commons identi-kit identifies a commons, how the commons is sustained as well as the community that emerges through sustaining this commons. I will use the commons identi-kit as my framework for theorising commons and will discuss this further in Chapter Three. The diverse economies approach to the commons is also interested in the ways different economic subjectivities can be fostered through commoning (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy, 2016). The diverse economies perspective on commons is fruitful for thinking about the role of commoning in addressing the problems of work as it cares for the ways commons can support people's lives, how commons are organized, as well as how commons contribute to a postcapitalist politics (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy, 2016). Therefore, this thesis asks two questions: what factors have enabled a commons to emerge in post-quake Christchurch? And how can these commons inform theories of work?

2.6 Conclusion: Commoning and the Future of Work

Working life is clearly more than the activities done in a job. Yet the context of waged work in the Anglosphere has a significant impact on people's ability to engage in a diverse work life. Employment as a core economic activity is not only causing problems for individual people and their ability to live well but are also contributing to very large collective problems in the way we survive together on this planet. The impact that the growth imperative and productivism has on the Earth is essential to address and addressing this is implicated by the way that time is distributed. In understanding the impact that waged work has on people's time, as well as the gendering of time, possibilities arise to address the climate crisis and redistribute essential work. As the dominance of waged work also contributes to overwork and disconnection, it is important to create non-exploitative and meaningful work. Postwork scholars have imagined what lives in the Anglosphere could look like without employment at the centre and suggest that more time be dedicated towards working and living in different ways.

But what can be done to shift current configurations of waged work and the emphasis on employment as the cornerstone of life and economies in the Anglosphere? It is clear that individual and policy level changes that address the problems of work are important. But it is also clear that they require the support of an interconnected network of actors to implement and strengthen them. I take inspiration from those valuing the impact of collective action, specifically theories of commoning. Commons scholars identify how commoning provides a way to transform people's relationships with each other and that which they common and argue that we need more space to common together.

But there are questions that remain. How do people in the Anglosphere begin to heal the metabolic rift? Address the unequal distribution of life's work and regain their time? How can they protect one another from exploitative relationships whilst engaging in competitive-based work markets? And how can they gain meaningful work? Through a diversified reframing of economies, we can begin to see what is already at hand (Gibson-Graham & Dombroski, 2020, p. 3). In the next chapter, I outline the use of a diverse economies methodology. Part of a diverse economies approach is embracing experimentation. Again, drawing from Cameron (2015), in a world whose future is unknown through environmental change and further through global pandemics, wars and

genocides, Cameron's proposal that social research take on a more experimental approach is both hopeful and generative. Through a diverse economies approach, research can take an active responsibility to make certain, desirable, worlds more likely (Gibson-Graham & Dombroski, 2020; St. Martin et al., 2015). This requires a hopeful approach to research that looks out for what already exists and works to make this stronger (Cameron, 2015). This often involves working alongside people who are already experimenting with new practices for a different world (Cameron, 2015; St. Martin et al., 2015). Such research is an open experiment that can offer new ways of living (Cameron, 2015). The role of a diverse economies approach for this thesis is to investigate and document two organisations who have responded to the problems of work in the Anglosphere. Each organisation has experimented with different ways of working and offers a different path forward.

Chapter Three: Seeking Economic Diversity

One thing that has changed extraordinarily over the course of this research is the development of generative artificial intelligence (AI). The AI landscape has exploded, and its use has skyrocketed. From autocorrect suggestions that appear when drafting an email, to a chatbot that generates results for over 300 million weekly users (Roth, 2024), forms of AI are rapidly multiplying. This change holds promise as computer technologies have done wonders for the tasks of research. For example, I can perform a keyword search to identify any character or word I need to find amongst 100,000 words or open a 500-page book in one computer tab. What is worrying is that artificial intelligence has long been represented as a 'pure', objective form of intelligence achieved through technological advancement (Adam, 1995; Dieter & Gessler, 2021). A kind of intelligence that is often projected to overtake the abilities of the human mind. Even Google's cofounder Sergey Brin stated that "the perfect search engine would be like the mind of God" (Pasquale, 2015, p. 187). What has concerned me most is the impact that these technologies, and their association with pure knowing, have on our relationship to knowledge. On how we value knowledge, identify where knowledge comes from and how this source of knowledge is acknowledged. In facing this change in technology and knowledge distribution, feminist methodologies have been even more salient. Feminist researchers have long questioned a pure and objective 'knowing' and feminist epistemologies are interested in "what knowledge is and who knowers are" (Adam, 1995, p. 356). Feminist methodologies are not only of interest for me as a feminist doing research, but because of what they offer to me as a person navigating their own relationship to rapid technological developments and their implicit impacts on 'knowing'. A feminist approach to knowledge making has been significant to my research process and will be discussed in this chapter.

In Chapter Two, I mapped out the problems with work in the Anglosphere and identified commoning as an important area of inquiry for thinking about how to repair the problems of work. This led me to the thinking of diverse economies scholars who are interested in the creation of community through the care of commons and the impact such commons have for economies. In this chapter, I set out the methodological framework of this research including how I answered my two research questions: what factors have enabled a commons to emerge in post-quake

Christchurch? And how can these commons inform theories of work? I begin this chapter by discussing the strengths of feminist methodologies and their influence on my epistemological positioning. Secondly, I discuss the diverse economies methodology that directly informs my research on work and the commons, which brings together these feminist research traditions with theories of economic change. Thirdly, I discuss the methods used to collect my data. Finally, I discuss the methods used to analyse this data.

3.1 Feminist Methodologies

In the 1980s, feminist philosopher Sandra Harding (1987) emphasized the important connections between epistemologies, methodologies, and research methods. As she explains, a researcher's epistemological stance informs the methodologies and the methods chosen by a researcher (Harding, 1987). A researcher's epistemological stance also influences how they define their role as a researcher, how they understand ethical research practice and how they interpret data (Naples & Gurr, 2014). One of the main goals of a feminist research approach is to support social justice and social transformation (Hesse-Biber, 2014a). Therefore, feminist research approaches work to understand oppression and exclusion, value subjectivity and personal experience, uncover 'subjugated' knowledge, and explore identity and difference (Hesse-Biber, 2014a). This focus of feminist research can be traced back to feminists' interventions to mainstream research approaches.

In the 1980s and 1990s feminist researchers challenged traditional research approaches (Collins, 1990; Harding, 1987; Jaggar, 1989; King, 1988; Mohanty, 1988; Sprague & Zimmerman, 1993). Beyond critiques of a male bias (androcentrism) in research, these researchers questioned assumptions about the nature of social reality and developed new kinds of feminist epistemologies and methodologies that "interrogated, disrupted, and modified dominant models of knowledge building" (Hesse-Biber, 2014a, p. 4). These new epistemologies began from a critique of positivism (Hesse-Biber, 2014a). Positivist research paradigms rest on the notion of scientific objectivity, the idea that knowledge is 'value free' and that researchers are detached from their 'objects' of research (Hesse-Biber, 2014a). Positivist research paradigms also believe in a universality of knowledge, where researchers can discover 'the truth' of social reality (Hesse-Biber, 2014a). Instead, feminist researchers centre lived experience as the basis for knowledge building.

Centering 'situated knowledge', feminist researchers' understand 'knowledge' and 'truth' as inseparable from the lived experiences of all those a part of the research process and acknowledge that knowledge is subjective, relational and entangled in power dynamics (Haraway, 2003). Rather than the split of the 'knower' (researcher-subject) and the 'known' (researched-object), feminist approaches understand that knowledge creation happens through networks of relationships and subjective experiences (Collins, 1990; Naples & Gurr, 2014). Furthermore, situated knowledge is embodied, partial and is not universal (Harding, 1987; Mohanty, 1988; Naples & Gurr, 2014). Therefore, feminist approaches assert that truth is subjective, and that 'social reality' is plural and concurrent (Frost & Elichaoff, 2014; Naples & Gurr, 2014).

The Cartesian dualism considers the mind and body to be separate and believes that the 'rational' mind is more valuable as a means of knowing than the body (Naples & Gurr, 2014). This gives leverage to the belief that knowledge is able to be separated and is asocial, with the researcher not a part of knowledge production. For feminist researchers, this dualism between the 'rational mind' and the 'emotional body' is a false dichotomy (Jaggar, 1989; Sprague & Zimmerman, 1993). Feminist researchers have worked to show the important role that bodies, emotion and sensory experience have in creating, holding and transferring knowledge as well as researcher's active and embodied role as participants in knowledge production. (Harcourt, 2009; Longhurst et al., 2008; McKinnon & Dombroski, 2019; Murphy, 2013; Jaggar, 1989).

The crucial insights of feminists of colour address the intersecting relationships between racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism and class oppression (among others), and inform feminist understandings of social realities (Collins, 1990; hooks, 2000; King, 1988). As knowledge is socially situated, different researchers will be situated in different ways that enable them to conduct research that is appropriate and insightful of the lives of those they study, particularly the lives of marginalized groups (Naples & Gurr, 2014). Significantly, decolonial scholars have created new kinds of methodologies that meet specific cultural paradigms and work to decenter Eurocentric and colonial knowledge[5] (Moreton-Robinson, 2013; Pihama, 2001; Simmonds, 2011; Smith,

[5] Importantly, some decolonial scholars such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith strategically reject the term 'feminist' due to its links to western imperialism. However, the work of these scholars has contributed significantly to feminist knowledge production.

1999). Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) created the language of intersectionality to convey the multiple forms of inequality and disadvantage that can meet and compound through her theories of intersectionality. This awareness of the intersections of positionality has allowed feminism to pay attention to contrasts in life experience and broaden the scope of feminist activism. Furthermore, paying attention to difference ensures not to homogenize women of particular difference, noting the diversity of women in "their particular geographical and cultural placement across the globe" (Hesse-Biber, 2014a, p. 8; see also Mihesuah, 2003; Mohanty, 1988).

It is widely agreed that a feminist research approach is not about a set of specific 'feminist' research methods but an epistemological stance that is brought to research that enables a researcher to achieve feminist goals (Johnson & Madge, 2016). Feminist research holds an activist stance with a common goal of engaging in social and political change (Davis & Craven, 2023; Johnson & Madge, 2016). What this looks like will depend greatly on the places and people involved in the research. This activism can be seen in the uncovering of important knowledge about women's lives that were hidden through androcentric research approaches, through the creation of new methodologies that addressed large inadequacies of other methodologies or through identifying prefigurative practices that can be seen to embody different social worlds here and now (Monticelli, 2021).

A common theme throughout critical methodologies, including feminist methodologies, is the acknowledgment of positionality and the need for researcher reflexivity (Altheide & Johnson, 2011; Dowling, 2016). As Cloke and colleagues (2023) express:

> "To explore these positional specificities via reflexive practice is to acknowledge that researchers know the world partially, influenced by how their knowledge is socially, spatially and intellectually situated, and that researchers are susceptible to the promotion or inhibition of particular kinds of insights" (p. 9).

Alongside my position as a PhD researcher, who am I? I am a young woman with Pākehā and Māori (Ngāti Porou) ancestry. I live and research in Aotearoa New Zealand which is a settler-colony and the home of a vibrant and vigorous decolonial movement. I grew up in Christchurch

and I experienced the Canterbury earthquakes as a child. These identities and contexts inform my research and my life in different ways, and some have changed over the course of this research. I have an academic background in Anthropology that informs my research approach and have always been drawn and felt connected to feminist theory and have been able to learn about feminist theory more deeply than ever before through the process of this thesis. Decolonial theory plays an important role in my thinking in the context of living and researching in Aotearoa New Zealand. I am very slowly and humbly reconnecting to my Ngāti Porou whakapapa. This has happened largely outside of the thesis and most actively through te reo Māori. When I reflect back on my time at the Understorey, a place that provided space to speak te reo Māori collectively, I realize the true value of this space as someone slowly learning te reo Māori in Ōtautahi. While a decolonial approach is not an explicit theoretical or methodological approach that I take in this thesis, the work of decolonial scholars and activists has and continues to inform my thinking. It is in these ways that I hold particular insights and particular motivations (Cloke et al., 2023; Naples & Gurr, 2014). Researcher reflexivity is important throughout the entire research process including during data collection, analysis and dissemination (Altheide & Johnson, 2011; Bell, 2014; Doucet & Mauthner, 2012; Dowling, 2016). To do so, I draw on Doucet and Mauthner (2012) who adopt a broad notion of researcher reflexivity and stress reflection on and accountability for "personal, interpersonal, institutional, pragmatic, emotional, theoretical, epistemological and ontological influences on our research" (p. 124).

Feminist methodologies provide a thorough and active approach to research. They critique positivist objectivity, refuse 'mainstream' biases (such as androcentrism and Eurocentrism) in knowledge production, highlight the role of the body and subjectivity and pay attention to the active role of researchers in knowledge production. In the next section, I show how a diverse economies methodology brings the contributions of feminist approaches to theories of economies which supports my study of work and the commons.

3.2 Diverse Economies Methodology

While many scholars of work critique capitalist social relations, they do not always consider how this can reproduce powerful assumptions about the nature of economies. Feminist geographers

Julie Graham and Katherine Gibson began naming ‘capitalocentrism’ in their book *The End of Capitalism (as we knew it): a feminist critique of political economy* (Gibson-Graham, 1996). Gibson-Graham were concerned with the way capitalism was presented as the most powerful and effective economic system and the political effects this framing had, where every day people had seemingly no agency to create economic change. They argue that this all-consuming attention to capitalism further entrenches capitalist processes and overshadows non-capitalist practices. They coined the term ‘capitalocentrism’ to capture such dynamics. In order to move away from capitalocentrism, Gibson-Graham pursued a reframing of economies, and this involved the move towards a ‘diverse economy’. Gibson-Graham drew on the work of Resnick and Wolff (1989) on multiple class processes (see Table 2: Table of Class Processes, p. 42) to identify the “co-existing ways of producing, appropriating and distributing surplus” (Gibson-Graham, 2008, p. 615). These diverse ways of creating and distributing surplus take shape in many forms and Gibson-Graham (2006) and other diverse economies scholars since (for example, Carnegie et al., 2012; Gibson-Graham et al., 2013; Sharp et al., 2022), have created inventories of this economic diversity through a form of diverse economies inventory (see Table 3).

Table 3

A Diverse Economy

Enterprise	Labour	Transactions	Property	Finance
Non-capitalist Communal or worker-owned cooperative Independent or Sole proprietorship Feudal estate Slave enterprise **Capitalist** Family firm Private firm Public company Multinational **More than capitalist** State capitalist enterprise Green capitalist firm Non-profit enterprise Social enterprise Produce and consumer cooperatives Tribal enterprise	**Unpaid** Earth Others Housework Family care Emotional labour Neighbourhood work Volunteering Slave labour **Waged** Salaried Unionised Non-unionised Part time Temporary Seasonal Familial **Otherly remunerated** Self-employed labour Self-provisioning labour Cooperative labour Indentured labour Feudal labour Reciprocal labour Bartered labour Work for welfare Intern labour	**Non-market** Household flows Gift giving Indigenous ritual exchange Gleaning Hunting, fishing, foraging Theft Earth Other exchanges State allocations State appropriations **Market exchange** 'Free' Naturally protected Artificially protected Monopolised Regulated **Other market** Sale of public goods Ethical 'fair trade' markets Local trading systems Alternative currencies Underground market Informal market	**Open access** Atmosphere Oceans beyond national zones Open-source intellectual property **Privately owned** Private individual Private corporate Feudal Stolen **Collectively 'owned'** Indigenous land, rivers, sea Collective property State managed assets Common property	**Non-market** Sweat equity Crowd sourced funding Family lending Rotating credit and savings associations Donations Interest-free loans Treaty finance Debt bondage Bribery **Market** Retail banks Commercial banks Investment banks Insurance companies Other financial institutions **Other market** State banks Islamic banks and financial instruments Credit unions Cooperative banks Community currencies Pay day lending

Adapted from Smith & Schmid (2024)

The diverse economy inventories are ever expanding and showcase the abundance of economic practices outside of capitalist processes (Roelvink, 2020b). The inventory also captures the diversity throughout capitalist class processes themselves (Healy, 2018b). This inventorying breaks down the dominant capitalocentric framings of economies by expanding on the

heterogeneity of economic practices (Gibson-Graham & Dombroski, 2020). Gibson-Graham and other diverse economies scholars argue that people do not live within a totalising system of capitalism as capitalocentric discourse conveys. But many people are still confronted with the exploitation produced by capitalist class processes. However, a capitalist-*oriented* economy can be acknowledged without crowding out the significant presence and impacts of non-capitalist processes (Diprose et al., 2017). Miller (2019) explains how "the problem with being capitalocentric is not the naming of Capital as a dire problem, but active participation in discursively amplifying a process that is already in motion" (p. 79). Therefore, the way that researchers discuss capitalist processes plays a role in reinforcing or disrupting the dominance of capitalism. This attention to language and framing is part of a 'politics of language' that is a key component of the diverse economies methodology (Gibson-Graham, 1996, p. xxxiv). Alongside an intentional use of language, reading for economic difference enables researchers to move away from a dominance of capitalism and seek out economic diversity.

Reading for difference works to make the economic activities that are subordinated in capitalocentric framings visible (Gibson-Graham & Dombroski, 2020). This resurfaces the non-capitalist practices that are already in place but may not be 'seen' or 'read' as economically powerful through capitalocentric readings of economies (Gibson-Graham & Dombroski, 2020). To strengthen the visibility of such practices, Gibson-Graham (2006) use 'postcapitalist' as a lens to analyse economies as already more-than-capitalist (Dombroski et al., 2023; Gibson-Graham & Dombroski, 2020). Reading for difference also reframes the ways agency and power is identified in different economic practices and subjects. As Gibson-Graham (2006) express:

> We approach economic relationships as something to be contingently rather than deterministically configured, economic value as liberally distributed rather than sequestered in certain activities and denied to others, and economic dynamics as proliferating rather than reducible to a set of governing laws and mechanical logics (p. 60).

To understand how people enact diverse economies, Gibson-Graham (1996, 2006) draw on the work of Laclau and Mouffe (1985) to think about multiple subject positions whereby people can occupy multiple positions in addition to or beyond the small number of capitalist subject positions

(Cameron & Gibson, 2020, p. 512). This focus on a 'politics of the subject' (Gibson-Graham, 1996, p. xxxv) also includes a broader understanding of who and what acts in economies, expanding beyond the human subject to recognise more-than-human agencies (Barron, 2015; Barron & Hess, 2020; Miller, 2020). Importantly, a politics of the subject is also about changes in economic subjectivity. In other words, changes in the way people feel and engage with the world. Affect has an important role to play in forming new subjectivities (Singh, 2017). As Gerda Roelvink (2020a) explains, affect can bring change in economic subjectivity by "working through the body and its capacity to act, which is felt and experienced as emotions" (p. 428; see also Latour, 2004; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017; Roelvink, 2018). Roelvink (2020a) gives the example of listening to music which can create a feeling of hope, or the way that protesters whose bodies are joined together against police can create feelings of power. Roelvink (2020a) states that affect is not particular to a specific ideology but works through bodies, "affect can create strong emotions and attachments, and importantly a shift in one's political or discursive position" (p. 428). In conversation with Katherine Gibson, Jarow (2020) reiterates that postcapitalism "is not something that can be learned or intellectually understood, so much as performed, acted out and felt, which suggests why new economies require new selves, new configurations of how we experience our bodies and relations" (2:58). Paying attention to the body, affect and the multiple subject positions that diverse economies scholarship draws upon provide useful tools to read for difference.

Reading for difference adopts a 'weak theory' approach. This approach involves a refusal to explain too widely or deeply, as well as a refusal to know the outcome in advance and to remain open to the unknown (Gibson-Graham & Dombroski, 2020; Roelvink, 2020a). This also involves making modest claims appropriate to the research. Research has the effect of alluding to "what is reasonable, possible, [and] legitimate" (Gibson-Graham & Dombroski, 2020, p. 7). The work of knowledge production for this methodology is not to produce an objective 'truth' but instead make 'other worlds' more possible (Gibson-Graham & Dombroski, 2020; St. Martin et al., 2015). Rather than a realist project of capturing exactly what is happening, diverse economies scholarship is performative. Therefore, the choice to read for the dominance of capitalism or economic difference is a strategic one that produces particular (performative) effects. Gibson-Graham have drawn on Butler's (1990) thinking on performativity and gender in how gender identities form through an iterative process that is as likely to be reproduced as it is to be disrupted (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012).

Similarly, capitalocentric framings of economies have performative effects of performing a system of capitalism. As Dombroski and Roelvink (2022) express, a diverse economies methodology "is not about 'getting accurate data', but instead considers the kinds of economic realities our research is representing and thus producing" (p. 279). For diverse economies scholars, this is about moving away from reproducing capitalocentric discourse and performing a system of capitalism towards performing diverse and community economies.

A community economy is "a site of ethical decision making about the kinds of economic life that support coexistence" (Roelvink, 2020b, p. 456). A community economy begins as an empty signifier that is filled with economic activities and the negotiations that link them together (Roelvink, 2020b). The 'community' of community economies is made through collective doing. Again, drawing on an inessenitalist notion of community, community is not bound by geographic or social commonality nor is it a predetermined grouping (Gibson-Graham, 2006). Instead, community is the outcome of lively collective negotiation, is "always in the process of becoming", and is never complete (Gibson-Graham & Dombroski, 2020, p. 19). The negotiation of community economies gathers around specific answers to a set of economic questions, otherwise called 'ethical coordinates':

- What is *necessary* to personal and social survival;
- How social *surplus* is appropriated and distributed;
- Whether and how social surplus is to be produced and *consumed*;
- How a *commons* is produced and sustained (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. 88, emphasis in original).

These questions can help researchers to identify the economic decision-making taking place and some scholars have since created ethical coordinates of their own to fit their own contexts (see Bargh, 2012). This notion of a community economy helps me to identify the ways that groups of people are working together to address such economic questions, specifically in response to the problems of work, in their own contexts and in their own ways.

Significant to the diverse economies methodology is that research is a process undergone *with* others rather than *on* others (Roelvink, 2020b). Influenced by participatory action research, diverse economies research takes on a 'politics of collective action' and engages in processes of co-creation between the researcher and the other human and more-than-human participants that are part of the research process (Roelvink, 2020b). A politics of collective action is important for Gibson-Graham as it reflects the "conscious and combined efforts to build a new kind of economic reality" (2006, xxxvi). In this approach to research, researchers and participants can explore how they might become new types of economic subjects through the research process (Cameron & Gibson, 2020; Healy et al., 2020) and attention is paid to the way economic practices are represented to give visibility and credibility to such practices (Roelvink, 2020b). A politics of collective action has influenced this research most directly through the nature of data collection as well as attention to the role of writing in representing and performing economies.

How does this all fit into my project of researching work and the commons? In the beginning of Chapter One I discussed how I became interested in the topic of work and named the two initial questions I asked myself: why is waged work not often treated as a site of ethical action? And where is the space for enacting a different kind of work culture? In Chapter Two I have explored the problems with current configurations with work in the Anglosphere that can make it difficult to engage in work as a site of ethical action. In adopting a diverse economies methodology, I can begin to explore ways of enacting different kinds of work culture through forms of community economies, specifically through the care of commons. When I started my research project, I began with a broad question that was influenced by the work of diverse economies scholars: what are autonomous groups doing to take back work? (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013). This led me to two particular organisations in Christchurch: Ōtautahi Repair Revolution and The Green Lab. I chose these groups because they were responding in their own way to the problems of work in the Anglosphere and were experimenting collectively to do so. First, Ōtautahi Repair Revolution respond to the material problems of production and consumption. Their repair café involves people collectivising repair labour and collaborating to fix objects together. They provide repair to other people who visit their repair café and have created their own set of principles for how their labour is to be engaged with. Second, The Green Lab's Understorey was responding to the relational problems of work. They had a clear emphasis on accessibility of workspace for a range of people

to work in, particularly a space for underrepresented identity groups in the city to come together to a safe space and aimed to connect workers together. It became clear that both organisations provide insight into the intersections between work and commoning. Both are enacting forms of community economy as they gather around the set of ethical coordinates of community economies and are trying to answer these key concerns in their own ways.

Through adopting a diverse economies methodology I acknowledge a diverse economy, pay attention to the role of language in performing economies, seek to identify new subject positions and use participatory approaches to data collection. To answer my research questions, I use a combination of qualitative methods. I use two methods to collect empirical material, participant observation and semi-structured interviews. To analyse this material, I use my chosen commons framework of the commons identi-kit (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013) and thematic template analysis. I discuss these methods next.

3.3 Collection Methods

Feminist research is less about using specific methods and more a perspective brought to methods that guides how a method is put into practice (Hesse-Biber, 2014a). I have chosen to use the methods of participant observation and semi-structured interviews to collect situated knowledge as part of a feminist methodology. A multi-method approach provides complementary evidence, in my case, descriptive information from observations, alongside the more structured forms of data collection of interviewing (Ciesielska et al., 2018; Kearns, 2016). In using these methods, I draw on the disciplines of anthropology and human geography which have a particular focus on fieldwork.

Fieldwork involves collecting data 'in the field' however there is much discussion of what is meant by 'the field' and what 'in' and 'out' of the field means (Bruun & Guasco, 2024; Howitt & Stevens, 2016; Katz, 1994). Research by anthropologists and geographers has traditionally involved foreign researchers 'stepping in' from the 'outside' and observing the everyday activities of particular ethnic groups, often through ethnographic research. Here the researcher becomes immersed within a culture that is unfamiliar, observing the 'who, what and hows' of the culture of interest. This has

often been done under the assumption that an outsider is in the best position to clearly see what is taking place, rather than someone who is 'too familiar' (Howitt & Stevens, 2016). Traditions of ethnographic research have been questioned and complicated, particularly by decolonial critiques of extractivist and inappropriate research practices (Smith, 1999). In response, conducting fieldwork has increasingly involved research that takes place within researchers' own cultural contexts as well as the expansion of culturally specific methodologies such as Kaupapa Māori (Māori approach) methodologies (see Smith, 1999; Waitoa & Dombroski, 2020). These shifts in research approaches generate important questions around who is an insider and an outsider. For Howitt and Stevens (2016), most human geographic research is cross-cultural "because we are drawn into thinking about other people's constructions of place, other people's ways of reading their cultural landscapes – even when they are the landscapes that we live in ourselves in our everyday lives" (p. 46). Many write about the fluidity of an insider-outsider status as a researcher, noting that one can be both an insider and outsider and that this can change over time (Bukamal 2022; Gelir, 2021). Researcher reflexivity enables researchers to be aware of advantages and disadvantages to their particular position (Hill & Dao, 2021; Parikh, 2020).

In this research, I am an insider to the city that I have conducted research within, researching within a very familiar place, the city in which I grew up and continue to live in. Despite this, I have 'seen' my city in a very different light as research inspires, especially through a diverse economies and postcapitalist lens. Bringing a theoretical interest to the field sites for the purpose of research helped me to reassess the city and think differently about the meaning of participants' practices. I began as an outsider of the field sites of this research and over the course of my fieldwork, I feel I have become more of an insider to the field sites as I built relationships with members of each. However, I have always kept a sense of being 'on the outside' as a doctoral student who was present to conduct research and because I have not participated in the decision-making of these groups. I am neither an insider nor outsider but acknowledge the ways that researching within my own cultural context have enabled an easeful entry to begin fieldwork and to establish relationships with those at the field sites.

The disciplines of anthropology and human geography share a common epistemological stance, that a good source of knowledge for understanding and explaining social phenomena is to engage

with the people involved in that phenomena themselves. Therefore, the role of the researcher is to build transparent and meaningful relationships with the people that their research is about (Buch & Staller, 2014; Davis & Craven, 2023). This requires researchers to engage in the lives of participants, to listen to their stories and understand their meanings. As cultural anthropologist Sherry Ortner (1995) explains, "minimally [ethnography] has always meant the attempt to understand another life world using the self (. . .) as the instrument of knowing" (as cited in Buch & Staller, 2014, p. 107). In attempting to understand 'another life world', ethnographers go where social life occurs. Traditionally researchers would immerse themselves in different 'settings' for long periods of time, now ethnographic research can occur in a variety of ways (Ciesielska et al., 2018) Regardless, what remains important is the role of the self in engaging in research relationships (Buch & Staller, 2014; Ortner, 1995).

3.3.1 Participant Observation

The method of participant observation derives from ethnographic research and involves researchers making observation of social phenomena through participating with their research communities (Winchester & Rofe, 2016). Participant observation has roots in social anthropology but is also popular amongst geographers as a useful method for stepping into 'the field' to observe the everyday activities and practices of certain communities or institutions (Kearns, 2016). By intentionally participating, the role of researcher becomes mixed with that of an active participant and can help to reduce the separation of the researcher from 'the researched' (Kearns, 2016; Phellas et al., 2011; Tedlock, 2000). Smith (2001) provides an overview of ethnographies of work and the ways that researchers have immersed themselves in unique ways to study a range of work forms. This includes researchers as domestic workers in private households, as food harvesters, as phone operators, and nightclub hostesses. Researchers of work have sat through corporate and workplace meetings, have witnessed police detective investigations and doctors performing procedures (Smith, 2001). Although many of these 'ways in' to study forms of work are now questionable and could lack consent, Smith (2001) captures the way participation and observation help to gain important insights.

The purpose of observation is to gain a contextual understanding and in-depth interpretation of social phenomena (Kearns, 2016). This involves sustained contact with people and relatively unstructured social interactions and takes place at a particular time and in a particular place (Kearns, 2016). These firsthand observations become a source of data, but observation involves more than just seeing, it involves sensory and experiential inputs such as soundscapes, emotion, and relationships between the researcher and the people and places they study (Kearns, 2016). Observations can also include self-reflective notes by the researcher to record their position within the research, sometimes forming autoethnographies (Altheide & Johnson, 2011; Davis & Craven, 2023). However, Law and Urry (2004) argue that research does not just describe the world, it also enacts it. Research methods perform worlds as they are not neutral but draw on ethical concerns of the researcher and the community. This is counter to "the hidden assumption that, in any particular context, and at any particular time, there is a single reality out there, waiting to be discovered" (Law & Urry, 2004, p. 397). Instead, the chosen research methods can strengthen particular realities and erode others (Law & Urry, 2004).

To participate with the two organisations of this research, I met the organisers of Ōtautahi Repair Revolution and The Green Lab. I received letters of approval from these groups and met other members who were part of the field sites and built relationships over time. I drew on Kearns' (2016) writing on participatory observation, who rather than offering a step-by-step guide on the method, discusses a range of approaches to observe and participate within a research project and their ethical considerations. My role was one of participant-as-observer and as I volunteered at the repair café and coworked in the Understorey, my observations centred around descriptions of these spaces, what took place there and the kinds of people that used these spaces and their practices, with emphasis on what was unexpected to me. My observations included routines, significant events, and how people interacted with one another. To reflect directly on my research questions, I paid attention to the ways people were talking about their work (tasks undertaken in the Understorey, repair labour at the repair café), and their beliefs and motivations for engaging in the organisation as well as the ways people collaborated at each field site.

The total length of my fieldwork was nine months. I worked in the Understorey coworking space for three months. I had to stop participating at the Understorey in December 2022 because it closed

and I discuss this later in the thesis. The Green Lab shifted some of their coworking furniture to Toi Auaha following Understorey's closing, but a new iteration of the Understorey was not created. I did attend some of The Green Lab's Wednesday writer's session held at Toi Auaha, but this was not part of my fieldwork. I volunteered with Ōtautahi Repair Revolution for six months of fieldwork. However, I continued to volunteer at repair events after my fieldwork period ended to continue to build on my relationships and because I had become invested in repair and the repair community I had found myself within.

My method of participant observation functioned in two ways. On one hand, like ethnographers, I collected data in the form of fieldnotes, by observing the activities of others in order to understand their social world. To make observations, I worked on my PhD and other academic work at the Understorey coworking space for a minimum of one day per week throughout the three months of fieldwork. I also volunteered at the monthly Richmond repair café events, which are the main events held by Ōtautahi Repair Revolution and was given the role of collecting repair data for the events. I regularly helped to set up the events and pack down and participated at an additional three 4-hour long Repair-a-thon events that were held in 2022 and 2023, some on international repair day. Becoming part of the two selected organisations was not difficult as I had pre-existing relationships with both groups, and this helped to inform the final decision to participate with these two organisations. Both of the organisations were focused on some aspect of the problems of work that I was interested in, and I was intrigued to understand more about the motivations behind their work and any challenges they faced.

As I observed, I produced a set of field notes. As Kearns (2016) explains, field notes are invaluable and are a "personal text for the researcher to refer to and analyse" (p. 329). My strategy for taking fieldnotes was different for each of my two field sites. For example, field notes on the Understory were taken on my laptop as I worked in the coworking space. As I and the other users of the space were already using our laptops, I could easily take notes with discretion without any disruption. When I created fieldnotes about Ōtautahi Repair Revolution, my fieldnotes were taken soon after finishing at the field site. I would avoid making fieldnotes during my participation at the repair café to avoid any disruption in the flow of conversation or interaction. I would leave and then sit somewhere to write everything I felt was significant or interesting off the top of my head in a

notebook or on my laptop: significant events, new people I had met, people I would like to interview, things that had changed, things I found strange, habits or recurring practices, unique events, and what the place felt and looked like. At times I also took voice recordings which I would type up the next day as a set of written notes. My approach to fieldnotes follows Kearns (2016) approach and her suggestion that "developing a discipline for such 'homework' is a key part of field observation" (p. 329) which ensured I captured as much fresh information from both field sites as possible. I took a handful of photos of each field site, specifically the space itself rather than photographing what people were doing, as I drew on the public photos on each organisation's social media pages for this instead. Both organisations have social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram) and relevant posts contributed as secondary sources to my firsthand observations which I collected in a document. This publicly available material was analysed and is at times referenced in this thesis. All of my fieldnotes have been compiled and are stored digitally in password-protected documents.

On the other hand, like autoethnographers, I collected self-observational and self-reflective data of my experience as a participant and researcher at both field sites (Davis & Craven, 2023). This included reflections on my experience using the coworking space as a student and what it felt like to be a worker in this space as well as reflections on my experience as a volunteer of Ōtautahi Repair Revolution. My role as a repair volunteer became more integrated to the running of the repair events during fieldwork than I had anticipated. This emerged through being given the role of collecting repair data and therefore greeting and guiding visitors to the repair café. I became the person who event attendees would see when they arrived at the event to 'log in' their items. I would greet them, let them know how the event works and ask for information about the item(s) they had brought in for repair. Then I would match them with a repairer who could decipher the problem with the item and at best be able to repair it by the end of the event. Attendees would check back in with me to update the status of their item on the website. This role was incredibly insightful for the purpose of research and brought me into the heart of the event. I quickly learnt about the issues of repair, repair success and the community relationship building that took place. Having this role was not a strategic choice, in fact I began sitting behind the computer because I did not have any repair skills. I felt under-skilled and greeting people and logging in the repair data felt like the best contribution I could make. This role stuck with me as other volunteers identified

me with the role. Upon reflection I feel that this was the best role to have had for engaging with and understanding the different perspectives at play.

Although being a repairer may have given me a different insight through volunteering my labour via repair skills, I was able to explore this perspective through interviewing repairers. Participating at the repair café also changed the way I consumed. I began to think about the repairability of items from the point of planning my purchases. It also put into perspective how limits to repair are created and who is to blame. This would not have been possible without the monthly experience of matching event attendees with repairers, learning what issues people were having with their items, learning from repairers about the reasons they could not repair items, and the recommendations repairers gave out to repair café visitors. I did not use the repair data that I collected during my time in this role as part of my dataset, but it did have a place in my understanding of repair, my observations at the repair café and my analysis. I also did not interview any repair event attendees, but they were an important part of the community who have informed this research and are integral to the repair café. In observing the actions and practices of others, there is a clear distinction between the observer and the observed (Tedlock, 2000). However, through recording self-reflections, the role of observer and the observed become less separate and this enables the researcher to gain different kinds of insights (Tedlock, 2000).

3.3.2 Semi-structured Interviews

Returning to the complementary role of a multi-method approach (Ciesielska et al., 2018; Kearns, 2016), alongside participant observation I conducted 13 semi-structured interviews with key participants across both field sites. Interviews are an important method to understand the strategies, concerns, and experiences of the participants of these organisations and gave me the opportunity to ask questions about my observations. Long form interviewing allows researchers to ask for further elaboration and gain deeper insight that cannot be deduced through observation alone and allows participants to directly explain and describe themselves and their work (Phellas et al., 2011). Semi-structured interviews enable researchers to bring forth their questions but through a flexible approach to interviewing that is also guided by the responses of interviewees who may open up new and important points of discission. In this research, I drew on the approach offered by Dunn

(2016) to conduct semi-structured interviews. This included using an interview guide which included all the questions and topics I wanted to address during each interview and created a scope for the interviews (Dunn, 2016, p. 152). However, a research guide must be balanced with active deep listening, as demonstrated by Hesse-Biber (2014b), and the nature of semi-structured interviews gave room for new questions to arise.

My semi-structured interviews were based around three broad empirical interests: participants' motivations for and involvement in participating at the field site, the impact their participation has had on them, and their feelings towards the repair movement or the role of community spaces in the city (see Appendix One). I had specific questions based on the themes of the two different organisations (such as a question about New Zealand's right to repair legislation) as well as questions that were tailored to particular interviewees depending on their role in the organisation. For example, a participant who had prior experience in repair café events and was involved in broader repair advocacy was asked to reflect on the creation and development of the repair café and its role in the wider repair movement. Conducting the interviews was also an opportunity to ask organisers how their organisation was supported (e.g. financially). As the nature of semi-structured interviews allows for new questions to arise, I asked new questions during the interviews and my set of interview questions developed over time as I continued the interview process.

The interviews make up the majority of the empirical material. They were conducted between November 2022 – June 2023 and ranged in length from between 8 and 80 minutes. Most of the interviews were over 25 minutes and the two shortest interviews were due to the nature of interviewing these repair volunteers on the night of a repair event. In addition to these formal interviews, further insight was generated from informal conversations that took place with repairer interviewees after the period of interviewing as I continued to participate, with more direct conversations around my research topic taking place after the interviews. This was not the case with the members of the Understorey due to the closure of the Understorey shortly after conducting my interviews.

To interview participants of Ōtautahi Repair Revolution, I approached volunteers during a repair event the month before I planned to interview them. I ask if they were interested in participating

in an interview about their experience volunteering and of their views of repair cafés and the repair movement. I organised interviews with volunteers in person and by email. I chose volunteers who I had established a relationship with and aimed to gain the perspective of volunteers of different ages, skill level (professional and casual repairers) and repair-skill types (sewers, electricians, generalists, event coordinators). I also interviewed one repairer from the Palmerston North repair café when visiting Palmerston North (in the North Island of New Zealand) in 2023. This was because this volunteer and I had a mutual connection, and they were interested in contributing to the research. I interviewed nine repairer volunteers (see Table 4). Six people wanted to be named, and three people did not want to be named. I created pseudonyms for those who did not want to be named who are quoted in this thesis.

Table 4

Repair Interviews

Repair Interviews	**Minutes**
Participant 1 – volunteer repairer & event coordinator	29.37
Participant 2 – volunteer repairer & event coordinator	49.45
Participant 3 – volunteer repairer & event coordinator	56.20
Participant 4 – volunteer repairer	8.26
Participant 5 – volunteer repairer & professional repairer	13.13
Participant 6 – volunteer repairer	26.22
Participant 7 – volunteer repairer	38.13
Participant 8 – volunteer repairer & professional repairer	79.50
Participant 9 – volunteer repairer	69.38

I interviewed the majority of the repair interviewees face to face at the Ecohub that hosts the Richmond repair café events. I sat down with each interviewee at the same time a repair event was taking place. I also interviewed one person over the phone and another on zoom and visited one interviewee at their repair business to conduct the interview at the end of their working day which provided helpful insights.

To interview members of the Understorey, I posted on a closed Facebook group to ask members of the Understorey if they were interested in participating in an interview about their experience using the Understorey and its value to them. I also emailed regular members directly who The Green Lab staff had recommended to me and who had voiced interest in doing an interview. The interviews I conducted with members of the Understorey were also part of a master's student's research project. We collaborated on the process of finding interview participants and created a set of interview questions that worked for both of our community economies projects. We interviewed Understorey members in November and December of 2022. December 2022 was also the month that the Understorey was due to close and so there were less members using the Understorey to interview. Due to the shorter length of fieldwork here, the recommendations by The Green Lab helped in gaining perspectives from Understorey members with different experiences of the various iterations of the Understorey and who had different volunteer experience at the Understorey. I interviewed four members of the Understorey (see Table 5). One person did not want to be named, and I created a pseudonym for this person.

Table 5

Understorey Interviews

Understorey Interviews	**Minutes**
Participant 1 – Long term member (multiple iterations)	46.24
Participant 2 – Long term member (multiple iterations)	29.18
Participant 3 – Welder member & property manager (one iteration)	17.42
Participant 4 – Long term member (multiple iterations)	36.32

I interviewed members of the Understorey face to face in the coworking space. Because the membership base is relatively small, this is not unreasonable in representing regular membership and the four interviewees provided a range of perspectives. The closure of the Understorey was unexpected and at first disappointing but did help to place a distinct boundary around the timeframe of the collection of primary data and helped me to manage the scope of the study.

Ethical clearance was required for this research. An ethics application was submitted to the University of Canterbury's Humans Ethics Committee in July 2022 and ethical approval was given in November 2022. I was known as a researcher during the observation period. The Green Lab informed Understorey members of my use of the Understorey as a PhD student and I introduced myself to Understorey members and repair volunteers as a PhD student researching the Understorey and repair café and wore my university ID card. Each interview participant was given an information sheet and a consent form (see Appendix Two) which they filled out or otherwise gave verbal consent before the interview commenced which was reaffirmed through sending them a copy of the interview transcript. Each interview participant had the opportunity to withdraw from the research, were given a copy of their interview transcript by email to review and had the opportunity to make amendments to their interview transcript and received a summary of the general research findings. All interviews were audio recorded with the informed consent of participants. I recorded the interviews with my iPhone and transcribed these recordings firstly through the audio-to-text conversion platform Cockatoo[6], through a password protected Cockatoo account, which created an initial transcript that I cross-checked and amended using the original audio recording for accuracy. This helped to make the process of transcription manageable and timelier. After finalising the transcripts, the recorded audio files of each interview were copied to a secure pen drive and deleted from my iPhone and from my Cockatoo account.

3.3.1 Limitations

What is practically possible can often shape fieldwork and sampling (Stratford & Bradshaw, 2016). Stratford and Bradshaw (2016) note that in qualitative research, the sample of participants is not intended to be representative, what is more important is the meaning that arises from the process of analysis and overall dependability of the research. A research setting can only include the particular people that are present at particular times of the research process. In my field sites, there has been a core group of employees and volunteers who are a part of these organisations and an array of others who have filtered in and out. This sample is not representative of the full community or population engaged with these groups but are the people who participated most during the time of my fieldwork, the majority of whom have been a part of each organisation for a long time. The

[6] Cockatoo Website can be found at: https://www.cockatoo.com/

boundaries of 'the field' in this research were created by specific conditions. For example, the repair events were located in one main space and only happened once per month, limiting the field to this specific time and place. The Understorey also had a defined space, and its closure imposed a specific timeframe to my fieldwork.

The biggest challenge I faced during data collection was the closure of the Understorey. The news of the Understorey closure came unexpectedly part way through my fieldwork. The news of the closure sounded alarm bells as I had anticipated to participate with each group for six months before checking I had collected enough data. Because the fieldwork began close to the time of the Understorey closure, I was not able to conduct as many interviews with Understorey members as I had planned. But the closure did create a defined moment where fieldwork could stop. This closure was not the first time The Green Lab had to stop their Understorey project. They had shifted the Understorey across three different locations, creating three different iterations of the Understorey. Although The Green Lab hoped for a long-term home for the Understorey, this did not come to fruition. Ultimately, the closure of the Understorey created an unanticipated swerve in the direction of my thinking around commons and how to define them and had a significant impact on the direction of my commons analysis. I will discuss this in Chapter Five.

Qualitative researchers widely recognize that no method can fully 'capture' the picture of social phenomena and each method has its own set of limitations. Acknowledging these limitations enables researchers to determine what they can claim. Participant observation has its own set of limitations and DeWalt and DeWalt (2010) outline general limitations of participant observation that also apply to this research. This includes the fact that researchers observe phenomena only when it intersects with them and do so from a particular place (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2010). The researcher does not know what they miss and must acknowledge this. Rather than claim an objective reality, DeWalt and DeWalt (2010) acknowledge that all observation is biased and ask not if but *how* it is biased through researcher reflexivity that acknowledges the researcher's positionality (Musante & DeWalt, 2010). Semi-structured interviews also have limitations as a research method and Dunn (2016) outlines general limitations of semi-structured interviews that also apply to this research. This includes caution for researchers to "resist claims that they have discovered the *truth* about a series of events or that they have distilled *the* public opinion" (p. 150,

emphasis in original). The inability to capture the 'full' reality or 'the truth' of a phenomenon highlights the performative role of methods in creating particular worlds and realities (Law & Urry, 2004).

To establish rigor in qualitative research, Startford and Bradshaw (2016) offer a 'hermeneutic research circle' (p. 126) that includes different sources who can check for rigor at the different stages of the research. This includes an interpretive community (those who read and engage with our work, such as supervisors and colleagues) and our participant community (our research participants) who check our work for sound practice. This is important because "trust in our work is not assumed and has to be earned" (Stratford & Bradshaw, 2016, p. 126). Although I was captivated by the in-depth and highly engaged approaches of participatory action research (Cameron & Gibson, 2005, 2020; Kindon, 2016; Lykes & Crosby, 2014), by nature, a PhD research project is often constricted by specific time and financial limits. I worked towards remaining in contact and in dialogue with the communities as best I could after the formal fieldwork period. Although less frequently than I had initially hoped with members of the Understorey due to the dispersion of members after the closure of the coworking space. I remained in contact with Ōtautahi Repair Revolution as I continued to volunteer at repair events, which enabled me to think with my findings while still 'entering the field', without adding to my data. As I had to meet the requirements of a PhD that is designed, conducted and authored by me, the analysis of the research findings is specific to my interpretation. My use of participants voices (quotes) and their description have been shared with my participant community for their feedback on my interpretation and the implications this has within the thesis narrative. This was a way to feed back to my participant community for the purpose of rigor as it is important to create opportunities for research participants to correct any misinterpretations and to have a say in the narrative of the research to consolidate the meaning of data (Jackson, 2008; Mayoux, 2006; Startford and Bradshaw, 2016). As the researcher creates an interpretation of the data, I have included 'raw data', such as full quotes from interviews, in the thesis so that readers can consider their own interpretations.

3.4 Analysis Methods

To analyse my data, I used thematic template analysis. I also use the commons identi-kit (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013) as a framework for researching the commons which informs my analysis. In analysing my data, I use an abductive logic which involves moving back and forth between theory and my data (Kennedy & Thornberg, 2018). As Kennedy and Thornberg (2018) explain, qualitative researchers who use abduction "examine how the data support existing theories or hypotheses as well as how the data may call for modifications in existing understandings" (p. 52). Using an abductive logic involves taking inspiration from existing theories without trying to simply 'test' these theories and to remain open to our own data in order to identify patterns and surprises (Kennedy & Thornberg, 2018). Overall, an abductive approach uses data to connect to or challenge existing theories. Through an abductive approach, data collection and data analysis are not separate but are done in relation to each other. When the researcher collects their data, they are prompted to revise existing theories and in analysing their data, they may acquire additional data to supplement and support the analysis and interpretation (Chang, 2016; Kennedy & Thornberg, 2018). For example, I collected more data (social media posts, answers to follow up questions of interviewees) as I analyzed my initial data. Theorizing is a continuous process that is ongoing throughout the time of research and involves a relationship between the engagement with literature before fieldwork, the empirical materials gathered during fieldwork and the new literature that is engaged with based on the fieldwork. This back and forth between theory and empirical material was particularly informative in the development of my understanding of commons, where my initial understanding of commons as tangible and resource-based was challenged and altered through analysing my data (asking what *really* makes a commons a commons?) and through further reading on the commons. I discuss this further in Chapters Four and Five.

Template analysis is a form of thematic analysis where researchers systematically identify, organise, and connect data into themes that can link to broader theoretical issues in context with the topic at hand (King, 2012; Terry et al., 2017). Themes rest on a kind of repetition in the data. This repetition does not have to happen across multiple interviews and can be within a single interview (King, 2012). Themes also have some kind of distinction between one another but will likely have some overlap at times (King, 2012). The themes and subthemes of a template are

modified in consideration of each new piece of data (King, 2012). The role of the themes is to support a narrative about the data in relation to the research questions, rather than represent all of the data collected (Terry et al., 2017). The most significant consideration throughout this process is to reflect on how the research participants make sense of their experiences and the kind of worlds that are revealed through their narratives (Terry et al., 2017). Although used most often to analyse interviews, template analysis has also been applied to other kinds of data (see King, 2012, p. 426). I conducted a template analysis of my interviews and fieldnotes following the approach outlined by King (2012) and King and Brooks (2017).

Through my engagement with commons literature, the commons identi-kit (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013) became my chosen commons framework and provided me with specific preliminary themes that I used to theorise what people were doing at each field site. For example, I thought about how 'access', 'use', 'responsibility', 'care', 'benefit', and 'property' manifested in both field sites during my field work however they were not automatically part of my initial themes. Others have also adopted the commons identi-kit to understand how the aspects of access, use, benefit, care, responsibility and ownership bring commons into being (see Williams, 2018). I chose the identi-kit as a framework as it is part of a diverse economies approach to commoning (aligning with my methodological approach) that takes an open stance to defining commons and is unrestricted by the ownership of property, creating more possibilities for thinking about what a commons may look like. This framework also helps me to identify the relationships that surround a commons (for example, around caring for or benefiting from a commons) which is important for thinking about commons as social and relational rather than as resources to be managed. Alongside having the commons identi-kit in mind, l began identifying themes informally as I went through the interviewing process but did not document these.

The preliminary stage of analysis began as I took the initial transcripts created through the audio-to-text platform Cockatoo and edited them. To do this I listened to the original audio to check the transcript was accurate and took note of any significant reactions and ideas. After editing the transcripts and sending them to the interviewees, I read through the transcripts on paper. During this process, initial themes were documented (see Appendix Three). I used separate templates for the two field sites. These broad themes were noted in a document and were developed with each

new conversation that was being transcribed, expanding the themes. As I formed these themes, I coded the sections of text on the printed copies of the transcripts using different coloured highlighters and made notes of my thoughts. After analysing the interviews this first time, I applied the initial templates to the field notes I had on each field site and only a small number of new themes were added. After receiving and applying a few amendments from some of the interviewees, I began the formal analysis process. I applied the initial template onto the transcripts, expanding or dissolving themes and subthemes as I went (King, 2012; Kings & Brook, 2017). This created the refined thematic templates for each field site (see Appendix Four). Part of creating the refined thematic templates included using the six concepts of the commons identi-kit (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013) as themes to re-organize some of my initial themes within, in order to analyse each field site as a commons. It was at this stage that I realized that I needed to make the case that each of the field sites was an example of a commons and could not simply assume this, and this also informed my thinking around what defines a commons. To demonstrate my commons analysis, I have included a set of commons identi-kit tables that are located and discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. After creating the refined template, I applied it systematically to the interview and field note material. I organised my coded material into a table within a document, which brought together the material from the interviews and fieldnotes that shared a theme. This acted as a basis for writing Chapter Four and Chapter Five.

As King (2012) puts it, “themes are not independent of the researcher who defines them. They do not lie waiting to be discovered, like a fossil in a rock” (p. 431). Researchers provide one interpretation of their data and during interpretation, researchers must select which themes to examine in depth (King, 2012). For example, I felt that there was an important theme in the repair café data about the way that gender roles informed how and by whom repair knowledge is taught but felt that this was not the main issue nor the focus I wanted to bring attention to when creating a narrative from the data. An important moment for reflexivity is around these choices and the way the data is interpreted by the researcher (Hesse-Biber, 2014). Although incorporating the participant community can aid in checking this interpretation, researchers ultimately decide how they will represent their data and the kind of narrative that they form. When analyzing my data, I focused on the themes that helped me most in answering my research questions. This was mainly about practices of commoning and work, the constraints on and strengths of each organisation and

the ways that relationships formed. I also thought about how to include interviewees' voices into my writing and chose quotes that I felt conveyed the insights I gained from my participants in their own words.

Creating a narrative from data can involve very strategic choices. A diverse economies methodology acknowledges the economic activities that are often ignored or deemed insignificant and aims to make them as powerful as other economic forms (Gibson-Graham & Dombroski, 2020). This approach moves away from a realist project towards a prefigurative project and involves a performative aspect to how writing interacts with reality (Gibson-Graham, 2020, p. 477). In this way, writing about communities and their actions can create visibility of and invoke legitimacy in such actions and ways of being in the world. In my writing this has involved 'thick' ethnographic descriptions of working at the Understorey and repair café (Gibson-Graham, 2020, p. 479), and the use of direct quotation from participations "to aid the understanding of specific points of interpretation" (King, 2012, p. 447). I have specifically used Cook's (2004) technique of 'following' as a method of ethnography within my writing to demonstrate to the reader what it is like to be at the repair café and the Understorey. Cook (2004) showcases his approach of 'following' by following a papaya through the papaya supply chain using ethnographic vignettes where "supply chains were shown to be deep relationalities of economy, value and values, context and practices" (Sharp, 2018, p. 34).

In Chapter Four, I 'follow' a kettle on its journey to and through the repair café. I follow a kettle in part as a narrative device to show the reader how the repair café works, the processes and steps involved and to guide the presentation of the findings. The narrative of the kettle captures the interaction between an object and its human owner. This enables me to 'follow' an item from its beginnings, having just been manufactured and sitting at the store, through moments that showcase the owner-item relationship that starts to form once it is purchased. Showcasing this relationship between the owner and the object from the beginnings of the object's purchase to the moment it breaks down is useful to explore the response to throw away or repair an item. However, I also 'follow' the kettle to supplement the focus on human agency in repair labour with the objects' agency in the processes of breakdown and repair, integrating the object as an active and influential agent. Focusing on the kettle and 'bringing it to life' through a narrative from its perspective

whereby the kettle interprets human actions towards objects, helps to explore more-than-human agency. This relates to new materialist theories of non-humans having agency, and the ways objects can actively shape and be shaped (Bennett, 2012; Latour, 1992; Pfeifer, 2021). New materialism rejects the understanding of the human ('the subject'):

> as the sole active agent in the world (. . .), and that 'things', 'objects', and other material phenomena also exhibit a kind of agency that act on and help shape human subjects, other objects, and also the larger social and ecological world in which we find ourselves (Pfeifer, 2021, p. 541).

This approach is non-hierarchical, 'demoting' the role of the human and going beyond anthropocentric views (Pfeifer, 2021). New materialist thought emphasises that humans are not the only agents and are at times not the most important agents (Pfeifer, 2021, p. 546).

While humans have an active role in the repair of objects, there is also the agency of the kettle (as one example) that influences how we can live out our routines. This includes the kettle's ability to frustrate us when it breaks down and to stop us from performing certain tasks because it has broken down. The purpose of the kettle narrative is to showcase this agency. But the aim of the narrative is also to inspire the reader to wonder about the goals of the object, turning an object visiting the repair cafe into a character with hopes that their use value will be realised. The details that create this narrative come from a typical kettle, purchased from a cheap retailer (as many that enter the repair café are) and the process of trying to fix it that I have witnessed at the repair café.

In Chapter Five I describe a typical week at the Understorey using composite vignettes and through 'following' a worker through each weekday. I 'follow' a worker to demonstrate to the reader the senses (sight, noises, feelings) of working in the Understorey and to guide the presentation of the findings. Following a worker through a week in the Understorey also helps to showcase the structure and rhythm of an office work week and going day by day shows how The Green Lab incorporated their events into the coworking space which they had purposefully allocated throughout the week. The details of these vignettes come from my experience as a worker at the Understorey and are drawn from stories of interviewees experiences of working in the Understorey.

Ethnography is not just about observation but is a practice of writing and representation (Humphreys & Watson, 2009). As Humphreys and Watson (2009) explain, it is through the process of ethnographic writing that much of the analysis or interpretation of fieldwork occurs and writing is an important tool to represent what has taken place in the field to readers. The choices I have made to write and represent the data I have collected is part of the diverse economies approach with attention to the performative impacts of writing. As Gibson-Graham (2020) explain, 'reading for difference' is about critically reading others' representations of economies and other phenomena but is also a practice of knowledge production. Reading for difference is to "discern what the author is 'doing' by writing in a certain way about a topic" (Gibson-Graham, 2020, p. 477). Similarly, when writing, authors represent their topic in particular ways that have particular effects. It is important for researchers to reflect on the social and conceptual assumptions that might underlie their interpretations (Dowling, 2016). I have applied the strategy of reading for difference to not only read against the dominance of capitalism but against other strong theories relating to scale and impact (Smith, 2020). This has included theorizing the ways grassroots and 'small scale' community initiatives can create change (Gibson-Graham & Dombroski, p. 18) or the kinds of affects commons can have even if, in the case of the Understorey, they stop, without automatically reproducing a commons-enclosure binary (Dawney et al., 2015; Millner, 2015).

3.5 Conclusion: Embracing the Unknown, Awaiting Surprise

This chapter has addressed how I have approached research and knowledge-making. This includes my epistemological and methodological positioning that draws on feminist approaches to research and knowledge. What feminist methodologies offers to me is to challenge assumptions of what and how we know, to pay attention to the body and subjectivity and its role in research and to be aware of the active role of researchers in knowledge production. Similarly, a diverse economies methodology offers me the tools to challenge strong framings of economies, to pay attention to the body and affect and their role in social and economic change and to use research as a means to perform desirable worlds.

Having to think about research methodologies at a time of rampant and unknown change in the creation and distribution of information with the rise of AI was an unexpected part of this research.

The ‘all-knowing’, objective and extracted knowledge represented by AI technologies that are becoming so commonplace, showcase the value and relevance of the ethical commitments of feminist research approaches. During the writing of the thesis, I have also reflected a lot on the idea of ‘productivity’ and what it means to me as a worker-student. My relationship to productivity has been full of conflict as I have worked through this thesis and in the process, I started to think about what my own work-life balance could look like throughout the PhD process. Could someone studying the harms of hustle culture really convince themselves to work all day? I had to experiment myself with what balances I could create. This included my own trial of a 4-day work week, of implementing different work hours and routines as well as starting my own mindfulness and yoga practices. I found the research process a useful time to trial these approaches and my experiments have given me tools to create a better personal work-life balance. At the beginning of this research, I was frustrated at the onslaught of productivity hacks and books designed to teach us how to increase our productivity, part and parcel of a seemingly never-ending quest. By the end I was using a handful of them to get me through long days at the computer. I am still entangled in, and feel conflicted by, the culture of productivity. But what I know for sure is that avoiding rest means it will come knocking often when it is needed most but wanted least.

This chapter has brought me one step closer to seeing what is already at hand for a different future of work in the Anglosphere and has given me the tools to strengthen different ways of working (Gibson-Graham & Dombroski, 2020). Using a diverse economies approach helps me to consider my role in making certain, desirable, worlds more likely and to remain open to the unknown outcomes of experimental action. As I experimented with different ways of working throughout my PhD, I also participated with groups of people who were engaged in working differently. In Ōtautahi, a repair movement is growing and those involved are experimenting with how to care for objects in old and new ways. Next, I look to this movement to learn more about how to heal the brokenness of production and consumption in the Anglosphere.

Chapter Four: Resisting Throwaway Culture

I drive down Vogel Street and park amongst the lines of repairers' cars. After walking down the long, paved driveway I open the door of a brick house, otherwise known as the Riverlution Ecohub. Upon opening the door, I see the kitchen bench is full of bread, a large steaming pot of soup and miscellaneous cups of herbal tea. As I walk inside, what I see sitting in the middle of the room is a big wooden table covered by thread, fabric and sewing machines. One person is holding a needle close to their face as they thread a thin, white thread into the eye of a needle. Others are setting up for a night of repair in the rooms down the hallway. I cannot see all of the repairers, but I can hear them talking and tinkering. After a month off in July to mark the deep winter slumber, the days are getting longer, and signs of spring are emerging from the soil in the community garden outside. Once again, we have joined together for a night of repair.

Visitors to the repair café start to arrive. One woman has brought in a suitcase to be repaired just so she could take it to the op shop. She knew that if the suitcase had a hole, it would not get resold. One man carries in a vacuum he had taken back to the retailer he had bought it from. The retailer said they would order in a new one but would not offer to repair his. He refused their offer. An electrician pulls out a worn part from a lamp that needs a replacement and shows it to the owner. I sit typing on a laptop recording the details of people's items. The shrill sound of a small golden bell rings out each time an item is fixed.

Our two hours are coming to a close. Devices are reassembled, thread is knotted, and the little golden bell is rung to announce the final successes of the night. Some visitors leave with a note of which spare parts they need to buy and where from. Others must dispose of their unrepairable item. After packing away the tools, bringing in the signs and cleaning the dishes, we say our goodbyes. We will repair again next month.

In recent decades people in industrialised economies are prepared for their things not to last. Globally, manufacturing processes have increasingly downgraded in quality and as a result many products are not built to last. This has led many people to enter a cycle of buy and dispose which contributes to global waste streams that are as hefty as 2.2 billion tonnes per year (Rodrigues & Pahwa, 2023). As a result, there is a legacy of devices, clothes and other 'stuff' that have been made to sell and use but are collected in landfills. What impact could be made by *repairing* goods instead of constantly making new ones? This chapter is about people engaged in repair labour at repair cafés in Christchurch. It is also about how repairing together helps to change repairers' and visitors' relationship with 'stuff' and with each other through the formation of a community of commoners.

In Chapter Two, I argued that there are two key problems with work in the Anglosphere. The first problem is the material problems of production and consumption, which includes exceeding environmental limits and disparities in the distribution and use of time. I argued that the second problem with work are the relational problems of exploitation and alienation. In Chapter Three, I discussed how a diverse and community economies approach provides a hopeful and generative means of understanding economic change. In this chapter I focus on how one collective, Ōtautahi Repair Revolution, is responding to the issues of production and consumption through collective repair labour. The purpose of this chapter is to explore what this collective can teach us about healing the brokenness of production and consumption in the Anglosphere and how a commons is formed and maintained.

This chapter begins by considering how the 'stuff' people own is entangled in profit-driven production and marketing processes that take place across the world. Because many of the products that are made through this process are designed to become obsolete in the near future, the act of repair is largely about maximizing the life of materials through their care and reuse. The act of repair is part of the principles of circular economies, but to make repair viable, repair needs to be planned, convenient and affordable. Currently repair is a largely expensive service, and few retailers provide information regarding the repairability of their products. I review the major repair initiatives that are growing around the world that work to ensure more products are built with repair as part of their life cycle. This includes product stewardship, durability labelling, and the right to

repair. This also includes a global repair movement in the form of local repair cafés, including Ōtautahi Repair Revolution. I use this chapter to explore a night at Richmond repair café and the perspectives of repairers on creating a repair future. This chapter explores how members of Ōtautahi Repair Revolution are engaging and investing in collective labour that enables them to fix as many objects as they can through sharing tools, knowledge and skills. I argue that they have formed a repair knowledge commons and in doing so, have created a commoner community. This is summarised through two commons identi-kit tables at the end of the chapter. Indeed, for some people and certainly to specific generations of the population in New Zealand, repair is a common-sense response to a broken belonging. So, what makes repair so radical for so many people?

4.1 Built to Break

Planned obsolescence describes the practice of designing products with a deliberately limited lifespan. Whether by using low quality materials, problematic design or implementing mechanisms that halt the function of a product, planned obsolescence is about purposefully making products that prematurely break down (Bisschop et al., 2022). Planned obsolescence is also linked to the practice of marketing new models of existing products with the suggestion that purchasing the latest model is essential (Bisschop et al., 2022; Hamilton, 2010). Building items that are destined to break down quickly and fostering an artificial ‘need’ to replace items are two strategies used to increase revenue. This is seen through the example of mobile phones. Twenty generations of the Apple iPhone have been released since the first iPhone in 2007 until 2023 (Jones, 2024). Thats more than one new iPhone model brought to the market per year and previous iPhone models are discontinued approximately two years after being released (Jones, 2024). It has been proven that Apple slows down their older models through software updates under the guise of prolonging battery life (Fox, 2017; Taffel, 2023). This is an example of how brands use planned obsolescence to encourage their customers to upgrade to new models over repairing the current model they hold in their hand, driving more product sales. The aggressive development of the iPhone is an example of the way planned obsolescence has become a common part of business strategy. But Apple is not the only brand with a reputation for planning obsolescence. In 2023 Amazon sold roving security robots for businesses called “Astro for Business”. They were $2,350 US dollars and on 25th September 2024, they all stopped working (Hollister, 2024). Amazon decided to not only

discontinue the product but stopped all of the models sold, quite literally, in their tracks. Amazon did not claim there was any problem with the product and cite a shift in direction towards home robotics as their reason and issued refunds to buyers of the robot (Hollister, 2024). This recent example of planned obsolescence is part of a much longer trend that began a hundred years ago in the 1920s by the Phoebus Cartel. The Phoebus Cartel, an international cartel that controlled the manufacture of incandescent light bulbs, worked to limit the average lifespan of their lightbulbs to 1000 hours and even established a 1000-hour rule that their member companies had to abide by and who actively worked to downgrade their lightbulbs to meet (Dannoritzer, 2010).

Planned obsolescence is not simply designing and manufacturing items to become commercially obsolete in the short term but a set of decisions that make products a complete material disaster. This includes a range of decisions such as the use of weak or low-quality parts or sealing products shut when it is not required (Pritchett et al., 2022). These items are built to break and are not made to come apart. If they are taken apart, they become significantly damaged, often too damaged to be reassembled (Ruiz-Pastor & Mesa, 2023). In most cases, there is no plan in place for how to repair these items when they break down and no spare parts made available to make a repair (Pritchett et al., 2022). Planned obsolescence is more than the choice of releasing a new model of iPhone. It is about the kinds of materials and techniques chosen in manufacturing processes and a disregard for how to keep those materials in circulation for as long as possible. These choices are typically driven by the goal of minimising production costs and increasing revenues (Pritchett et al., 2022). Where in the past items used to pass through multiple generations, they are increasingly only lasting years or months (Bakker et al., 2014; Bisschop et al., 2022). I talked to Alan who is a volunteer repairer at Ōtautahi Repair Revolution and a professional electronics repairer, about this exact issue:

> Nowadays things are made in highly automated factories, with a high degree of robotics assembly. Things that used to be screwed together that would come apart, now have clips all around the edges and you have to unclip it all and it's sometimes quite difficult, the clips can be flimsy and break. When I was a Tech, back 20, 30 years ago, you could fix anything because everything came apart easily, there were generic components, it was all relatively simple. But technology is moving on, the complexity of the products has moved

> on, and how products are put together has changed dramatically. And that's changed the whole face of repairing things. It's a race to make the cheapest possible product. And it shows.

As Alan has explained to me, through his time as a professional repairer, electronics have miniaturised and companies have shifted away from universal parts towards creating their own unique components, causing electronic devices to become more materially complex. Importantly, electronics require critical raw materials that are increasingly in low supply and to extract them involves a range of unethical practices such as the use of child labour, paying low salaries and hazardous, toxic working conditions (Buratovic et al., 2017). By repairing these devices instead, we could slow down the demand for these materials and could give manufacturers time to address and develop new reuse and recycling techniques for the eventual wear of components (Restart, n.d.b.).

A different model for resource use and consumption is in circular economies. A 'circular economy' describes ways that resources are circulated and reused rather than disposed of in a linear process (Friant, 2020). This includes designing-out waste and pollution and finding ways to regenerate environments through waste disposal (Friant, 2020; Goburdhone & Dombroski, 2023). The ideas that underpin circular economies are not new and are reflected in many Indigenous approaches to material use (see Bargh, 2014, p. 465). For example, circularity is conceptualised through a Māori worldview by Māori zero-waste organisation Para Kore as part of a connection to Ranginui and Papatūānuku (Para Kore, n.d.). For example, natural materials like oil that are used to create the plastic of a kettle, are regarded as a gift from Papatūānuku (Repair Cafe Aotearoa NZ, 2021). Therefore, it is important to think about how to regenerate Ranginui and Papatūānuku in return for this resource, in the way we extract oil and in our response to the product at the end of its life (Repair Cafe Aotearoa NZ, 2021).

An important critique of circular economy discourse is the dominant focus on technology driven circular economies (Corvellec et al., 2022; Friant, 2020). These forms of circular economy thinking focus on how to dispose of, recover and recycle materials in different ways. But addressing overproduction and overconsumption requires a reconceptualization of people's

relationship to materials (Morrow & Davies, 2021; Savini, 2023). In the instance of repair, it is important to acknowledge that people make decisions to repair or dispose items from embodied habits (Hawkins, 2006; Shove, 2003). Dominant waste subjectivities in New Zealand (and in the Anglosphere more broadly) are about taking waste away and out of sight (Diprose et al., 2023; Goburdhone & Dombroski 2023). Through paying attention to the social and relational dynamics that inform peoples approach to materials, rather than how to manage waste through forms of technology, circular economies can better focus on 'higher' forms of circularity in practices of repair, reuse, reduce and avoidance. This is also important because mainstream circular economy approaches often fail to address the very beginning of the production process that involves the extraction of raw materials and their unethical consequences. Globally, natural resource consumption is predicted to have risen by 60% by 2060 compared to the consumption rates of 2020 (Charlton, 2024). With the knowledge of the consequences of exceeding planetary limits, this trend in consumption is unsustainable. These approaches also continue to pursue economic growth and do not question consumerism (Savini, 2023; Llorente-González et al., 2025). Degrowth scholar Savini (2023) argues that "the extent to which circularity can deliver its promise of reduction depends on the value that is ascribed to both present and future waste" (p. 1). Savini (2023) argues for a shift in the valuing of waste from monetary to socio-ecological value. This includes a re-prioritisation of the use-value of waste in order to repurpose waste for social projects and nature recovery (e.g. material banks for sourcing resources, rejected commercial trees for rewilding projects) while minimising hazardous, non-circular materials (Savini, 2023, p. 8; Saito, 2024, p. 189). Approaches to circular economies that focus on the social dimensions of sustainability argue that creating successful circular economies requires achieving social and environmental justice (Morrow & Davies, 2022). This involves recognising the integral role of more-than-humans and of people in performing circular practices (Friant et al., 2020; Llorente-González et al., 2025; Morrow & Davies, 2022; Ozanne, 2024).

These approaches to circular economies have uncovered the considerable amount of labour that needs to go into a circular economy on many different scales (Llorente-González & Vence, 2020). Not only shifts in the ways manufacturers and retailers implement a circular economy but the everyday labour of people implementing circular economy practices. What many circular economy approaches have failed to recognize is the amount of additional labour that will be required,

particularly of households (Hobson et al., 2021; Lindsay et al., 2024). As Lindsay et al. (2024) explain, geographers who have studied household sustainability labour have found that this labour is complex, gendered, unpaid, and frequently unacknowledged by policy makers (Hobson, 2020; Hobson et al., 2021; Organo et al., 2013). Empirical studies have shown that low waste living requires research, skill development, time and money which they acknowledge are not distributed equally (Hobson et al., 2021; Lindsay et al., 2024). If the labour of repairing objects is a significant component of moving towards circular economies, collective labour provides a way to address some of these issues (Savini, 2023; Van der Velden, 2021). But there are still a number of barriers repairers face when attempting to repair an item.

Repairers face common barriers to repair across the world. For example, technology protection measures prevent access to software and include encryption, external devices, and passwords. The purpose of technology protection measures is to protect copyright material and to stop unauthorized access or copying. However, technology protection measures have been applied to products in ways that disrupt or prevent their repair (Austin et al., 2022). Repairers may need to circumvent or 'hack' a technology protection measure in order for a device to work properly after a repair but going around the measure is unlawful (Sims & O'Sullivan, 2023b). In fact, any independent repairer in New Zealand who navigates a software lock during a repair faces the potential jail term of up to five years and/or a maximum $150,000 fine as stated in the Copyright Act 1994 at the time of writing (Copyright Act 1994, s. 226C; Sims & O'Sullivan, 2023b). Technology protection measures can prevent the repair of an item altogether. The intellectual property embedded in everyday items is an unsuspecting determinant of the repairability of the things people own. The 'terms of use' within devices play a large role in people's right to repair their things and when purchasing most devices, people enter into these terms without much thought (Wiseman & Kariyawasam, 2023). Copyright is now a part of most things that people own that are digitalized, such as dishwashers, cars, and phones (Wiseman & Kariyawasam, 2023). Intellectual property creates barriers to repair through stopping the release of repair documentation. How can someone access and repair the circuit layout of a device if this is a protected concern for copyright? In America, farmers who owned John Deere tractors could not fix their own tractors until a recent change (Roth, 2023). The manufacturing company put software locks onto the tractors that only authorized dealers could disable, which prevented farmers or any independent repairer from

diagnosing or fixing their machine (Roth, 2023). These locks also involved the ability to remotely shut down the machines at any time (Roth, 2023). This had large consequences for farmers whose livelihoods depend on this machinery. There is a balance to be kept between rights holders and public access to repair-related knowledge. Currently, there is a clear lack of balance as seen in the digital locks in many devices.

Product warranties also inform peoples response to broken consumer items and can help to trace responsibility back to retailers and manufacturers. The most common warranties are 2-5 years long (Wiseman & Kariyawasam, 2023). In New Zealand at the time of writing, the Consumer Guarantees Act (1993) provides protection if problems arise with the product or service purchased. This includes repairs, replacements or refunds when goods are faulty. However, it becomes the supplier's choice whether to refund, replace or repair an item if the fault is 'non-substantial' (McWedge, 2023). Under the Consumer Guarantees Act (1993), manufacturers must make spare parts and repair facilities available for a period of time after the goods are supplied (McWedge, 2023). However, these spare parts and facilities do not have to be made available to the consumer or to independent repairers as businesses can state to consumers that they do not provide parts or repair (McWedge, 2023). On top of this, it is only the first person in New Zealand to buy the product who is covered by a warranty. If an item is bought second hand and it breaks, the second-hand owner is responsible for finding spare parts and a repair facility (McWedge, 2023). The rights of the Consumer Guarantees Act (1993) do not last the lifespan of the product (McWedge, 2023). As the majority of goods are manufactured overseas by foreign-owned companies, consumers have limited opportunity to engage directly with manufacturers (Pritchett et al., 2022).

There are a set of key proposed legislative changes that are being fought for to respond to these barriers and strengthen repair in New Zealand. These ideas are prominent in repair movements globally to address barriers to repair. These include product stewardship, durability labelling and the right to repair. First, product stewardship is about taking responsibility for a product's environmental impact (Jensen & Remmen, 2017). This can refer to responsibility taken on by the creator or user of a product and a range of other actors (Lane & Watson, 2012). Product stewardship is framed in different forms such as a focus on environmental management, creating a sense of shared responsibility, or redirecting responsibility back to manufacturers (Lane &

Watson, 2012; Lewis, 2005). Product stewardship schemes look at minimising the product's environmental impact throughout all stages of the product's life cycle. This could include shifting the responsibility for collection, transportation and management of product waste away from consumers and local governments and onto manufacturers (Lane & Watson, 2012).

Second, durability labels provide information on how long an item is expected to last and how repairable it is. Making this product information available at the point of sale through a product label could encourage manufacturers to design differently, particularly for disassembly, and may lift standards for repairability, access to parts, tools and information (Cordella et al., 2020; Maitre-Ekern & Dalhammar, 2016; Milios & Dalhammar, 2023). Currently many of our possessions have already been designed with some kind of user-care in mind such as cleaning recommendations, spare buttons attached to clothes and basic manuals, a durability label would take this a step further and showcase how manufactures have considered the longevity of their items.

Third, the most popular initiative for accessible repair is the push for the legal right to repair. The core argument for the right to repair is for there to be a legal right for owners to have the ability to modify and repair the items they own without restrictions from manufacturers (Austin et al., 2022). The right to repair is framed in opposition to current widespread restrictions such as the requirement to use only a manufacturer's maintenance services, restrictions on access to tools and components, and software barriers like technology protection measures (Austin et al., 2022; Sims & O'Sullivan, 2023a). The right to repair is about designing products that can be repaired easily and affordably (Sims & O'Sullivan, 2023a). The right to repair legislation ensures manufacturers will make spare parts, repair instructions, tools and software available to independent repairers. The right to repair movement is about protecting already established rights to repair and to establish these rights in places they do not currently exist. In New Zealand, ensuring there is a right to repair requires changes to consumer legislation, intellectual property legislation, and waste minimisation legislation in order to remove existing barriers to repair (Pritchett et al., 2022). At the time of writing, the New Zealand Government is in the process of reviewing the proposed Consumer Guarantees (Right to Repair) Amendment Bill which would amend the Consumer Guarantees Act 1993 (New Zealand Parliament, 2025).

So far, I have explained the barriers to repair and the important changes in manufacturer practice and legislation that is required to shift from a throwaway culture and make repair more possible. One group of people who are responding to throwaway culture are those who gather at repair cafés. Repair cafés play an important role in understanding the limits of current legislation and many repair cafés collect important data that traces which manufacturers' goods are being brought in for repair and are building an understanding of which models, materials and techniques are built to last and which are built to break. The next section will contextualise repair cafés.

4.2 Repair Cafés and Ōtautahi Repair Revolution

Repair Cafés are free events where local people bring their broken belongings, and local volunteers do their best to repair them. The contemporary Repair Café movement began in 2009 in Amsterdam when Dutch environmentalist and journalist Martine Postma wanted to foster local-level sustainability (Repair Cafe 15, n.d.). The purpose of a repair café is to strengthen community relationships and build awareness around the issues of repair (Repair Cafe 15, n.d.). Repair cafés have been organised in a range of places such as in community halls, schools and universities, and churches, and most repair cafés are run on a donation basis and through local council funding. In 2024 there are an estimated 4000 repair groups around the world with 75 repair cafés across New Zealand (Open Repair Alliance, 2024; Repair Café Aotearoa New Zealand, n.d.).

The repair and restoration of items is a topic that has been present within popular culture in the Anglosphere for some time. In 1979 the beloved *Antiques Road Show* began airing on British television. The show involves antique specialists appraising items brought in by local residents. In 2017 the *Repair Shop* made its television debut in which family heirlooms are brought into the repair shop to be restored. These two shows capture a mainstream fascination with the history, condition and the value of the old things people own. New Zealand also has its own history with repair. The 'number 8-wire attitude' captures the practical and resilient D-I-Y approach that is considered a part of Kiwi culture (Pritchett et al., 2022). Number 8 wire, a gauge of steel wire commonly used for New Zealand rural fencing, is used to refer to the ability to create or repair machinery using available scrap materials. Historically, this resourcefulness was necessary because of New Zealand's distance from other countries and the inaccessibility of spare parts

(Pritchett et al., 2022). This 'do it yourself' attitude is still reflected in New Zealand culture. For example, New Zealand's largest home improvement and garden retailer, Mitre 10, made their slogan "DIY it's in our DNA" (Mitre 10 New Zealand, 2012). The act of repair has had a place in New Zealand identity for a long time and has manifested in different ways. Although the number 8 wire attitude has roots in rural New Zealand, this likening towards repair is also part of urban spaces in New Zealand. For example, in Ōtautahi RAD Bikes ('Recycle A Dunger') was formed in 2013 to "test the idea of bicycle recycling and assisted DIY repairs in central Ōtautahi/Christchurch" (RAD Bikes n.d.).

According to Repair Café Aotearoa New Zealand (n.d.), the contemporary Repair Café movement came to New Zealand in 2013 with the first repair café run by the Lyttelton Harbour Timebank. This was a one-off event but in the following years regular repair events emerged around the country. Significantly, Repair Café Auckland was established in 2016 and in 2020 the national organisation Repair Café Aotearoa New Zealand (RCANZ) was established to support repair cafés across the county and pushes for legislative change for the right to repair in New Zealand (Repair Café Aotearoa New Zealand, n.d.). Regular repair cafés emerged in Ōtautahi in 2021 with the creation of Ōtautahi Repair Revolution. Ōtautahi Repair Revolution began through two small repair events hosted at an intentional community house that sparked a lot of interest. The coordinator of the events, Zac, felt that there was a need for a space to repair together in the city and he was invited by Richmond Community Garden to host a regular repair café at their Riverlution Ecohub, in the eastern suburb of Richmond. This established a monthly Richmond-based repair café that began in August of 2021. This repair café runs during the evening on the third Tuesday of each month.

In 2022, Ōtautahi Repair Revolution began a year-long project called the repair roadshow. The purpose of the repair roadshow was to help other community hubs around Ōtautahi establish and host their own repair events. The repair roadshow involved occupying different community spaces around the city each month with existing repair volunteers to support other communities in establishing their own repair events. The aim of the project was to make repair cafés more easily accessible by location and to have these local repair cafés be run by people who live within these areas. This was partly because many people were visiting the Richmond repair café from across town and the roadshow project was an opportunity to address the lack of accessibility of repair

cafés and build repair skills and capacity amongst locals in other parts of the city. The repair roadshow took place during my fieldwork with Ōtautahi Repair Revolution, and I participated at the roadshow event hosted at the University of Canterbury. At this time, Ōtautahi Repair Revolution was not just the name of the Richmond repair café but became a moving presence where experienced repair-café repairers came together to host different repair events in different locations. The repair roadshow events were held in locations such as community libraries, at the local university, and even in a west coast town outside of Christchurch.

'Ōtautahi Repair Revolution' became somewhat of an umbrella name for the repair movement in Christchurch, particularly during the repair roadshow project. On one hand, Ōtautahi Repair Revolution is a community of repairers and repair enthusiasts across Ōtautahi rather than a single repair café. On the other hand, the Richmond repair café is home to the Ōtautahi Repair Revolution 'brand' and other repair cafés have gone on to create their own social media pages and branding. A shared Ōtautahi Repair Revolution community Facebook page is used to cross-share repair café events that are taking place in the city. I talk about Ōtautahi Repair Revolution from my point of view of my time participating with them, predominantly at the Richmond repair café. However, what is also included in my fieldnotes is an unexpected one-off visit to the Palmerston North repair café located in the North Island of New Zealand as well as one interview with a participant at the Palmerston North repair café. The Palmerston North repair café has therefore informed my understanding of repair and repair cafés and provided an unplanned but very useful point of reference to understand the similarities and differences between repair cafés.

In what follows, I zoom in on a night at the repair café. To journey through a night at the repair café, I follow the perspective of a kettle to explore the relationship between owners and objects and the ways that objects shape the experience of humans. I also draw on the perspectives of six repairers. Zac, who initiated Ōtautahi Repair Revolution. Mike, a volunteer repairer and core 'generalist'. Imogen, a volunteer repairer and an organiser of the repair roadshow event at the University of Canterbury. Alan, who has a long history of repairing both as a volunteer at repair events throughout Christchurch and repairing as a professional electrical repairer at his repair business. Inga, a volunteer repairer and creator of 'human repair' at the Richmond repair café. Finally, Viv a volunteer repairer and creator of the 'take it apart table' at the Palmerston North

repair café. To return to the purpose of this chapter, I capture a night at the repair café in order to understand the ways people are collectivising repair labour. By the end of the chapter, I create a commons identi-kit to show how a commons has been formed by repairers. I explore what this can teach us about healing the brokenness of production and consumption.

4.3 A Night at the Repair Café

Before a repair event takes place, a facilitator works behind the scenes to prepare for the event. This includes announcing the event on social media, at times contacting volunteers, and setting up the space with tools, materials and books. The facilitator plays an important role in activating repair events as their preparation work ensures that repairers can arrive and begin repairs easily and they provide oversight to ensure the event runs safely and smoothly. Facilitators are repairers too and will often be 'on the tools'. Although repair events are dependent on people, they are equally dependent on tools as the kind of repairs that take place at a repair café rests on the skills that volunteers bring on the night and the collection of tools available to repair. The tools that are available to the Richmond repair café include a set of collective tools the group has acquired or bought through koha and council funding. As the initial facilitator, Zac spent time collating a supply of tools that continues to grow. These collectively owned tools are kept at the Riverlution Ecohub and are shared during the events. The personal tools of repairers are also an important contribution to the repair events. Many repairers bring their own tools to repair events to use themselves or to share with other repairers. One of the volunteers at the Richmond repair café brings along multiple large crates of tools and spare parts that he unloads from his car at the start of each event. The tools that are available to perform repairs are always in flux and repairers often make do and improvise with what is available to them. The types of tools and materials that are needed to repair expands as the diversity of the kinds of items that are brought in for repair broadens. Repairers research these new items and source new materials and tools as well as investigate new barriers to repair they have not come across before. This interaction with the new items that arrive at the repair café causes repairers to expand their repair knowledge and broadens the collective knowledge shared between the repairers.

But not all repair knowledge and skills are equally dispersed. Sometimes a single repairer is the only person who owns a specialist tool, and the only one with the skill to use it. Their absence at an event is felt particularly when multiple items are brought into a repair event that require this skill and therefore require this particular person to attempt a repair. One volunteer can have a significant impact on the possibilities of repair at an event. Repairer's skills and knowledge contribute to, and impact, the nature of the event including what can be fixed, what visitors are able to learn about their items, and what kinds of solutions are proposed.

The strength of sharing tools at the repair café is that the Richmond repair café does not require a lot of funding to afford and collect a wide range of tools to make repairs. The downside is that there can be inconsistencies in the kinds of repair available to the visitors who come to the events. This can mean asking visitors to come back to a future event with the possibility that the repairer will be there or giving guidance to visitors about the next steps of repair for them to seek out independently. However, missing the necessary tools and materials during a repair event has led to innovative solutions and ultimately inspires an opportunity to test out new repair approaches when possible.

Alongside the gathering of tools, Zac also spent time at the beginning of the repair café building relationships with a range of people who have repair skills to create a volunteer base. The volunteer repairer collective grows as more people find out about the repair cafés in the city. Often people become volunteer repairers after having brought an item in for repair and realizing they have skills to offer. Some who want to join are not sure how their skills would fit in the repair café. In a conversation with Mike, he explains how he and others like him, found a place in the repair café:

> I got called a 'generalist' (laughs) because I didn't have any particular skills. I've got woodworking skills and play with plastics and a bit of metal, I know a little bit about electricity, but I don't really have any specialist skills. The first time I turned up with a few tools, didn't know what to bring. I got given a few jobs to do and 'generalist' was the thing.

The term 'generalist' captures a range of miscellaneous repair skills, and the generalists have proved to be a crucial part of the repair volunteer base. Although other repairers have crucial

speciality skills such as electrical repairs or sewing repairs, the breadth of a generalist's skill set means that they can apply these skills to repairing a broad range of items. The repairer collective of Ōtautahi Repair Revolution includes certified electrical technicians, software developers, mechatronics experts, textile menders, and generalists. This includes professional repairers who have certifications as well as well as repairers who are self-taught[7]. The skills of repairers can echo traditional gendered divisions of labour of women performing sewing labour and men performing electrical and mechanical labour, but these skills have been performed by a diversity of gender identities at the Richmond repair café. However, professional repairers do tend to fall into these gendered categories.

While volunteer repairers are organising themselves for a night of repair, others in the city decide they will visit the repair café. Often visitors to the repair café will have seen the event on social media, on posters at the Riverlution Ecohub, or heard about it through word of mouth. These people come along to take part in having an item repaired by a volunteer repairer, to gain guidance in a repair they plan to undertake, or simply to see what it's about. For visitors of the repair café, opting to bring an item to a place where it might be repaired is a choice that emerges after realising it is broken. To demonstrate this, I follow a kettle's journey to and through the repair cafe:

> *Lily makes a large effort to reach her hand across the kitchen counter to press down on my switch. Once she feels it click, she lurches backwards and waits intently. Lily scrunches her face as she looks at me, becoming suspicious as I fail to create any sound. Her father should have noticed I have not been able to make sound when he tried to make herbal tea last night. But David got distracted by the commentary blaring from the television in the next room. Lily is annoyed now. She yells for help. "MUM THE KETTLE ISN'T WORKING!"*
>
> *After Lily explained to Anna that I had failed to work, Anna put me in a supermarket bag which she placed in the boot of her car. It was very dark and cold there. I was laid on my side with the water for David's abandoned tea lying dormant in my body.*

[7] Certain repairs do require certification. For example, electrical repairs must involve a registered electrician by law.

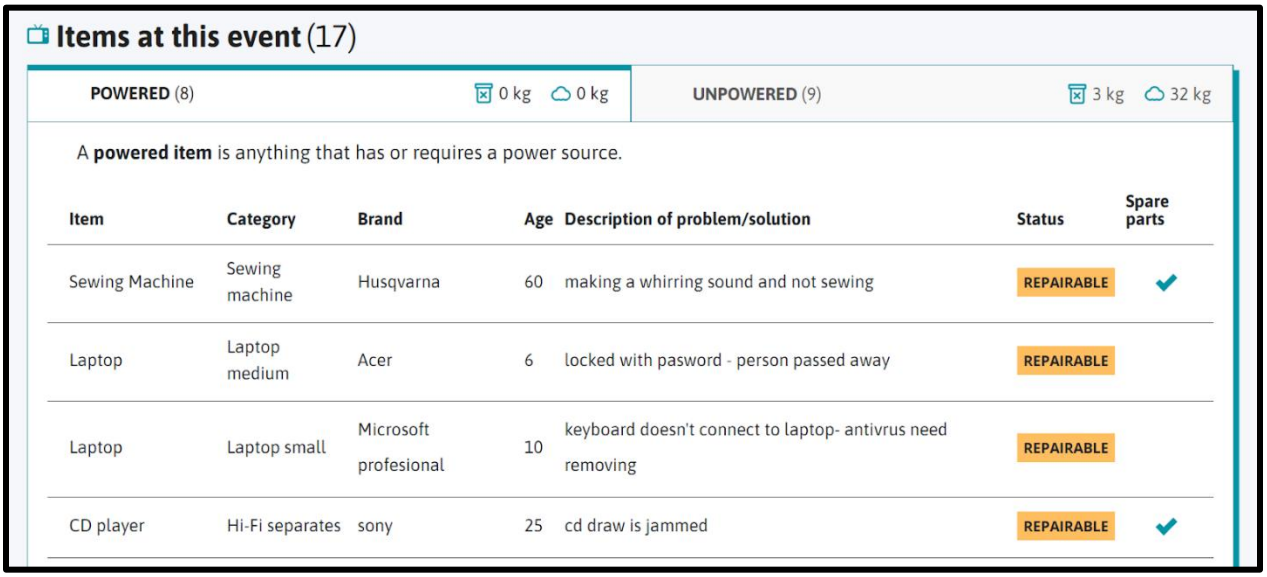
Some of it splashed out of my water outlet when Anna drove to and from work. I was not sure why Anna had put me there.

One evening I was taken out of the car. Someone was swinging me in the bag as they walked somewhere. Soon I was grabbed by a fumbling hand. David. I could hear his voice. He was speaking to someone; they were talking about me. David took me out of the bag and into the light. People's gaze travelled to look at me. "What have we got here?"

Visitors to the Richmond repair café will walk through the door carrying their items in their hands, over their shoulder, or in bags. Some people have brought in long bench seats, a pile of clothes or containers filled with a scatter of broken pieces. While there is no official limit on the number of items that can be brought in for repair, there is no guarantee that all items will be repaired by the end of the night. Because repairing an item depends significantly on the people, tools and parts available on the night, these factors can also delay a repair. To get started, visitors are directed to 'check in' their items before they are passed onto a repairer. At this stage, visitors will start to present their items to a volunteer. Each item gets inventoried into a database hosted by the website *Restarters.* Restarters is a website that was created by The Restart Project in 2013. The Restart Project helps communities run repair events through their website as well as provide repair directories and support legislative change surrounding the right to repair (Restart, n.d.a.). Restarters is a free digital platform for repair cafés to enter information about the items that arrive at their cafés. The information that can be recorded includes the issue with the item, the items age, the brand and model as well as if the item was fixed, repairable or at the end of its life alongside the barriers to repair that were faced (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Screenshot of a Repair Revolution Restarters Event Page, Powered Items.



Items at this event (17)

POWERED (8) 0 kg 0 kg | **UNPOWERED** (9) 3 kg 32 kg

A **powered item** is anything that has or requires a power source.

Item	Category	Brand	Age	Description of problem/solution	Status	Spare parts
Sewing Machine	Sewing machine	Husqvarna	60	making a whirring sound and not sewing	REPAIRABLE	✔
Laptop	Laptop medium	Acer	6	locked with pasword - person passed away	REPAIRABLE	
Laptop	Laptop small	Microsoft profesional	10	keyboard doesn't connect to laptop- antivrus need removing	REPAIRABLE	
CD player	Hi-Fi separates	sony	25	cd draw is jammed	REPAIRABLE	✔

Collecting this data helps to support the broader repair movement in a few ways. First, repair data is used to determine how easy or difficult it is to repair different kinds of items. Because items are categorized, this data gives insights to how easy it is to repair, for example, the average toaster, vacuum, or mobile phone. Secondly, collecting repair data builds an understanding about the brands and models that are repeatably difficult to repair. Whether they are unable to be opened, are made using poor quality materials, or because the brand does not provide repair information about their products. Collecting this information at repair cafés is significant in supporting demands for manufacturers to increase the repairability of their products. By participating at repair cafés, visitors are helping to add to the useful insights of what brands and models are breaking and which are repairable. Having learnt about Restarters, Ōtautahi Repair Revolution created a profile and began logging in their repair data.

For the Repair Café movement, Restarters is a useful infrastructure for supporting collective repair labour and collaborating on efforts for right to repair beyond the single repair café. Bollier (2021) points out how certain kinds of infrastructures make it "easier, cheaper, and even normal for individuals to come together to create their own commons" (p. 66). He draws on the examples of physical infrastructures like Wi-Fi and legal frameworks like creative commons licences (Bollier,

2021). Such infrastructures can help people to collaborate more easily. The Restarters platform enables many repair efforts scattered across the world, to combine their efforts in powerful ways (Bollier, 2021). This starts when visitors are asked about each item they have brought to the repair café and there is always a story behind an item:

> *They got me on sale for $15 at the mall. I was replacing their last kettle that they had lost during their recent move. David and Anna were becoming increasingly tense during the move. With everything in boxes and no kettle, they were feeling the effects of their caffeine withdrawal. They rushed to the store on a weekend, bickering with one another over which colour kettle they wanted. Lily was asleep in her stroller parked close in the small aisle. In the end it was the combination of Anna's minimalist interior style and David's germ phobia that led them to choose a white kettle. Out of nine identical white kettles, I was the one chosen. Luckily for me, David compulsively cleans my exterior three times a day.*

Some of the items that are brought into the repair café are only a few months old. Other items are over 50 years old. Many stories are shared about the items and their origins. People talk about who gave them the item or where they bought it from, the reason the item has become broken and at times, the strategies people have tried to fix the item themselves. Sometimes these stories are very mundane, sometimes they are very meaningful. Regardless, the setting of the repair café welcomes people to share stories about their items. These stories exemplify the kinds of values people attach to their items and can be economic, sentimental, and environmental values among others, and reveal some of their motivations to bring their item to the repair café.

After logging in items to Restarters, items are matched to a repairer. Knowing who to pass the items to is possible through the relationships built between volunteers who start to learn about each other's often evolving skill sets as well as becoming familiar with the kinds of items that are brought in and what they require. Repairers pick up new techniques and experience by attempting a repair on an item they have not done before and when time permits, they have the chance to experiment with new items and techniques. As someone who often had the role of matching items to repairers, it was important that I took care in building relationships with repairers and

acknowledge the person in front of me before passing an item to them, especially in the flurry of a repair event.

Over time, a consensus is built around what kinds of repair are not possible within the timeframe of a repair café event. This consensus has informed the role that visitors to the repair café can play in the repair of their items. For example, it is recommended that visitors bring their own spare parts before arriving in order to complete the repair. This can include a new phone screen that fits their model of phone, a new zip, or the corresponding type of material-specific glue. Visitors are also recommended to do preparation work before the event such as unpicking a broken zip to be replaced at the repair café. This saves repairers time on the night and helps to ensure visitors have the correct specific spare parts or materials that are needed for the repair. This also means that the repair café can stock general materials and parts but are supported by visitors supplying their own parts and materials at times. Visitors begin to learn more about their items as they are given the responsibly to supply the correct materials and parts.

If there is not a repairer available to look at an item, it will be placed in a que and visitors wait until their items are ready to be looked at. Once an item has been matched to a repairer, visitors are able to start a relationship with their repairer. The repair café is not a drop-off system. There are sometimes instances where a repairer will offer to take an item away to finish a repair and will bring it back the following month, but repairers will organise this directly with the owner of the item. The intention of the repair café is for visitors to stay with their items and interact with the repairers:

> *David hands me over to another man who walks me down a hallway. The man sets me down on a table, turns away from me and sits down at a desk. He picks up a screwdriver and starts to concentrate on a circuit board. He is talking to a woman. I see there is an old vacuum cleaner that has been disassembled on the other side of the room. I catch sight of dust particles floating in the air. People come in and out of the room carrying different home appliances and ask for the man's advice. He responds to them, waving his screwdriver around like a wand as he speaks. Eventually David walks into the room and watches as the man reassembles the*

vacuum and plugs it in at the wall. The man holds the vacuum's hose in his hand and presses his foot gently on the power button. The vacuum roars and starts to recollect the dust that had arisen during its disassembly. The man looks happy. "There you go". The man nods towards the woman who is stood leaning on a wall. "Thank you so much!". The man walks over to pick me up from the table. "Let's see what's wrong with you". The man looks me over. He notices I have some water still inside. He walks back down the hallway to the kitchen sink to fill my body with more water. As he does so I see people comparing the weight of fabrics, others are admiring a very old wooden clock. One person is wearing a grey knitted hat with a newly sewn bright blue patch. The man walks me back to his room. There's David, peering over the desk looking at the different sized screw drivers. The man places me back onto my stand and turns to speak to David, "Let's try to boil it and see what's happening".

Although there are professional repairers present at most of the repair café events, the events are also made up of volunteer repairers that are self-taught or do not have a certification. Unlike the liability between a consumer and a retailer or manufacturer, repairers at the Richmond repair café emphasize function and experimentation over guarantees and professional-standard outcomes, attempting repairs through an 'all care, no responsibility' approach. This approach is communicated clearly through an eight-step poster by Ōtautahi Repair Revolution that is present at all the Richmond repair café events and is intended for the visitors of the repair café to read to understand how the repair café works. This poster uses specific language to preface the intentions of the repair café and are used to navigate the steps of the repair event. An excerpt from the poster is below:

1. Bring us your broken stuff: chuck it, no way.
2. Help us collect data: data helps us make big changes.
3. Find your repairer: we are not always able to fix everything but will give it our best shot.
4. Connect: what does repair mean to you?
5. Upskill: take this opportunity to learn a new skill, like sharpening knives, checking electrical circuits, and sewing.

6. Volunteer: volunteers are the lifeblood of repair cafés and wouldn't function without you!
7. Start your own repair café: it's easier than you think.
8. Right to repair: if you can't fix it, you don't own it.

In reading these extracts by Ōtautahi Repair Revolution, it becomes clear that the emphasis is on building repair capacity and sharing skills and knowledge among a group. Volunteer repairers are not positioned as the holders or keepers of repair knowledge and instead Ōtautahi Repair Revolution are inviting people in to join a collective effort to repair. Repairing together is also understood as a way to connect with other people and to a broader conversation about the 'stuff' of people's lives. Ōtautahi Repair Revolution in particular, approach repair more informally with less pressure to produce 'perfect' repairs and more focus on experimentation and the often messy and non-linear process of learning to repair. Imogen, a sewer, explains how this approach to repair at the repair café informs her strategies of repair during an event:

> Because you're not getting paid for it and they know it's volunteer work, there's not pressure that it has to look amazing. It's functional repair as opposed to being invisible repair or being a really decorative thing. With my own clothes, if I was putting a patch on the knee, I'd do sashiko, which is a Japanese mending technique, and it looks really nice. But it takes a long time. So if I was mending the same thing at the repair rev, I would whack a patch on it. And around the edges of the patch, I wouldn't overlock, but if I was doing it for myself, I would try to overlock the edges of the patch so that it would last longer.

In fact, when it comes to textile repairs, repairers often encourage visitors to consider using a contrasting patch to produce a 'visible repair', embracing the repair as part of an item's life. As Imogen demonstrates, there is a wider purpose to the repair café than the repair of items that 'takes the pressure off'. The repair café is a place to engage with repair without the expectation of creating 'perfect' repairs, nor to complete the repair of every item that arrives. Repairers control the pace at which they repair items and the techniques they decide to apply. They can choose not to repair an item they do not want to repair, usually items that they know are difficult to tackle and require different kinds of machinery or special materials. The repair café is also a space to socialize and

eat together and a place to focus on building relationships amongst repairers and visitors. Although the repair café is about repairing objects, it is also about providing a place to be with others.

Ōtautahi Repair Revolution acknowledges that it takes collective effort to make repair more possible, through collecting data, upskilling, volunteering, starting a repair café and contributing to the right to repair. The repair café is about creating an agency that many people feel they do not have to respond to their broken items. This focus on relationship building and the collectivisation of creating and maintaining the repair café involves managing expectations. In particular, managing the expectations of visitors to the repair café. This dynamic of managing expectations is explained by Zac:

> There's a lot of questions when someone walks in the door because they're used to our current economic model and when you walk in everything's kind of tipped on its head. Your expectations of things are all confused and so you get people walking in the door having high expectations for their thing to be fixed really well. Or to not engage with the repairer and see a bit of a hierarchical status where you're the customer and they're the worker.
>
> And we try to break those a bit. A lot of it might be when you're sitting there repairing something and someone's standing there hovering over you, that you try to start a conversation with them and then they see that actually, oh this person isn't a repairer trying to make money, they're a person in the community coming here to offer a service for free. I think you'll always have people that will come with different expectations and especially people that are very solidly established in the way things are, will find it difficult to understand what the idea of these things are and maybe for them a paid service by someone who's a bit more knowledgeable rather than a free service that is run by volunteers who may or may not be good at what they do works better for them.

Zac demonstrates the negotiation necessary to establish expectations around the repair café and the role of actively intervening in the interactions at the repair café to bring these expectations to life. Zac makes reference to our current economic model, referring to the role of paid repair services,

in comparison to the relationship-based model of the repair café which is a free service supported by koha. This relationship-based model is achieved in part because visitors are encouraged to be with their repairers during the repair process. Alan has experience both as a professional repairer and as a volunteer at repair cafés, and makes a distinction between the nature of professional repair and café repairs:

> As a technician, normally we do the work in isolation from the customer. And so they don't recognize how much hard work goes into repairing something. But the thing with the repair café is that you're generally doing it in front of the owner of the item. Which can sometimes be daunting. And sometimes you have to be quite brutal to take something apart.

Although different to Alan's typical repair setting in his business, the repair café does allow for visitors to be brought closer to the process of repair. This includes witnessing what it takes for a repairer to perform a repair. Visitors sitting with repairers can also potentially counteract the tensions of expectation. Here both people are together, witnessing what it takes to repair an item, with the repairer gifting their labour for free. Visitors being present during the repair process also allows them to learn about the issue of the item, what spare parts are required and at times what brand, material or model to purchase instead. Repairers often bring visitors into the decision-making process of the repair and check in with visitors about the repair strategy they wish to take. Sometimes visitors will perform their own repairs after getting guidance from a repairer, such as using one of the sewing machines to fix their own clothing. Many of the items repaired at the repair café are 'easy fixes' for the skilled volunteers but can mean a lot for the owner of the item. The item may have a common fault that repairers have become familiar with. These repairs can be the difference between an item being brought back into use and an item that is disposed of:

> *As expected, I didn't boil. The man empties my body and looks inside at my thermostat. "Still in good condition". He soon figures out that the cord that connects me to my power base has wires that have become loose. This makes sense after all those times of being yanked out from the kitchen wall in replacement of Anna's smoothie machine. After the man makes a few adjustments, my wires are reconnected again.*

At best unrepairable items are able to be recycled, at worst, these items are sent to landfill. Sometimes an item is automatically unrepairable because the item cannot be opened, and the fault cannot be identified. When items cannot be opened, repairers cannot detect if there are any broken or worn-out parts. Sometimes all the item requires is to be disassembled, cleaned, and then reassembled. But when items are not even able to be diagnosed, when they are glued, melted or forced shut without the ability to be opened, if only through breaking the item entirely, this makes repairing an item impossible.

Repair is possible if the manufacturer makes it so, and the ease of repair is a matter of design. When repair is communicated well by manufacturers this creates an ease to repair, such as the example of the Fair Phone, a repairable phone that can be fixed by users simply with a standard screwdriver (Gibbs, 2023). Other examples include products with accessible repair manuals, which repairers draw on for guidance in their repair. People often share their frustration about this barrier to repair at the repair café. The design of items not only impacts if repairers at the repair café are able to repair an item but impacts how everyday people can gain and use repair skills on their items.

Repairers draw on technologies, techniques and models of the past and rely on repair information that is available online to inform their repair choices. Repairers will re-use materials to replicate original pieces. For example, plastic handles have been replaced with crafted wooden handles, pieces of plastic are moulded to create ‘new’ replacement parts, and fabrics are repurposed to mend textiles. In this way, repairers add their own layer of design input as they repair items. The repair may not last long, but the repair café provides repairers with the opportunity to experiment as they try out different techniques and methods of repair. Some people will bring a previously repaired item back to the repair café and update their repairer on how the repair approach fared. Sometimes repairers will try again with a different repair approach. This is part of the creative and experimental approach to repair fostered by Ōtautahi Repair Revolution.

Repairers also team up to tackle the repair of items together. Collaborating on repairs can provide the support and confidence to attempt a repair on an item that a repairer does not feel confident in. Part of these collaborations include intergenerational relationships and knowledge sharing, as well as the cross over between professionally trained repairers and amateur repairers. Although the

internet provides an abundance of useful resources for repair, it can be difficult to determine what online repair information is trustworthy and what is questionable. Mentorship and in-person experience proves to have a significant impact on repair confidence, as Zac explains:

> The mentorship is amazing. At the last event I got to play around with some electronic stuff which if I were doing it myself, I would probably not approach it because there's too many different things to learn in order to do it safely. But because I had an electrician next to me, I was able to pull the thing apart, get him to validate or to remind me which one's positive and negative and that I'm going do it safely in whatever I'm doing. Just getting those little bits of information. He only needs to look over and take a split second to make a judgement and give some guidance. But for me that was massive. It's a lot easier than me going on YouTube and looking at how to check the continuity on the multimeter or see which part of the plug is the ground and which ones the negative and the positive.

What is important about the repair café is that it brings together people with different knowledge to cross pollinate. This allows for repair knowledge and repair skills to be passed on to others and shared widely. In doing so, this repair knowledge becomes increasingly more accessible and familiar. Of course, a lot of repair information is already accessible online, but as Zac explained, having someone to physically guide and teach a repair skill provides large benefits to practicing those skills. A widely accessible and practiced repair knowledge is normal for particular generations of people, but it has been disrupted. Zac explains this shift:

> We used to have a lot of people who were very good at a lot of different things and now everything's specialised, so we've got individual people who are really good at one thing but terrible at another thing. And so it's bringing all of those people together and kind of creating a lot more generalists, a lot more people that have a lot of information in a few different areas. And the only way to get that is really through human interaction.

Zac highlights the role that human interaction has for rebuilding a broad repair knowledge. The repair café plays an important role in bringing people with different kinds of repair skills and knowledge together to create more generalists. As the repair café volunteer base grows, there is

potential for the diversity of repair knowledge to expand. As visitors come into contact with the repair café, their repair knowledge also grows, even if only a little. Their interaction with the repair process enables them to come closer to the shared frustration and joys of repairing, without having to lift a finger:

> *David tells the woman sitting at the computer that I have been fixed. The woman picks up a small, golden bell and shakes it. As it rings, people cheer. Anna and Lily have arrived. Anna looks at David with surprise as she takes in the room. The three of them begin to walk around the room and talk to people. A man is serving bowls of soup to a group of people who have congregated around the kitchen bench. Babies are bouncing on parents' hips. The room is full of people sitting together in huddles around various objects. David places me on a big wooden table in the middle of the room. Next to me sit three whirring sewing machines, pressed into motion by sewers melding together bright colourful fabrics. In front of the wooden table is a chair. There is a woman sitting in it. She is being given a shoulder massage by another woman. They are talking about yoga and a bike accident.*

Inga has a background in massage therapy and introduced ‘human repair’ to the Richmond repair café, providing simple massage therapy during events. She came along to the first Ōtautahi repair event:

> Back then I already had an idea of the human repair, but I just didn’t have time to put towards it, or maybe just not enough guts to ask (laugh). I really liked the idea of the repair café, I wanted to support it. To learn, to understand the maintenance of things, why things are broken and how this consistency contributes to everything. Sustainability is in this consistency and maintenance.
>
> People kind of throw themselves away. At the moment I don’t do massage therapy on a regular basis. This is still more ‘giving fish’ than teaching people how to fish, but it gives them some tools so they can go out and start doing something in order to help themselves. I can come and share a skill, this is what other people [repairers] are doing as well.

Here repair is interpreted beyond fixing objects and is instead about tending to physiological health. Performing human repair involves building relationships. Inga interacts with people on a much closer level, through the body, and it is through her time interacting with her human repair participants that she gets to know how people are doing. The purpose of human repair is to provide physical care, but it was clear that human repair also invited different kinds of conversations between a repairer and visitors to the repair café. Such as significant events that were taking place in people's lives and the effects these may be having on their bodies. Part of the purpose of repair cafés is to build relationships through repairing objects, human repair focuses on the repair of the human state and builds relationships through paying attention to the needs of the body.

Human repair also highlights the role of maintenance for human health as well as the maintenance of human health as an ongoing process that is strengthened by being with others. The human repair chair invites visitors to consider their own need for repair and how this might be found through sitting down with another person and through attention to their body. Inga also shares knowledge about caring for the body for people to be able to help themselves and this is meaningful for her. In this way, repairing collectively can expand beyond objects and towards a meaningful care for others.

> *Lily has quickly made friends with two other children. A woman has given them an old telephone, and they are pulling it apart. One child is picking up the tiny screws that have been removed and places them into a container. Another child holds up a long curly cord that has been extracted from the body of the telephone. Lily pulls a metal cube out of the telephone and inspects it. The woman at the table asks: "oh look, do you reckon this is the brain of the telephone? That remembers all the saved phone numbers". Before Lily responds, Anna picks me up from my table places me into a bag.*

The "take it apart table" was created by Viv for children to become more involved at the Palmerston North repair café. The take it apart table uses items that were not able to be fixed by repairers, and are safe to handle, and dedicates space to taking them apart. Viv has a 'save it box' with compartments for screws and other useful parts from the items to keep for reuse or recycling.

Viv also keeps a minimal set of tools at the take it apart table to encourage the children to ask surrounding repairers for tools that they need, such as the right head for a screwdriver. Viv explains the origins of the take it apart table:

> The minute we sat down and started planning the repair café I was thinking about what kids might do. Listening to these mostly older guys who were part of the repairs, I heard them all saying how when they were young they loved taking things apart. And so I said we could offer something like that for children who are attending, because it's to sow the seeds for a repair mindset.
>
> How can you know that things can be repaired if you don't know that they're made of little bits and pieces and what things look like on the inside. It's like little Sam when he saw the coffee machine, by the end he's like it's not 'a' thing, it's a thousand things. So I could see the potential for that and I'm always going to be looking for the educational kid focused bit of the work because I'm an educator.

As Viv explains, the take it apart table is about uncovering what is inside. Viv talks with the children about the mechanisms of the items. Discovering with them every little spring, switch, and screw and prompts the question: what is this for? In paying attention to the seemingly mundane insides of a coffee maker, every compartment, wire and tube becomes an interesting discovery. Viv makes an important connection between taking things apart and building a repair mindset. The items that are brought to the repair café are particularly active. When they work, they have electricity running through them, they have mechanisms that move pieces around, they have elastic that withstands being pulled over a human body. They also have the ability to stop working. The take it apart table considers all of these pieces and what they mean. The take it apart table is also questioning 'who' can be a repairer:

> I wanted to give them [children] a whole table. But it isn't a box of toys. It's a proper legit activity. And the best of the parents and grandparents who come with them understand that. We're the noisiest table. There are children who love it and spend the entire morning. I've only had one child ever come in and go, "Oh no, I don't wanna do that", and just wander

> off, they had no interest. Occasionally people are a bit confused. They come over and go, "So sorry, what are you repairing?". And there was one suggestion that perhaps we should change it from a take-apart table to a repair table for the children. For me there's already repair tables for the children, because all the other repair tables are for children as well as adults. In fact, I'm making an assumption that it's only for children to take things apart. Yesterday, the main person who was taking things apart at closing time was a grown man! (Viv)

Viv's consideration and incorporation of children at the repair café questions the assumptions that children do not repair. Perhaps unexpectedly, the take it apart table also raises the question of the role 'take it apart' has for people of all ages. What the take it apart table revealed to me is that taking things apart is the key intervention of repair. What the children were doing at the table was much more than a child-friendly activity to partake in at the repair café while adults engaged with the 'true' repair. Diagnosing an item through taking it apart, through discovering how each piece plays a role in the function of the item and in salvaging parts, is at the core of repair labour. Although taking things apart at the take it apart table would always lead to the recycling and disposal of these materials, what the table enabled is an opportunity to discover the parts of an unrepairable object in their entirety, to take the opportunity to unveil, look, and touch what is on the inside. Learning about repair is not only found in the act of completing a repair, but in the discoveries in the process of taking things apart. Viv provides an offering for people to engage in acts of repair that are as hands on as the other repairers in the room. Watching other people who were vastly more skilled at repairing items than I was at the Richmond repair café brought me closer to a sense of what it takes to repair. Sitting at the take it apart table with Viv and watching as each component of an item was dislodged and pulled out, brought me even closer. Perhaps more people, young and old, ought to sit down and take things apart.

> *A hand reaches inside the bag and searches to find my handle. Anna pulls me out of the bag and places me on my base at our kitchen counter. She inserts my plug into the wall socket and flicks the switch. Electricity is available to me once again. Anna picks me up and fills me with water from the kitchen tap. She places me down gently, ready for tomorrow morning's cup of coffee.*

The next morning, Lily makes her way into the kitchen, walking in a zig zag. Her parents are still asleep. Her hair is matted to one side of her head, and she aggressively rubs her eyes. Orienting herself, she notices I am back in my spot on the kitchen counter. She hurries over and reaches across the counter to push down on my switch. She notices my red light has turned on. Her eyes widen, her mouth smiles. The water inside me starts to bubble.

4.4 Making a Different Choice

In this section, I will discuss repairers' reflections on how their participation at the repair café has impacted their relationship with objects and consumption. These experiences can help us to think about how circular economies may be enacted. A significant part of the experiences of the repair café is not only to look at and touch objects in new or different ways but to feel differently about them. As Viv explains below, time spent sitting with 'a thousand things' at the repair café can produce important feelings for shifting participants relationship to objects:

> Repair is the opposite of shopping. I think shopping feeds quite a big human appetite. I think primally we are primed to find it quite exhilarating when we get something in. And I think that's a big appetite to overcome. But I think the repair café gives us a little thrill that is what we often get from shopping, but it's a different kind of thrill. There are people for whom repair is economic, a huge help, and there are people who say, "I don't want to throw this expensive thing away". It's driven from different places. But it seems to be just as primally delightful for everybody in the room. I think part of why it is so great is the emotion it gives you. I mean, it's only an ironing board, what the heck, but it's an alternative to that negative "we've blown it, all humans are awful, we've lost the planet". It's a different space to stand in. It's going "well at least I've fixed my ironing board!".

> People who come to Repair Café could just as easily drop that broken thing in the bin and go down to [store name] and buy another one made by a slave. But they choose not to, they do something more sophisticated, and they engage with how that thing works and how it might be fixed and they go, "well maybe there's something smarter we can do".

Viv captures a delight that is not only found in performing repair but being a part of the repair café overall. Gerda Roelvink (2020a) discusses how the role of affect, experienced as emotions, can create strong attachments that can shift economic subjectivities. As Viv notes, the thrill and delight of the repair café provides a different source of emotion that may help to replace the thrill of consuming and create strong attachments to the practice of repair. In facing the very existential environmental crises, finding 'a different space to stand in' to take action in fixing an item creates a sense of agency that many people do not feel they have. The feeling that comes from repair, whether performing the repair labour or not, is different to disposing the ironing board and repurchasing a new one. Viv highlights how there are multiple benefits in having access to repair knowledge and repair skills that go beyond an individual's fixed item, such as this sense of agency and hope.

Similarly, Imogen reflects on her consideration for repairability in what she buys and the implications these decisions have on the way she consumes:

> In her book, Sandra Goldmark has a phrase she uses: "have good stuff, not too much, mostly reclaimed. Care for it, pass it on". I think this sums it up pretty nicely. Using socks as an example, now I'm only buying socks that are of good quality, ones that, when the time comes, will be easy to darn. Like second hand woollen socks or hand knitted ones at a market. I'm also trying not to be too upset when old, shitty, thin socks from [brand] get holes I can't repair, because the sock was poor quality to start with. One day my drawers will be filled with socks I love and can repair… and will want to repair. So I'll have a different relationship to that drawer of socks than my current one. Which is currently frustration at socks that aren't of good enough quality to repair. The same could be applied to all stuff, although other stuff might be easier to pass on than socks!

Imogen's quote provides an insight to part of her process in cultivating a repair mindset. Imogen is asking herself: what will I do if this breaks? Having this step as part of the process of interacting and buying 'stuff' brings repair into focus. To begin asking ourselves: is this repairable? Can I easily get spare parts for this? Will the manufacturer take responsibility if this breaks in the next 50 years? Has the manufacturer taken responsibility to ensure it is repairable in the first place? This

matters not just for environmental reasons but also connects to the ways we encounter others through commodity markets, especially those who are far away across the world. The authors of *Take Back the Economy* (2013) use the term 'distant others' to capture the often-vast numbers of people involved in the production and sale of commodities (Gibson-Graham, et al., 2013). They prompt us to consider how we encounter others through what we purchase as many of the goods and services we acquire happen through 'the market' which can easily disguise the true nature of these encounters (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013). Not only are consumers often separated from the lands from which these items are coming from, they are also often separated from the people involved in production and the conditions of their lives (Goburdhone & Dombroski, 2023). The items that are brought into the repair café are made by multiple people who are part of complicated supply chains. Participating at the repair café has helped some repair café visitors to think about how the items they buy are implicated in wider networks of manufacturing. However, for others visiting the repair café, repairing what they own is less about consideration for distant others but a direct response to their need for their item to function. These different motivations draw different kinds of people to access the repair café.

4.4.1 Accessing Repair

Repair cafés are often framed as an act of sustainability and 'helping the environment'. While this is true for some people engaged in repair cafés, bringing an item to a repair café is driven by a range of motivations. Significantly, repair makes economic sense. Viv explains:

> We get the wealthy people and they're welcome and they're great, but we also get the person who was given some pyjamas and they don't know how to take them up. They've cut them with scissors and they're all wonky and these are their warm pyjamas and we can help. And they're so pleased. And it means they've literally got a pair of warm pyjamas. And total dignity, because they're there next to the person doing the nice thing. It is very inclusive in that way. And there's no charge. That's what people love about it. And it's really important that it is free. If they were to start paying us or charging people, I wouldn't want to do it. I like that it's an alternative economy.

Repair cafés are not a matter of one socioeconomic group providing a service for another. Repair cafés are made of a mix of people who have different financial circumstances, giving their time and skills to others who also have different financial circumstances. Viv points out that coming to the repair café out of economic need is dignified because of the relational underpinnings of the repair café. There is a shared collective care around the ability to repair objects at the repair café, rather than a focus on 'need'. Regardless of the reason that an item needs to be repaired, the focus is on how a solution can be found and how this can be done in collaboration. This makes the concentration of volunteer skills and knowledge accessible to a wide range of people. However, Zac highlights a significant disadvantage in the lack of repairable items:

> There is a demand for repair in some areas and with some people, but there's also the lack of knowledge that it's even possible. We've become so complacent with the fact that things are single use or only last a couple years. When you're part of that socio economic group that can only afford the ten-dollar kettle from [brand] or whatever it is, if you keep buying that and you realise that every year I'm having to replace my kettle, that group ends up actually paying as much, if not more, than the people that can afford the good kettle that's going to last them a lifetime.

What Zac is describing are some of the impacts that the quality of manufacturing and repair have on different socioeconomic groups. The repairability of items is significant to those in low-income groups, and therefore accessible repair, such as the free repair of repair cafés, is an important service. Free repair services allow for people to have everyday items that they rely on repaired, without having to invest money into the repair. Repair cafés also often bring people into contact with knowledgeable repairers who can advise which kinds of appliances are most reliable or most easily repairable. This information is important for everyone to know but is particularly useful for those with less resources (e.g. time for research, money). This highlights the value of repair services, free and professional, for supporting forms of circular economies. As Hobson et al. (2021) and Lindsay et al. (2024) point out, the ability to engage in sustainable practices is dependent on access to specific resources. Both designing repairable products and building supportive social infrastructures are critical to repair economies.

Furthermore, Viv has also highlighted the importance of repair cafés being free to access and that the exchanges taking place at the repair café are part of an 'alternative economy'. The volunteer repairers that I interviewed felt that a dedicated coordinator should be paid for their time, but repairers wanted to volunteer their time and labour to give back to others. In reflecting on what changes may occur from paying repairers for their time, many felt that paid repairs came with a potential pressure to do a job worth being paid for and that repairing for payment might change the experimental and welcoming approach of repairing. Alan also reflects on this:

> I would consider the whole repair café thing to be completely voluntary. Koha is great, but it shouldn't be demanded. I like to think that the volunteers at a repair café have done someone a favour and I'm hoping that person will then do a favour for someone else. I think I've seen people donating food as well? So we don't have to have it part of the monetary economy. There's no reason for us to be part of the monetary economy.
>
> What we have to consider is people are giving their time and the time is valuable. Here at Eco-tech Services (Alan's business) we have to make so much money every hour in order to keep the lights on and pay the bills and pay the wages. But we don't have that at the Repair cafés. We don't need that money because it's all volunteer driven and donations of equipment and time.

Collectivising repair labour creates a freedom from requiring funding to run the repair café. Alan also notes how there are other ways that those who benefit from the services of the repair café can show appreciation in gifting food and passing on a favour. However, there is still value in paid repair services and important changes to be made in making paid repair accessible and affordable both for those who want to use paid repair services and for the repair businesses themselves. As Alan explained to me, there are very few local repairers, because most appliances are too expensive to repair. The importance of paid repair services is reflected in the way repairers at the repair café refer visitors to local repair businesses to seek specific help. Zac reflects on both forms of repair:

> The concept of a repair café was started in the Netherlands with an unspoken assumption that it's a voluntary event. And there is a role for all forms of repair. Repair cafés that rely

> on volunteers but also space for paid repair through higher quality, paid to repair services. It needs to be accessible to people that can't afford or would not throw down money to fix the $10 kettle.
>
> Obviously there's limitations in these events. If someone brings in a lamp and we need to fix the wiring, that's very easy. If someone brings in a pair of noise cancelling headphones and they need to be micro-soldered that's a whole other story and maybe in that situation if someone can afford noise cancelling headphones then they can also afford the costs to have those repaired. I think we need all of the options. So that it's accessible but also that it does validate the role of the repairer as a necessary job.

As repairers gift their time and labour, they make repair accessible, especially for those who need it most. At the same time, repairers can be seen investing in a future of repair through their commitment to sharing their skills and knowledge of repair with others. Repair café volunteers also discuss ways to improve and expand on the project, and this has included a vision of what a repair culture could look like for the city more broadly.

4.4.2 The Future of Repair

When talking to repairers about the future of repair cafés in Ōtautahi, two different perspectives emerged. First, Zac describes his vision of a repair future:

> Within each suburb of Ōtautahi there is a self-sustaining repair café and that each one of them is different from the next and that they run whenever they see fit or needed to run. Operating however best suits their community. That there's not anyone who is surprised about the event, that it becomes a natural and integrated part of our day-to-day. I think diversity is key in a flexible and resilient structure. Community gardens are a good example. Some are completely open, some are subscription or membership based, some are allotments. And maybe the best future for repair is having open volunteer-based community events as well as businesses charging fees. They all cater to different people with different needs.

For Zac, repair in the form of repair cafés or as paid repair services, becomes an ordinary and integrated part of daily life. Zac also notes how diverse forms of repair increases the accessibility of repair overall and imagines a network of repair infrastructure. However, for Alan, repair cafés represent a temporary measure in striving for a repair-future:

> I think in an ideal world, we shouldn't have to have repair cafés. Although it's really great, I consider it to be more of a stopgap measure between now where there's a lot of products that are not repaired because it's too expensive and so volunteers are doing it, and some point in the future where products will be worth repairing. Instead of something cheaply manufactured that fails prematurely and people take it to repair café, the product will be something that is long-lived.

Zac and Alan highlight two of the major goals of the repair movement. On the one hand, it is about creating repair spaces, which as Zac describes, are important assets for communities to support a broad repair culture. Part of creating repair spaces is about fostering repair as a skill that is available to everyone, where the act of repair is not limited to professional repairers but can become a part of anyone's skill set to fix their own belongings. On the other hand, it is about demanding greater responsibility from manufacturers so repairs are needed less often and can be achieved with greater durability. As Alan explains, volunteers are currently putting effort into repairing items that have been built poorly to begin with. Manufacturers could be doing much more to ensure products do not break down so often in the first place, do not require being repaired as often, and when they do need repair, can be fixed easily and will last a long time. Casting back to the American farmers who could not repair their own tractors (p. 103), there is a large interest in making repair information available to the owners of products. Zac highlights this:

> I think repair cafés are one of the examples of taking back commons and taking back our rights over things. I think people have been taught that if the government says we can do things then we can but I think that we always need to be trying to take back what is rightfully ours, and that knowledge over the things that we use, that doesn't belong to the producer, the manufacturer, it should belong to us.

Part of the right to repair is demanding the right to be able to fix what you own (Austin et al., 2022; Pritchett et al., 2022) whether that is through seeking out an independent repairer, repairing the item yourself or through in-house repairs. To make these options possible, manufacturers need to be transparent about how to repair their items. Ōtautahi Repair Revolution make it clear that repair knowledge is an important source of sufficiency, environmentally and economically, that deserves to be known, not kept within the control of manufacturers. As it states on their introduction poster, for Ōtautahi Repair Revolution, "if you can't fix it, you don't own it". To truly 'own', or in other words, to take care of an item, requires knowing how to repair it.

Manufacturers will need to make some big changes in order to make this repair future possible. To do this successfully, businesses will need to produce high quality, repairable products. Manufacturers and retailers will need to pay attention to how long their items are lasting and invest in support services for customers beyond a two-year warranty. However, bringing repair into the centre of manufacturing goes against the goal of perpetual profit. How can businesses last in a repair-savvy manufacturing climate? Alan and I talked about the tensions and contradictions between 'successful business' and repair, he explains:

> If you were a company operating right now and you made something that was long-lived and repairable, you'd go out of business because you've made all the products, everybody got them, and the market is now gone. They don't need anything else. There was a company making keyboards that were repairable, and they even supplied a tool to take the keys off. They're no longer in business because China churned them out by the millions.

Alan describes how markets can evaporate when a product is repairable, creating a clear tension between repairability and profit. Innovation is a cornerstone of business practice and technological change is often pursued to expand markets (Sayudin et al., 2023). Many technological changes improve the overall function and quality of products. However, these 'innovations' can become a strategy to simply increase sales, as seen in the trend of planned obsolescence (Bisschop et al., 2022). As I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, many products are being manufactured faster and cheaper and are designed to have a short lifetime while also being marketed in strategic ways

to produce new consumer desires (Bisschop et al., 2022). But as Alan assures me, this is a choice that can be made differently:

> There's no reason why a lamp can't last forever. There's a whole lot of items where the technology hasn't changed to make it redundant. We don't need a microwave oven that's got flashy lights and all the rest of it. The bare basics of two knobs is quite fine. But okay, if you're going to buy a fancy micro-oven, it should be repairable.

Design is an important part of product development and aesthetic value does impact consumers purchasing choices (Shi et al., 2021; Van Geert & Wagemans, 2020). But as Alan argues, ensuring items are repairable should be a bare minimum. As the speed of product development has quickened, contact with high-quality products has decreased dramatically (Bakker et al., 2014; Bisschop et al., 2022). However, many of the carefully crafted objects *have* lasted 40, 60, 80 years and when they enter repair cafés, they act as reminders of the possibilities of making something that lasts. More importantly, the people whose hands carry these items into the cafés tell many stories of their experience of these long-lasting items. Luckily, many of the repairers of Ōtautahi Repair Revolution also have insights of how manufacturers used to make items, what materials have been swapped and changed over time, as well as changed manufacturing techniques. These repairers know what is possible from their experience with older models and some understand the impact of changes to manufacturing policy. These stories are often shared at the repair café. For example, Mike recounts:

> We bought a washing machine and it only lasted seven years. We went in to buy another one and the guy in the shops said "Oh, you've done well!" and I was seething. My generation and my parents' generation, they bought things that lasted, or they were given things for their wedding that lasted 20 or 30 years. A jug or a toaster or something. Things don't last that long anymore.

Many business approaches to circular economies focus on whether consumer behaviour will meet environmental goals and if this can be done while maintaining a customer base (Hobson & Lynch, 2016; Savini, 2023). For example, relying on consumers to implement post-production waste

solutions like recycling or composting (Savini, 2023). What Alan is asking is how can *businesses* move towards a different production model. How can they experiment with different kinds of manufacturing and marketing models that are based on the integrity and longevity of their products. Luckily, there are manufacturers eager to increase the longevity of their products, such as the Fair Phone (p. 120) and manufacturers who are eager to shift beyond business as usual as seen in Gibson-Graham et al. (2019) investigation on manufacturers in Australia. For Ōtautahi Repair Revolution, the future of repair requires both expanding the kinds of repair infrastructure available to all people in all places and the demand for better quality *stuff*.

4.5 A Repair Knowledge Commons

Through my fieldwork with Ōtautahi Repair Revolution, I see their collective effort to repair as a form of commoning that is creating and caring for a repair knowledge commons. To create a repair knowledge commons, they have gathered and shared information (manuals, repair books, repairers advice), materials (the cupboard of tools, repairers' personal tools), and skills (people to demonstrate, teach and supervise). They care for this commons collectively through their ongoing labour at the repair café. I identify this as an urban commons as defined by Huron (2015). Drawing on Gibson-Graham, Cameron and Healy's (2013) definition, the commons are a property, practice or knowledge, in which:

- Access is shared and wide
- Use is negotiated by a community
- Benefit is widely distributed to community members (and beyond)
- Care is performed by community members
- Responsibility is assumed by community members.
- The formal or legal ownership of the commons can take any form (p. 135)

For Ōtautahi Repair Revolution this involves sharing access, use, benefit, care, and responsibility of a repair knowledge commons. For example, access of the repair knowledge commons is enabled by the koha system that allows anyone to come in and use the service. Use of the repair knowledge commons is negotiated by Ōtautahi Repair Revolution who have fostered a culture guided by their

8 principles. Importantly, the use of the repair café is not based on a drop-off system and is instead an opportunity to build relationships between repairers and visitors. Benefits of the repair knowledge commons are shared and include having items repaired and in use again, gaining a sense of agency to take action to care for items rather than dispose of them and cause a negative environmental impact, and to be able to use a free repair service without paying a hefty cost. Care of the repair knowledge commons is performed by repairers who research more about new techniques and items and gather new resources and materials that are shared with others, by the Ecohub that hosts the physical resources, and by outsiders to the repair café who provide up to date repair information online. Responsibility of the repair knowledge commons is assumed by the volunteer repairers who continue to participate alongside supporting organisations such as Repair Cafe Aotearoa New Zealand. Key to a commons is the community relationships that sustain it (Dombroski et al., 2023). As Gibson-Graham (2006) argue, a commoning community is created out of 'doing' together. At the repair café, repairing collectively and caring for repair knowledge brings a community into being. My understanding of this repair knowledge commons is summarized in Table 6.

Table 6

Repair Knowledge Commons Identi-Kit - 'Resource Layer'

Commons Identi-Kit for the Repair Knowledge Commons					
Access	**Use**	**Benefit**	**Care**	**Responsibility**	**Property**
Shared and wide	*Negotiated by a community*	*Widely distributed to community members (and beyond)*	*Performed by community members*	*Assumed by community members*	*Any form of ownership (private, state, or open access)*
Open to all repair café visitors	Use shaped by Ōtautahi Repair Revolution's 8 principles	Volunteer repairers Visitors Environment Advocacy efforts for changes in repair legislation	Ōtautahi Repair Revolution volunteers Ecohub Those who provide free and up to date repair information online Funders and koha	Ōtautahi Repair Revolution volunteers Repair Cafe Aotearoa New Zealand	Open access repair information (online, in library books) Collectively owned tools Privately owned tools available for use/shared from repairers Individuals embodied knowledge/ skills

Adapted from Gibson-Graham et al. (2013)

In my analysis, I have categorised the repair knowledge commons as a 'resource layer' of commoning. However, this is not to limit my understanding of commons to be mere 'resources'

or property (Brandtner et al., 2023; Wagenaar & Bartels, 2024). This initial layer of commoning is still dynamic and relational. However, I make the distinction between a 'resource layer' and a 'deeper layer' of commoning to differentiate the repair knowledge commons with a cultivation of a repair sensibility. Through my fieldwork with Ōtautahi Repair Revolution (as well as with other repair events), I saw their collective care for a repair knowledge commons as part of a cultivation of a repair sensibility, whereby a broader repair culture is also being created and cared for. Not only was the collective creating and caring for repair knowledge, but they were also increasing their capacities to intervene in the breakdown of items and to perform repair, developing a repair sensibility and forming a culture of repair. This 'deeper' layer of a repair sensibility is summarised in Table 7.

Table 7

Repair Sensibility Identi-Kit - 'Deeper Layer'

Commons Identi-Kit for a Repair Sensibility					
Access	**Use**	**Benefit**	**Care**	**Responsibility**	**Property**
Shared and wide	*Negotiated by a community*	*Widely distributed to community members (and beyond)*	*Performed by community members*	*Assumed by community members*	*Any form of ownership (private, state, or open access)*
Open to all	Any repairer	Anyone	All participants of repair Wider repair community	All participants of repair	Intangible

Adapted from Gibson-Graham et al. (2013)

This ‘deeper layer’ of commoning is not a tangible ‘thing’ being commoned like the repair knowledge that repairers draw on at the repair café. Instead, it is a repair sensibility. Many scholars have discussed the impact of commoning as an active process that can foster different kinds of subjectivities (Bollier, 2014; Dombroski et al., 2023; Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy, 2016; Roelvink, 2020a; Singh, 2017; Stavrides, 2012). This ‘deeper layer’ of commoning captures the affects of commoning that hold important potential for shifting subjectivities. I have called this a ‘deeper’ layer not because it is deeper in some sort of hierarchy of importance but because it cannot be seen in the same way the repair knowledge commons can be seen or interacted with. The deeper layer is hidden from sight and needs to be surfaced. These two layers of commoning are interconnected and ultimately inseparable but labelling them this way helps me to identify two important aspects that are active in the processes of commoning. These aspects include the material resources of commons that help commoners to reproduce life and the affective dynamics of commons that can influence shifts in subjectivities. I argue that the deeper layer of commoning a repair sensibility at the repair cafe holds important implications for transforming subjectivities, whereby a repair subjectivity is able to be cultivated. This deeper layer of commoning is important because of its contributions to repairing the brokenness of production and consumption. I will discuss this deeper layer of commoning in detail in Chapter Six.

4.6 Conclusion: Commoning Knowledge

In this chapter, I have explored the ways that one group of people, Ōtautahi Repair Revolution, are trying to address the problems of production and consumption in an Anglosphere context. I did this through describing a typical night at the repair café and by reflecting on some of the broader dynamics of repair cafés. By the end of the chapter, I argue that Ōtautahi Repair Revolution are commoning repair knowledge. I argue that they have created a repair knowledge commons and I use the commons identi-kit (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013) as a framework to demonstrate this. I have identified how use is negotiated, how benefits are distributed, how care is performed, and how responsibility is assumed. I also argue that there is a second, ‘deeper layer’ of commoning taking place. This deeper layer of commoning is of a repair sensibility. I will return to this deeper layer of commoning in Chapter Six. My first research question asks what factors have enabled a commons to emerge in post-quake Christchurch? What this chapter has highlighted is that

commoning at the repair café requires space, time, and care. In Chapter Six, I will elaborate on the role of space, time and care as conditions for commoning. So far, I have thought about ways of connecting to objects, working together to repair objects and commoning repair knowledge. In the next chapter, I begin to think about the way one group have responded to the problems of exploitation and alienation in work in the Anglosphere through connecting to their bodies and to others' bodies and in collectivising the care of bodies. To do so, I journey through a week at The Understorey.

Chapter Five: Resisting Productivity

I bike through the central city. Arriving at Welles Street, I brake and swing my leg over as I step off my bike and lean it on a post to lock it up for the day. I cross the street and enter The Welder. As the automatic doors slowly slide open, the smell of pastries and coffee waft towards me. I walk past the baked goods and into the heart of the repurposed industrial building known as The Welder. I can see bar tables and stools, couches and pot plants and business people sitting together in small meetings, eating and typing on their laptops.

Entering the large room that is the Understorey I hear the sounds of fingers gently typing on keys and hushed conversations. The sounds of chiming dishes and hissing coffee machines fade out as I close the door behind me and enter the comfortable quiet. I walk past a volunteer sitting at the front desk and settle my belongings on the floor at the foot of a large wooden table. Sitting at the table, plants are always at eye level. A large monstera leaf towers over my laptop. I can smell the plants, their soil and moisture. I spy little black bugs zooming around, sometimes landing on my laptop. The array of lamps dispersed around the room makes the space feel cozy.

Someone asks if they can make me a cup of tea which I happily accept. Two people are taking zoom calls. One person is playing with a set of beads they place on a tray, ordering and reordering the beads as they work. One Understorey member is propagating plants at the propagation station. The plant cuttings sit in test tubes and are kept warm under fluorescent purple grow lights. People are wearing headphones as they work, bobbing along to their tunes. At morning teatime a barista brings in the daily coffee order to the regulars.

It starts raining at 2:50pm. The rain splatters hard and loud on the tin roof. It drowns out the instrumental music that always plays in the background. With all

of the plants around and the volume of the rain it feels like being sheltered in a rain forest. I think about my bike rested outside, likely now slick with rain. When I leave the Understorey, I open the door and let in the hubbub of The Welder and quickly shut the quiet in behind me.

The places where people perform their paid work in the Anglosphere expands far beyond traditional offices (Mitchell et al., 2003). However, offices and similar workspaces (libraries, creative hubs) are still significant resources for workers (Di Marino et al., 2023). For self-employed and creative industry workers, their work is often a combination of temporary projects and contracts, and their workplace is often made of multiple spaces, making them used to a more flexible work life (Schmidt, 2024). This flexibility is often praised, but for many it can be lonely and insecure (Worth, 2024). In recent years, anxiety, stress, fatigue and burnout are some of the significant mental health issues reported by non-self-employed workers from a variety of sectors and these mental health issues have been linked in part to isolating work conditions (Worksafe, n.d., 2021). Therefore, isolating work conditions are an increasingly shared experience for workers in the Anglosphere across the board. Shared workspaces have been suggested as a way to overcome issues of isolation and create the opportunity for meaningful connections between workers, particularly for self-employed and creative workers (Spinuzzi et al., 2019). This chapter is about people engaged in coworking at a coworking space and how working and caring together changes their relationship to work and creates a community of commoners.

In Chapter Two, I argued that there are two key problems with work in the Anglosphere. The first problem with work is the material problems of production and consumption, which I have explored in Chapter Four through the field site of Ōtautahi Repair Revolution. The second problem with work is the relational problems of exploitation and alienation. In this chapter I focus on how one collective, the Understorey, is responding to the issues of exploitation and alienation through collective care labour. The purpose of this chapter is to explore what this collective can teach us about healing the brokenness of work in the Anglosphere and how a commons is formed and maintained.

This chapter begins by looking back at the rupture caused by the Canterbury earthquakes in 2010 and 2011 and one of the community organisations that was born from the earthquake response. This organisation, The Green Lab, later created the Understorey coworking space. I reflect on the way shared workspaces have become a significant part of work life in the Anglosphere, particularly for creative workers, and trace the iterations of the Understorey project. I then explore a week working at the Understorey and the perspectives of Understorey members on the impact the space has on them as well as the decision to close the coworking space. This chapter explores how members of the Understorey are engaging in collective labour that enables them to create an accessible and inclusive coworking space. I argue that they have formed a workspace commons and in doing so, have created a commoner community. This is summarised through two commons identi-kit tables at the end of the chapter. The rupture of the Canterbury earthquakes left a lasting impact on the surface of the city, but what arose from the rubble was a hopeful and experimental social landscape.

5.1 Turned to Rubble

The Canterbury earthquake on the 4th of September 2010 was the beginning of a sequence of earthquakes that reshaped the physical landscape and social fabric of Christchurch city. Following the initial magnitude 7.1 earthquake that hit the Canterbury region in 2010, a shallow 6.3 magnitude earthquake struck in 2011 (Cloke et al., 2023). This 2011 quake was within 10km of central Christchurch city and hit during a workday, resulting in mass destruction of the city's infrastructure as well as significant injuries and 185 deaths (Brand & Nicholson, 2016). One hundred thousand buildings were damaged with 10,000 buildings needing to be demolished (Brand & Nicholson, 2016). Eighty percent of the central city buildings were removed and over 90% of greater Christchurch housing was damaged by the Canterbury earthquake sequence (Bennett et al., 2012). While 65,000 people moved away from Christchurch, thousands of migrant workers arrived in Christchurch on special rebuild visas (Collins & Friesen, 2022; McDonald, 2018). In 2013, one in eight paid workers in Christchurch were working in the construction industry, responding largely to the major loss of infrastructure (Pickles, 2016). The earthquakes also caused significant disruption to people's lives. School children experienced heightened emotional distress and showcased post-traumatic symptoms (Liberty et al., 2016), many people faced high levels of stress

related to land zoning and insurance company negotiations surrounding loss of personal property and housing as well as forced relocation (Morgan et al., 2015). People also experienced distress caused by the ongoing aftershocks and living in a vastly damaged environment (Cloke et al., 2023).

As the city was largely pulled down, space both in the inner city and in the surrounding residential areas became empty. During this time of demolition and reconstruction in the city, several place-making community projects emerged (Cloke et al., 2023; Dombroski et al., 2019; Dombroski et al., 2023). These projects took shape in many different forms and communities used the newly vacant spaces in a variety of ways (Carlton & Vallance, 2013, 2017). Many of the projects were creative and experimental and were significant in the recovery of the earthquakes (Vallance et al., 2019). Ōtautahi had become home to a multitude of community organisations who were curiously experimenting with different ways of living, sharing, and being together (Dombroski et al., 2023). As I discussed in Chapter One, scholars such as Cloke and Conradson (2018), Cretney (2019) and Dombroski (2024b) have made links to the way the earthquake disaster created the affective space for such projects to emerge and highlight their influence in shaping the future of the city. An important component of these post-quake organisations is that they existed within a transitional city where projects would emerge and disappear. The temporary nature of many of the projects was familiar to residents living in a rapidly changed and changing cityscape. Greening the Rubble was one of the organisations to emerge after the 2010 earthquake and became what is now known as 'The Green Lab'. The next section will explore The Green Lab's beginnings and projects.

5.2 The Green Lab

The Green Lab emerged following the Canterbury earthquake in 2010 as 'Greening the Rubble', a volunteer driven, not-for-profit organisation that created temporary landscaping projects in the city. Greening the Rubble emerged alongside two other core groups in reaction to the earthquake, Gapfiller: a social enterprise who design creative, experimental civic installations (see Dombroski et al., 2019); and Life in Vacant Spaces: a charitable trust that brokers spaces between owners of vacant land and buildings with creative projects, community groups and social enterprises (see Dombroski et al., 2025). With 80% of the city's central buildings destroyed and removed from the second major earthquake in 2011, this significant loss left a lot of gaps and a lot of grey in the city

(Bennett et al., 2012; Brand & Nicholson, 2016). The three groups started with a similar goal: fill gaps, have life in vacant spaces, and green the rubble. One Understorey member, Hayley, spoke to me about the impact of urban greening on her experience of the post-quake city:

> One of the hardest things for me after the earthquake was just this vast devastation everywhere and so the first signs of hope really were little greening pop-up things, things would just come on a corner site. There'd be like a little picnic chair and a garden box and a coffee cart would turn up. It was just little things like that and then it just grew and grew and all these little things started popping up around the city and then the buildings started to come and then the people started to come. I think that the work that was done at the beginning was really important for people to feel like there was going to be a way out of it.

Some installations were very temporary, and others stayed longer, such as the container mall in the central city, an outdoor shopping centre made of shipping containers. Greening the Rubble became a registered charitable trust in 2013. Since then, the nature of their work changed with the city's evolving needs, from temporary greening of the rubble in response to the disaster, they started to create green spaces for regenerating residential communities. In 2019 Greening the Rubble rebranded as *The Green Lab*. Part of their regeneration projects include working with communities to co-create spaces that support connection and wellbeing. One of these spaces was the Understorey, a community coworking, collaboration and events space. The Understorey was created in 2021 to "test ways of sharing space, and (. . .) to support a flourishing, wellbeing-focused economy" (The Green Lab, n.d.b.). A significant feature of the Understorey was the many plants adorning the walls, shelves and desks as The Green Lab continued with their urban greening aims through creating an indoor green space for people to work in. The Green Lab created the Understorey with creatives, change organisations, community groups, small businesses, and entrepreneurs in mind (The Green Lab, n.d.b.). They were also aware of the need for safe spaces in the city for Māori and Queer communities.

Although New Zealand has become increasingly more multicultural (Stats NZ, 2024b) Christchurch has a long-standing reputation for its conservativism, including reports of racism and homophobia (Madden-Smith, 2023; Ross et al., 2022). Young adults in the city have reported their

anxieties of being queer in the city (Ross et al., 2022). Students from a local all-boys high school have recently created a queer-straight alliance group to respond to the homophobia and sexism in their school culture (McCallum, 2021) and students from a local all-girls high school protested against the high level of sexual harassment and assault they have experienced living in Christchurch (O'Callaghan, 2021). This context is part of what shaped The Green Lab's goal to create an inclusive space in the city through the Understorey.

What drew me to the Understorey was its role as a coworking space. The purpose of a coworking space is to provide workspace for workers who do not have traditional workspace infrastructure (self-employed, contract workers, small businesses) (Gerdenitsch et al., 2016; Spinuzzi et al., 2019). The origins of formalised coworking spaces are traced back to the early 2000s in countries like the United States, Canada and Switzerland (Merkel et al., 2023; Rus & Orel, 2015; Spinuzzi et al., 2019). Coworking spaces began as small community-led spaces that were focused on "dismantling loneliness and (. . .) collaboration over competition" (Merkel et al., 2023, p. 223). The coworking movement has since become more commercialised through brands like WeWork and Google in the creation of a coworking industry but a diverse range of coworking spaces exist around the world (Merkel et al., 2023). Coworking spaces range from hot-desking to personal hire offices and vary in their formality (Spinuzzi et al., 2019). As paid work has become more mobile and for many increasingly more isolated, coworking spaces are an important resource for a well-connected work life (Spinuzzi et al., 2019; Worth, 2024). In New Zealand, coworking spaces first appeared in 2009, and in 2022 over 70 coworking spaces are in the main cities of Auckland, Christchurch and Wellington (Methorst, 2023).

Coworking has become an important resource for creative workers, including in Christchurch. Creative industry jobs are largely precarious and require building livelihoods from multiple sources (Brydges, 2024). Creative work is often project-based and working contracts are often short term with a large amount of freelance work and other forms of self-employment (Schmidt, 2024). Therefore, creative workers often work across organisations, projects and locations and often require high amounts of mobility and their multiple locations of work can be a combination of many online and offline spaces. As creative work often involves flexible working structures, creative workers seek flexibility in their workplaces. Collaborative workspaces like coworking

spaces can create places to build community and support for creative working practices (Schmidt, 2024). However, collaborative workspaces can also be exclusionary "based on gender, age or association with particular creative communities" (Schmidt, 2024, p. 212). Although this can be a purposeful curation, Virani and Gill (2019) highlight the "way that 'curation' becomes a site of tacit and unaccountable decisions about who belongs in a creative hub, with the risk of heightening inequalities along lines of gender, race and class (and also age and disability)" (p. 151). As Brydges (2024) explains, the creative worker is commonly theorised in much research as white, male, middle-class, and urban. Brydges (2024) calls for researchers to account for the diversity of experiences of labour within creative industries and the creative economy.

The Green Lab understood that the way people work and connect with each other had been changing since the COVID-19 pandemic and they designed the Understorey to encourage collaboration and support between workers (Brydges, 2024). Working in the Understorey space involves hot desking, where desks are not assigned to anyone and are used on a first-in-first-served basis. The Understorey coworking space is inspired by an understorey found in a forest and is reflected in its name:

> In a thriving forest ecosystem, the understorey is an interconnected network of plants and organisms that grow in the space between the ground and the canopy. Resources are shared here; plants communicate, test survival strategies, and nurture rich biodiversity. The understorey supports new generations of saplings and makes important contributions to the stability of the ecosystem. Imagining our city as a forest – this space seeks to support the Ōtautahi understorey. (The Green Lab, n.d.c)

The Green Lab's kaupapa seeks to learn from nature, "understanding that plants thrive in complexities of shared resources and transfers and that humans are much the same" (The Green Lab, n.d.b.). The Understorey coworking space is a place for individuals and organisations to connect with one another, acknowledging their place in a broader, shared ecosystem within the city. Similar to the ever-changing nature of understoreys everywhere, the Understorey coworking space has evolved across three iterations as it has moved to different locations within the city. The first Understorey was named Understorey Tuatahi (meaning 'first') and was active between

September 2021 until October 2021 in what was previously a gymnasium within The Arts Centre Te Matatiki Toi Ora, in central Christchurch (see Figure 3). The Green Lab's use of this space was enabled through the Arts Centre providing a large discount in rental cost to support the activation of the project as well as local city council funding which covered the discounted rent (Carlton & Vallance, 2023).

Figure 3

Inside Understorey Tuatahi



Source: The Green Lab, 2021b

Part of the outfitting of the space was through product loans, such as furniture that was gifted for use in the Understorey in exchange for marketing visibility, alongside custom furniture owned by The Green Lab. Understorey Tuatahi was a way to 'test' the project for 6 weeks before it was set to be moved to a new location. The second iteration named Understorey Tuarua (meaning 'second'), began in October 2021 and was active until April 2022. Understorey Tuarua (see Figure 4) was located within The Terrace, a new post-quake building that is home to restaurants, bars, offices and retail stores, located in the central city. The Green Lab's use of this space was enabled through a subsidized rental contract made possible through the charitable trust Life in Vacant

Spaces. Life in Vacant Space own and administer the set-up of buildings for temporary use at free or low cost in the city. The contracts by Life in Vacant Spaces makes space in the city more accessible to organisations who cannot afford the standard rents of the inner city.

It was this iteration of the Understorey that groups like Queer Games Night and Wednesday Writers were established. A strength of this location was the neighbouring fringe theatre Little Andromeda who play a part in the local artist and Queer culture in the city. Understorey Tuarua existed during high levels of COVID-19 cases in New Zealand and the use of the space adapted to match this circumstance but eventually the project was relocated as a new tenant was able to pay full rent for use of the space.

Figure 4

Inside Understorey Tuarua



Source: The Green Lab, n.d.a.

I participated at the third iteration of the Understorey, Understorey Tuatoru (meaning 'third'). Understorey Tuatoru was active between May 2022 until December 2022 and was located within The Welder, a gentrified health and wellbeing complex (see Figure 5). The Welder is home to businesses such as a low waste refillery store, an events space, a wellness centre as well as

restaurants, cafés and bakeries and a main seating space (The Welder, n.d.). The Welder offered a private meeting room with a board table seating eight people to Understory users with nonprofit rates. The use of the space that homed the Understorey was also discounted as the site was brokered by Life In Vacant Spaces which enabled a discounted rent for The Green Lab. Understorey Tuatoru was open 9:30am – 4:30pm Monday to Friday with the option of after-hours access.

Figure 5

Inside Understorey Tuatoru



Source: The Green Lab, n.d.c.

My preliminary fieldwork began in September 2022, four months into Understorey Tuatoru. Across the iterations of the Understorey, coworking members included artists, architects, geospatial engineers, authors, students, entrepreneurs, events producers, and environmental nonprofits among others. The Understorey project was made possible through Christchurch City Council funding and through cross sector support from funders and collaborators (see Carlton & Vallance, 2023). Outside of the Understorey coworking space, The Green Lab continued to pursue other community-focused projects. One of the projects The Green Lab were undertaking during my fieldwork was setting up a community garden, with a wheelchair-accessible layout design, in

the suburb of Mairehau in collaboration with the organisation The Neighbourhood Trust. Another project was their physical 'green lab', a moveable workshop that is about the size of a standard shipping container. This lab is a multi-use building that is moved to activate different sites in the city. Ōtautahi Repair Revolution have even used the Lab as a workshop for some of their repair events when it was stationed at the front of the Riverlution Ecohub.

During Understorey Tuatoru, The Green Lab was a team of nine staff members. This included a director, a communications manager, an accounts and funding coordinator, and a community host among others. The Green Lab's director worked over thirty hours per week, and the other staff members worked part-time and when combined, worked the equivalent of 2.5 full-time employees. These part time work arrangements were made either through choice, due to chronic illness, or through balancing multiple jobs. This enabled work hours that fit staff members circumstances, with consideration for their physical and mental wellbeing.

In what follows, I zoom in on a week in the Understorey. To journey through a week at the Understorey, I follow the perspective of a fictional Understorey member to demonstrate the experience of working at the Understorey. I also draw on the voices of four Understorey members. Molly, an artist and public events planner. Hannah, a filmmaker. Sophie, property manager and events space coordinator at The Welder and Hayley, an architect. To return to the purpose of this chapter, I capture a week in the Understorey in order to understand the ways people are collectivising care labour. By the end of the chapter, I create a commons identi-kit to show how a commons has been formed by coworkers. I explore the possibilities that this collective offer for doing work differently in the Anglosphere and what this can teach us about healing exploitative and alienated work and workplaces.

5.3 A Week in the Understorey

Monday

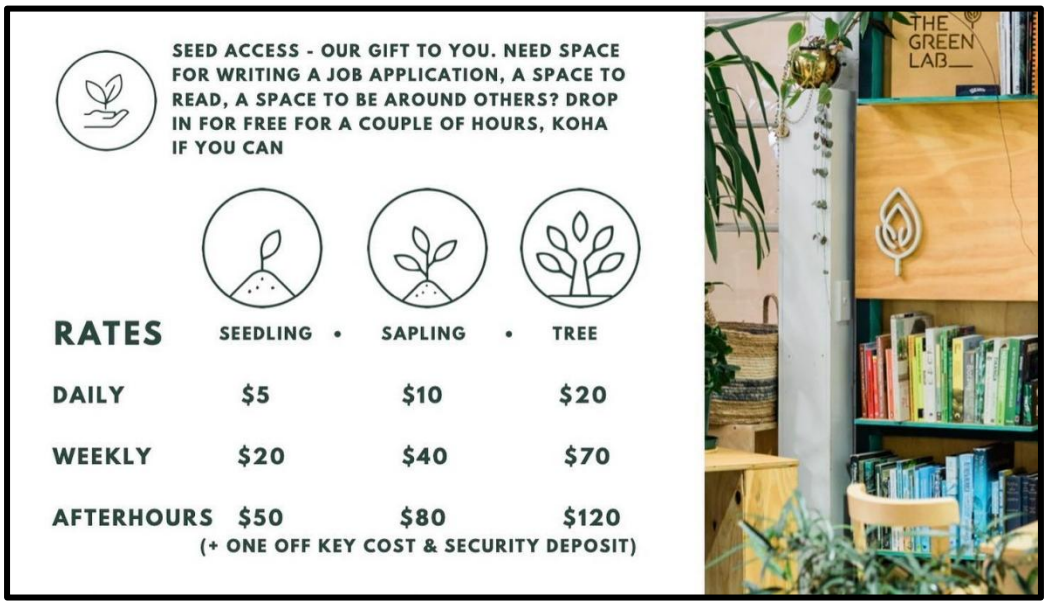
> *People arrive at Understorey Tuatoru to begin their work week. They greet each other and share what has taken place for them since packing up the week before. Soon after, a barista makes a series of visits into the Understorey carrying an*

> *assortment of steaming caffeinated beverages, handing them over to regulars whose orders they have memorized. As more people drip into the Understorey, they sign in and find a seat at one of the large wooden tables. Some people spread out large architectural designs and a range of pens and equipment across the table. Others sit simply with a laptop. Many people wear headphones. One woman is walking around to each of the plants stationed around the room with a small watering can. She touches the leaves, often swiping away dust that has accumulated over the weekend. At the propagation station, rows of test tubes hold spindly plant snipping's that are eagerly sprouting long white roots. The woman picks up each test tube from its holder to hold it up to eye level. At 1 o'clock people congregate on couches. The informal crafting session of 'Monday Makers' is beginning. People scoop out balls of wool from tote bags, lay out a rainbow of coloured pencils, and a stack of dated magazines. Chatter bubbles in the Understorey, complimented by the rhythmic tapping of needles, the swift scribbles of graphite and the sharp cut of paper.*

The concept of the Understorey was to create a space that was in service to the community. Specifically, the Understorey was a space for particular groups in the city. This included not only workers in the city, such as freelancers and artists who lacked workspace but also Queer, Māori and migrant communities in the city too. Building a membership base and user audience for the Understorey was therefore about creating the right kind of space for those communities. One important aspect of this was creating an *accessible* space to work and meet within the city. The accessibility of the Understorey is not merely about physical access to space in the city but also in paying attention to economic and social accessibility. This includes making the Understorey accessible from a financial standpoint but also from an inclusion and social safety perspective. To make the Understorey financially accessible, The Green Lab designed a pay scale to provide manageable and flexible user-rates for their members (see Figure 6).

Figure 6

Understorey Sliding Pay Scale Board



Source: The Green Lab, 2022d

This pay scale is a 'choose what you pay' scale that ranges from free use to pay it forward rates. It is also a sliding scale whereby users can move down or up in the price they pay. The pay scale was implemented to alleviate cost barriers to access workspace in the city and as a structure to allow members to determine their own pay rate through an assessment of their circumstances. The Understorey pay scale involves daily and weekly rates across four tiers:

- Seed, a koha based tier with up to two hours free and give what you can.
- Seedling, an entry tier intended for students, creatives and new startups, or anyone who needs it.
- Sapling, a midrange tier which contributes to the basic cost of keeping the Understorey open.
- Tree, which contributes to the cost of keeping Understorey opened, staffed and supports the seedling tier.

During fieldwork, I paid for my use of the Understorey at a daily tree rate. The Green Lab were initially nervous about the high levels of trust needed to implement the pay scale system but found that people paid within their means. If people could not pay, they would arrange to pay another time or provide volunteering hours to The Green Lab and very rarely did people not pay or contribute at all. As The Green Lab created the Understorey following the outbreak of COVID-19, the flexibility of payment was important to them. This flexibility includes allowing people visiting Christchurch to drop in and use the Understorey on a very short-term basis or for members to pause their payments if they were going away or when the Understorey was closed due to social distancing. Using a sliding scale to manage membership fees meant a wide range of people could access the space and if a member's circumstances were to change, their membership rate could change with them. The Green Lab describe it best:

> We know $5 means different things to different people, and we believe in co-creating community. We've found that those who can pay $10 or $20/day tend to, which supports those paying $5/day. This active choice of price range encourages participation in supporting others where possible, or accepting that support when needed. It's a small gesture of interconnectedness and is in line with our interest in wellbeing economies.
>
> We are a non-profit and our kaupapa is creating green spaces for wellbeing and social connection. We think it's important to have spaces that most folk can access in the central city where they can connect. We also have support from funders who believe in this kaupapa that help keep user costs down. (The Green Lab, 2022c)

It became clear that keeping the space at a 'coffee cost' was key, and a familiar reference point to those who seek workspace in the city. Libraries are the other popular low-cost option for working in the city but can lack the amity and cohesion of a coworking space. The cost of workspace in the city is a problem especially for artists, freelancers, students and startups. The Understorey pricing is therefore informed by the aim to create a low-cost workspace in the city. Payment is understood as a barrier to being in public space and therefore in community generally. Molly reflected on the importance of this attention to cost:

> Having a space that I can host people that's not a café and the fact that I can have a meeting in here and not have to buy four coffees. It's just on a money and affordability level. It's really helpful for my practice. Even that alone makes a huge difference for me because I'm a broke arse artist, I can't be feeling guilty in a café only buying one coffee for six hours. Whereas here you're not guilted if you can only afford koha, it's okay. We'd rather have you here than not and that's so wonderful.

The anonymity of the pay scale encourages an honest evaluation of how much one can pay, including paying less if circumstances have changed, or paying more when it is possible. The pay scale encourages a collectivised contribution towards access, based on the trust that all are contributing within their means. The language of 'saplings', 'seeds', 'trees' used in the pay scale invokes the dynamic layering of an ecosystem that is balanced and supported by each layer. The Understorey would be out of balance if it was made of just tree or seed members, not only from a management point of view in keeping the space running but in the way each layer holds different potentials, resources and strengths.

So who was accessing the Understorey? The Green Lab explained to me that seventy two percent of Understorey users were non-binary and women. This is not representative of the population in Christchurch and indicates that the Understorey was providing benefits to these particular groups. To return to the importance of inclusion and social safety in the Understorey, moving the Understorey through its multiple iterations involved navigating hegemonic spaces. The Green Lab were aware that public spaces can be for a particular type of public. In Christchurch this involves public spaces that are largely influenced and dominated by Pākehā and heteronormative culture (Ross et al., 2022). The Green Lab identified The Welder as a 'white wellness' space and this was an important aspect of the space that The Green Lab was aware of. In an Instagram post they state, "we are also keeping an eye on demographics and use – we know this [The Welder] is a particular kind of space and that there might be other venues that could be more inclusive".

The Green Lab creates social and cultural safety, in one way through the physical location of the Understorey and its cultural dynamics, but also through the events they ran within their space, which we will arrive at throughout this section of the chapter. One example of their events is The

Green Lab's collaboration with the Aotearoa Multicultural Women Association who collaborated on events hosted at the Understorey such as C.V. writing, the use of te reo Māori, as well as writing and practicing pepeha. Although The Welder had particular cultural undertones to navigate, The Green Lab was able to use elements like the pay scale to make the space financially accessible and offer the space for others to host events in line with their social and cultural needs.

Tuesday

> *I walk into the Understorey and sit down at a table. This morning a man sits at the high bar table that is stationed outside the large window that looks into the Understorey. The man is wearing a sharp suit and shiny pointed shoes. He peers down at his silver watch, squinting to read its face. Then he looks back up and taps on the screen of his tablet, quickly becoming distracted as his eyes are drawn to movement in the Understorey. His eyes trace one person who has stood up and is making their way to the other side of the room. They look out and catch his eyes. The man can see their mouth move as they lean down to speak to another person who is sat sketching something at a table.*
>
> *Inside the Understorey we can see the man's look of surprise as another man in a well-tailored suit walks up to his table. He starts to become animated as they have a conversation. It looks as if they are projecting their voices over the rest of the crowds sitting at tables in The Welder. But inside the Understorey we cannot hear their voices. All we can hear are the tapping of computer keys and the sound of music gently playing in the background.*

The Understorey has been used for a variety of purposes. The Green Lab explained to me that as a coworking space, the Understorey hosted the coworking of over 680 individuals across more than 4,200 visits. Alongside coworking, the Understorey was also a community space. The Green Lab hosted regular weekly events at the Understorey as well as less frequent events such as plant swaps and mental health awareness events. Across the iterations, Understorey has been used for board meetings, hui, youth workshops, presentations, community check-ins, rehearsals, auditions,

as a venue for a graduation ceremony and as a workshop for productions. All of the members of the Understorey that I spoke to had used the space for a unique purpose that went beyond the typical vision of coworking workspace. For example, Molly explains:

> I totally used understory as a studio space at one point. I had to make some giant magnetic poetry and had to say, "I'm just taking over the stage to lay out these giant words". So I've been able to bring my practice both in making and in bringing people together. All of the different levels of my practice have been able to come together in this one space which is quite cool. It's flexible and it's got all the facilities you need, it has seating, it has a screen, it has sound, it's got a kitchen, and being able to have food and offer cups of tea is super helpful.

Having space as an artist was a common theme throughout the conversations I had during my interviews with Understorey members. Coworking spaces have proven to be important social infrastructure, especially for independent creative workers who often try to find ways to come together and avoid isolation (Rus & Orel, 2015). Part of the strength of the Understorey is having a space to create in, such as Molly's example of magnetic poetry, but also the relationship building component of Understorey members' work. Having a space that enables and supports the hospitality aspect of people's work was also important to its members, Molly explains:

> The modular and adjustable aspect is really key. I think the fact that it's not bare bones because most of the time if you're in a community hall or something it's all echoey and a bit hodge podge. Whereas here it's not hodge podge. You've got the couches and it's cohesive and it doesn't feel like you're just scraping together bits and bobs. I'm always running random events so it's been great for me to have a space where I can bring people together here and feel that there's money going to good people, I'm around good people, I'm supporting a good kaupapa and it's always been located handily as well.

It is not just how The Green Lab host community through the Understorey but the way in which Understorey members can negotiate the use of the workspace, often to the benefit of other members, and make the space their own. Some more examples of the use of the Understorey include Artists

Life School events. Artist Life School is a series of workshop events that bring together contemporary artists to further develop their professional skills. One of these events that was held at the Understorey focused on budgeting and wellbeing and another on how to write an artist talk. Other examples of events held at the Understorey were film screenings, potlucks, a queer history series, poetry events, and workshops on the history of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Another example is Dr Sketchy's anti-art school, run by Molly:

> My hobby is Dr Sketchy's anti-art school which is life drawing, drinking, and burlesque. So at the first Understorey when it was at the gym at the arts centre, we ran a flora themed Dr Sketchy's there and that was super cute, we had a pop-up bar and it was a ticketed event and it was during the [COVID-19] levels so we had to allocate seats. But it meant that we had a big enough space that was well ventilated that we could bring a group of people together. It was affordable for us and it was really special to be able to bring it here. I can't imagine holding something like that in a normal coworking space because it's cold and blar. Whereas this has got the plants, it's got the warmth.

In this example alone, there is an obvious juxtaposition between ideas of a 'normal' coworking space and the uses of the Understorey. Molly makes the comparison of a 'cold' coworking space with the 'warmth' of the Understorey that invites more than a space to sit down and work. Understorey members were able to run a range of events that were significant to them. Another example was holding a memorial at Understorey Tuarua. An art colleague had passed away in Auckland and due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, no one in Christchurch could attend the official ceremony and a memorial was held at the Understorey. In this example, what struck me was how something so deeply personal was supported and resourced by the coworking space and how unlikely this combination of work and mourning is to overlap. Molly also reflected on this:

> It's opened my eyes to how flexible a non-profit can be and how much work it can do for the community. Even in those little things, just offering space. The fact that [Green Lab director] said to use the Understorey for the memorial. When you're in a time of crisis and grieving, something that's that simple is super important. Just saying: 'I've got space, use it".

Having space to host, to mourn, to dance and to draw highlights the significance of accessible and fluid spaces to 'be' and connect with others in the city. Specifically, a space to freely express identities that are not often supported in the wider public spaces of the city. Another example of paying attention to the broader circumstances of Understorey workers' lives is found in the regular Tuesday Check-in events. The Green Lab would host community check-ins midday on each Tuesday. These sessions invited Understorey visitors to take time to talk together. The sessions were informal social catch ups, not networking events. They involved getting to know each other and sharing highs and lows if participants wanted to do so. As The Green Lab describe:

> We're living in challenging times and we know that sometimes just having a space where we can celebrate the wins and commiserate the losses, or just be heard, is important. Anyone in the space is welcome to participate, or you can come in just for this. Bring your lunch if you like. (The Green Lab, 2022a)

Conversations were had about the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, and climate change. In openly discussing these broader current events and world circumstances, participants could take the time to talk with others about how their lives were affected or the often-difficult feelings that arise with such topics. The Green Lab provided a specific time for members to reflect on themselves holistically, rather than just on their work.

Wednesday

> *Molly is sitting at the welcome desk this morning. She gets a discount on her weekly fee in exchange for her help at the desk. She says the role provides her with critical motivation as she sees other people working on site. I meander around the tables to find a spot at the back of the room that is well sheltered by plants. Some people are on zoom calls today, sporadically talking aloud to their screen with no response heard by those outside of their headphones. I try to avoid walking into their backgrounds. Molly offers everyone a cup of tea.*

> *At 1 o'clock, a group starts to form. Wednesday Writers is about to start. There is hubbub of chatter amongst the writers who are greeting each other and getting hot drinks. Writers bring out their tools, some have pens and paper; others use their laptops. The writers share what they are working on, many report on their broader artistry – upcoming events where they are showcasing their work, events that have passed and how they went, feedback they have recently received. They also discuss what they want to achieve in their session today. With writing on top of everyone's mind, I place my headphones over my ears and refocus on my work.*

The *Wednesday Writers* writing workshops are for all varieties of writers. The purpose of the regular session is to build community, connection and accountability between writers. The workshops are attended by people who are writing in different genres, are there for different reasons and where different generations cross paths, as Molly explains:

> I'm not a writer, but I'm always here on Wednesdays when they're here and I think oh wow. I love that it brings together my best friend's mum's 76, and an English teacher. It brings in people like Arts Laureate[8] Tusiata Avia, the creme-de-la-creme and then also emerging writers who've just finished high school. And they're all in the same space.

One of the strengths of coworking is building relationships and networks (Gerdenitsch et al., 2016; Rus & Orel, 2015). As Schmidt (2024) explains, resource-building networking can differ along gender lines and social background for those working to enter creative industries and this can exclude particular people from participating in creative working environments. Molly showcases the diversity of writers participating at Wednesday Writers sessions. For Understorey members it is not only about making work connections, but connections as artists or Queer folk, for example. Another strength members identified of their coworking space was being able to meet people they felt they would not usually meet as independent workers. Like Molly, Hannah also reflects on the

[8] The Laureate award is a New Zealand arts award, further description can be found at: https://www.thearts.co.nz/awards/laureate-award

Understorey as an important meeting space, particularly as a creative worker without a fixed workplace:

> Those connections that spontaneously come through like Queer Games Night, or the people that come in after hours, or the people that are working alongside you. You wouldn't have crossed their paths or have been asked: 'what are you working on today?'. It's a question no one asks you as a digital nomad. It's sort of that water cooler culture.

Hannah uses the reference of an office water cooler to reflect on the isolation of remote work and highlights the benefit of coworking with its opportunities to socialize. The original coworking movement worked to create such 'water cooler' moments in fostering the social aspect of working in a traditional office within coworking settings for 'digital nomads' like Hannah (Merkel et al., 2023). As freelance workers are individualized through the nature of their work, coworking provides a place of potential to form as a collective of workers. For Hannah, the Understorey had a variety of uses relating to the different kinds of work in her life:

> I do my boring proofing work at home because I can do it quickly when it's quiet. But then I needed space to ensure that I was creative. And I thought when I came here in the afternoons, even if I get nothing done, this is the creative space. This is where I write my film. And this is where I do this kind of stuff. Whenever I needed a social connection, I would come. And then when I started volunteering in exchange for reduced cost, I thought well this is even better because now I'm here today because I have to be (laughs).

Although not always the 'best' space for all kinds of work she does, Hannah was drawn to the Understorey as a generative creative and social space. As she began to volunteer, she was drawn in to use the space, much like Molly. Hannah mentioned in our interview that sometimes the space was not the best for the tasks she needed to do that day. Some of her work tasks require the quiet of home, sometimes there was less than optimal space to spread out creative work across the tables when she arrived. This was a part of sharing the coworking space and negotiating the use of the space that is built on a hot-desking model. Having the Understorey as an optional workspace

created flexibility over which workspace was the best fit for the work at hand and gave workers like Hannah the social infrastructure to make social connections easily.

Thursday

> *At the end of each day, a member of the Understorey usually turns the music off and switches the overhead lights with the purple fluorescent grow-lights before locking the door. At the same time, each business owner out in The Welder packs up their shop, pulls in their tables and chairs, rolls down their shutters and locks their doors. The Welder falls to silence by the evening. But tonight, the Understorey will be filled with te reo Māori. On a Thursday night, the space is reserved for Whare Tīhau to allow te reo to flow in a chorus of voices. The plants in the Understorey are accompanied by the sounds of rolling R's and laughter. Kai is shared and games are played into the night.*

Whare Tīhau is a social event and reo space for those who whakapapa Māori (have Māori ancestry). 'Whare Tīhau' alludes to a space filled with the twittering of birds and acts as a metaphor for the sound of voices conversing in te reo Māori (The Green Lab, 2022b). The Whare Tīhau nights are an opportunity for speakers and learners of te reo Māori to come together with the purpose of speaking what they know, alongside reo Māori games, activities, kai, workshops and resources to support the learning of te reo Māori. Whare Tīhau were mostly tangata Māori (Māori only) events but the last Thursday of each month was open to all to attend. The Whare Tīhau events enabled the Understorey to become an important cultural space to speak and celebrate te reo Māori. The Māori language requires a revitalisation effort to protect and ensure it can flourish to pass through to future generations (Huia, 2023). Dedicating a time for the Understorey space to fulfil this purpose, through a culturally sound setting, provides significant opportunities to meet and speak with others beyond a formal classroom as well as face any mamae in reconnecting to and regaining te reo Māori. Honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi was an important component in the kaupapa of the Understorey as reflected in physical reminders of Te Tiriti through posters that were on the walls of the Understorey and in events that supported te reo Māori, like Whare Tīhau. Te Tiriti posters, alongside rainbow flags, for example, are instantly recognisable as commitments to particular

causes. They are also embodied through events like Whare Tīhau and Queer Games Night and shape the culture of the space. Another significant physical feature that communicates the values of the Understorey space to its visitors are the many indoor plants that adorn the space.

The Green Lab were motivated to fill their coworking space with plants as they understood the positive impact of plants on humans and because of their origins as Greening the Rubble. The plants help to connect members to other living beings and can act as reminders of members own need for necessities like sunlight, water and fresh air. When speaking to Understorey members, the plants were described as a benefit of the workspace. As all of these plants require care, specific members of the Understorey took on the role of maintaining them. This established a reciprocity between the benefits of the plants to humans (such as cleaning the air) and the human care of the plants. Having the plants as a significant feature of the Understorey was a unique aspect of the space compared to other coworking spaces that Understorey members had come across in the city, as Hannah explains:

> The atmosphere is beautiful. Others [coworking spaces] tried to be like 'we're quirky cause there's blue and red on the walls'. Whereas this shows the amount of nurturing that someone has put into the space and continues to put into it.

The themes of the Understorey draw on the layers of a forest, from seeds to trees. Alongside the live plants, the space is also filled with wooden furniture and these natural materials are a clear reflection of this theme. Rather than a typical office space which is uniform and structured, Understorey was designed for function and comfortability including social and cultural safety, different work needs such as creative artwork, and for members to host others and to not feel guilty in doing so. In my observations and interviews at the Understorey, a balance of productivity and rest were sentiments reflected by Understorey members. The Understorey helped members in managing their work as they aimed to regulate their work time and goals and also make room for social connection and replenishment, as Hannah explains:

> I try to carve out space. I do boring proofing in the morning at home alone because it's fast and then it's most efficient, and then I come here (Understorey) and I nurture another

> important part of myself where productivity is less of the issue. Because sometimes someone's on their phone, they're having a meeting. You do work slower if you're kind of surrounded by other things going on. You don't come here to hit a deadline.

Hayley expressed a similar sentiment:

> I really look forward to my days when I come in here. I'm probably less efficient, I get less achieved, but I think it balances out when I'm just go, go, go, go, go, and achieve, achieve, achieve, achieve, achieve, you can't do that all the time, so it provides that balance and that softness.

Both Hannah and Hayley highlight what they understand to be an important balance of productivity and working with less intensity and acknowledge the limits of their bodies which cannot 'go go go' without rest. The Understorey helps them to create this balance for themselves. There is an acknowledgement of the Understorey as a softer, warmer place that allows members to assert a less intensive and more regenerative work style. Where the interactive nature of sharing workspace can be distracting but also useful to slow down and work at a different pace. Importantly, members also reference the goal of being productive and efficient, a goal that was clearly influential in how they managed their work. But they acknowledge 'another important part' of themselves that is often lost to the goal of productivity. The themes of rest and balance were also reflected in the resources that were within the space. Below, Figure 7 provides an example of the kind of resources that could be found in the Understorey.

Figure 7

Rest for Resistance Book from The Green Lab Library



Source: The Green Lab, 2022e

Rest for Resistance is authored by QTPoC [9] Mental Health, a grassroots transgender-led organisation that creates on and offline spaces for community wellbeing (Rest for Resistance, n.d.). Their book Rest for Resistance includes chapters such as *We Are Not Machines* and *Tending to Mental Health at My Intersections*. QTPoC Mental Health's work strives to "uplift marginalised communities, those who rarely get access to adequate health care or social support", centring the experiences of Black, Indigenous and people of colour (Rest for Resistance, n.d.). Rest as a political act has roots in Black Feminism as a strategy of survival for the lived experience of intersecting and compounding discrimination (racism, sexism and heteronormativity) as well as the exploitative conditions of capitalist economies (Hersey, 2022; Zuckerwise, 2024). QTPoC host meditation groups and a weekly Burn Out Activist Club. Similar themes are reflected in The Understorey coworking space. The way the Understorey is used is open for members to negotiate

[9] Queer, Trans, People of Colour.

with The Green Lab and this shapes the culture of the space. It is clear that The Green Lab also shape the space in ways that foster a particular workspace culture. Such as their community check-ins and events like Whare Tīhau and Queer Games Nights. Although this activist culture was not a requirement to cowork at the Understorey, it was an undercurrent that could always be identified in the function of the Understorey. In one example, Hayley reflects on how coming to work at the Understorey also involved coming to work on herself:

> I would always have considered myself very inclusive and open. But I am also 50 (laughs) and the world is changing faster than I am. I'm kind of at that point where I'm aware of these things I don't know or don't practice and trying to work towards them. Here [Understorey], along with studying te reo, those two things together are...there is this kind of ongoing social learning and growing that I'm still doing.

This is echoed by Sophie:

> Working here probably has made me more aware of not thinking 'he-she' and events-wise having that kind of question beforehand so that you are using the right terms and the right pronouns for people when you're dealing with them. Especially in the events world you can often go 'excuse me sir' naturally when that might not be the right thing and you think you're saying the right thing but it actually can be taken really wrong so having that understanding, I think it definitely brought it to the front of my thoughts.

As Hayley and Sophie demonstrate, part of the benefit of the multiple forms of activism in the Understorey is providing social learning and an opportunity to make mistakes and be corrected. The culture of the space is the result of Understorey members, visitors and Green Lab staff collectively reproducing it. In this way, Understorey staff and Understorey members assert ethical actions that push back against the worker subjectivity that has dominated work life. They reinforce a new subjectivity of work that involves paying attention to the embodied experience of work including their need for rest, checking in on one another and housing and caring for plant life in their space. Members have a space to go where others are encouraging wellbeing, not for the

limited purpose of worker productivity but for maintaining a multifaceted and holistic sense of wellbeing.

Friday

> *It is the final day of the week for the co-workers of the Understorey. Tonight, after everyone has logged off from their emails and has packed up their work for the week, an evening of games will commence. While some members leave at 5pm, saying their goodbyes and wishing everyone a good weekend, other members stick around and are joined by newcomers who arrive at the Understorey for Queer Games Night.*

As Ross et al. (2022) explain, the lived experience of being openly Queer in Christchurch public space in the 2020's is often difficult and can be unsafe. Queer Games Night is a monthly, all ages, alcohol free LGBTQIA+ community games night. Queer Games Night began in Understorey Tuarua and through support from The Peter Rule Foundation (a rainbow organisation), the events were free to attend. Much like Whare Tīhau, Queer Games Night is about providing space for Queer folk to come together in the city. When I asked Understorey members about any responsibilities they had for caring for the Understorey, they listed their roles related to closing or opening the Understorey and sitting at the welcome desk. This interpretation of responsibility was focused more so on the physical space and did not always capture other forms of responsibility, such as social responsibility, that became clearer to me as I thought about the way the culture of the Understorey was created and maintained. A culture maintained not only by The Green Lab but in the ways that Understorey members activated and used the space. Although The Green Lab provided the scaffolding for a particular culture, the users were vital in bringing it to life. For example, without participants, Whare Tīhau and Queer Games Night would not have existed. The space required the co-creation of community as stated in The Green Lab's description of the Understorey and its pay scale (The Green Lab, Instagram). The Green Lab's leadership in enacting responsibility related deeply to maintaining integrity, as demonstrated by Figure 8.

Figure 8

Facebook Apology Post Made by The Green Lab



Source: The Green Lab, 2021a

This Facebook post was in response to an event made in collaboration with local organisation *Re Kindle* who focus on teaching resourcefulness skills (ReKindle, n.d.). In the post The Green Lab state:

> Mō taku hē, mō taku hē - We've made a mistake and we apologise. Rekindle and The Green Lab scheduled a basket weaving workshop this weekend where tangata tiriti would share European weaving traditions using tī kōuka/cabbage tree leaves. It has been generously brought to our attention that during Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori[10], this workshop doesn't whakamana Māori weavers or centre the traditional weaving practices of Aotearoa. Rekindle and The Green Lab apologise for our oversight and any mamae this has caused. We have rescheduled the workshop and will be reviewing our programming procedures with cultural advisors as a result. Both our organisations are grateful that this was brought to our attention. We are committed to listening and learning toward being better Te Tiriti partners. (The Green Lab, 2021a)

[10] Māori language week.

This public statement which acknowledges both a mistake and a commitment to learn from this mistake demonstrates the transparency of The Green Lab[11]. This gave me a useful insight into understanding the ways that social learning was achieved through the Understorey as explained by Hayley and Sophie's reflections on the impact of the space on their own social learning, of 'keeping up' in a dynamic and multigenerational world and understanding diverse pronouns. The Green Lab showcase how to remain open. This openness to learn and change and to address the hurt of others is striking in comparison to the manoeuvring that many organisations undertake to avoid responsibility or accountability. In my conversation with Molly, she reflected on the importance of creating a shared sense of accountability:

> It [Understorey] has made me a lot more aware of the importance of governance, strategy, and policies. Because I've seen in action how the policies and the kaupapa and everything here is so easily tracked. You can see it in action. I haven't really found many organisations that that is evident. I've learned a lot more about the importance and value of what I used to think was bureaucratic bullshit but is actually really important governance and standing stones to build a community on. And the importance of thinking those things through and having those strong kind of foundations, so that you can look back to them and be like, what are we doing? Why are we doing it? What is our thing? What isn't our thing?

Such standing stones could be seen as The Green Lab's own ethical coordinates of responsibility, where a community forms around negotiations of how to access space in their city and retain safety and freedom to express identity in public spaces and workplaces.

5.4 Making a Difficult Decision

Political alignment was a significant factor that drew members into the Understorey with many stating that the Understorey matched their politics in some way. Being able to politically identify

[11] For international readers: Hosting a European weaving workshop during Māori language week can cause hurt as the purpose of Māori language week is to celebrate the use and revitalisation of Māori language and is a time to celebrate Māori practices more broadly (such as weaving). As it is an especially important time to uplift Māori practices, highlighting European weaving traditions is contradictory to this.

with the Understorey was demonstrated by members through their discussions of 'queering' organisational norms and contributing to anti-capitalist and anti-corporate alternatives. This section will explore the ways some Understorey members expressed their sense of belonging within the Understorey. One of the most significant ways that political alignment was expressed is through notions of queering. As Molly explains, the Understorey is "an explicitly queer space. Not just in gender and sexuality but it's queering. It's disrupting capitalist bullshit and that is something that I find very cool". In talking with Molly, her notion of 'capitalist bullshit' was easily understood as a reference to the extractive, exploitative and individualized logics surrounding capitalist processes. Although she did not explain this in these terms, Molly's discussion of a disruption of 'capitalist bullshit' is to me visible in the disruption of a productivist work culture in the Understorey. Molly referred to queerness specifically as a 'doing', interlinking its effects on the Understorey:

> The team at Understorey, they've got three or four they/them's out of six people working, how fucking cool is that. It's truly diverse. It's walking the talk, it's really doing its best to. The fact that we've got the decolonisation and Te Tiriti information around. You don't see that in a corporate environment. I think it's a very conscious decision. I know that's a lot of [Green Lab director] leadership and [Green Lab director] The Green Lab as well. And it does it without it being performative[12]. It's just there and it's just part of the grounding of it. This is always a queer space. This is always a Māori space that's supportive. I think that's key. A diverse staff and board and a genuine engagement with Te Tiriti and being conscious and educated about that. I think it's a very conscious decision. You need to have diverse staff so that it's not performative.

Molly highlights the leadership of The Green Lab's director in implementing these decisions into the design of the coworking space as well as the ongoing maintenance of 'walking the talk' that relies on not only The Green Lab staff and board but also the Understorey members. Part of the queering achieved by the Understorey is a queering of mainstream corporate culture and the

[12] Molly is using the term 'performative' to signal an action that has inauthentic intent. 'Performative' is often used to refer to someone acting out a belief or value with no concrete substance.

creation of a counter-culture. The non-corporate components of Understorey were a significant strength identified by interviewees.

The identification of a counterculture was expressed by Hannah:

> My first Friday here, Queer Games Night sprung up around me as I was finishing my work and that was lovely. I was like, what's happening? (laughter). Speaking of that counterculture, that was quite cool. Or the play theatre troops coming in and starting to set up and then you learn oh I actually know someone that's in that and oh, you're the guys putting on that thing that I wanted to go to. You make those extra connections.
>
> I was checking out coworking spaces like [name of other coworking space]. I'd been there one day, and it was funny because it's corporate, but they've tried to be quirky, just because there's colours on the wall. And it's quite expensive for what it is. It was fine, I thought I was going to do that. Then I looked at one other place that made that place look delightful. That one was like IBM and lawyers use it and everyone's in a tie. I thought I'd be more lonely here than if I was at home because I'm so not like these people and there's no reason to pay to come here. This would be miserable.
>
> Then I found that The Green Lab was doing something. Once I walked in (clicks finger), I thought this is where I want to be. Little Andromeda was across the way, so the guy who programmed Little Andromeda was working there. It was actually creative countercultural people. Even the fact that I could afford a couple of days at those other places I thought these are actually the people I want to be around, the connections I want to make and the thing I want to support.

As Hannah explains, other coworking spaces in the city have felt 'commercial' and 'corporate'. There was a clear distinction made by members between the Understorey and their experience of other coworking spaces. Both Molly and Hannah highlight a connection they felt towards the Understorey, where turning up to use the space involved more for them than simply coming to work. Their work in the Understorey took on another meaning as they contributed to a space that

represented and performed a counterculture that they believe in. One word Hannah used to describe the Understorey is ‘alternative’.

I asked her what she means by this and what it is alternative to, she responds:

> This is going to be really basic, but the contrast is to be a lawyer. My sister is a lawyer, nothing against it. But someone who has to wear a suit, someone who needs the stability of knowing where they’re going to be from nine to five every single day. If you had that, you wouldn’t need or have to come looking for this space. Other places don’t have Queer Games Night, it doesn’t have the counterculture, it doesn’t have the play troupe coming in, it wouldn’t have the price band variation because corporate people go there.

Hannah reflects on the importance of space, such as coworking spaces, for workers in the city whose work is more fluid and mobile. Although Hannah expressed a rejection of corporate culture throughout her interview, she also uses the water cooler reference to reflect on the isolation of remote work and to highlight the benefits of coworking through opportunities to socialise at the Understorey. Hannah highlights the importance of socialising with other workers for all workplaces. Similarly, Understorey members wrestle with the role of productivity in their work lives, rejecting the goal to continuously improve their productivity and to ‘go go go’, while also measuring their effectiveness through a sense of productivity. However, their reflections demonstrate the role of rest and productivity as equally integral components to a successful work life which the Understorey enables for them. In many ways, the Understorey is about creating space in the city that many people do not easily have: as Māori, Queer folk, artists, and freelance workers. Hayley summarises the interaction between people and place at the Understorey:

> There’s a softness in here that I like. It doesn’t feel like work. It doesn’t feel like a harsh place. I think it’s both the physical space and the people. One feeds the other. I think it would be very hard to have it separated, I can’t imagine that you could have this physical environment and people would behave in a traditional office way and I don’t think you could have a traditional office environment and have people relaxed and being the way they are. I think it really needs both.

But what happens when the Understorey comes to a close? The Understorey had been made and remade three times across three locations before my field work at Understorey Tuatoru. During my time at Understorey Tuatoru, The Green Lab had to make a significant decision to close Understorey Tuatoru in December 2022. This was due to several factors including the difficulty of balancing multiple projects within the organisation and a decline in Understorey memberships. But what was most significant was the impact that running the Understorey had on the wellbeing of Green Lab staff. The wellbeing of staff was crucial to the decision to close Understorey Tuatoru. The Green Lab's staff capacity was unequally distributed across the organisation. This was most evident through The Green Lab director who was acting as the host and activator of the Understorey. This included opening and closing, being present to welcome and assist Understorey members, keep up with social media communication, and look after the facilities. This took their capacity away from other Green Lab projects. The Understorey also had the potential to draw other staff capacity away from other Green Lab projects. For example, the accounts person could have had two hours to spare to work on other projects but would use that time to complete the invoicing of Understorey memberships. Assessing the staff capacity involved understanding how much work is too much for one person. In an organisation that is focused on wellbeing, this wellbeing has to be felt by the staff too. In the interviews with Understorey members, the imminent closure of the Understorey was an integral part of our conversations. Molly reflects:

> There's so much that's possible with this space, but you're limited by staff hours and funding and doing that without burning people out. It burns individuals out in service of their community. And also, you can advertise the hell out of a space, and you still can't make people show up. That's my work in events, you can do all the right things, but it doesn't always work out. For me, what isn't possible is purely based on capacity and the unpredictable nature of people. Or more the unreliable nature of people showing up. [whispers:] And I don't know what the solution to that is.

Molly's reflection on burnout highlighted to me a risk for workers committed to providing community space. When this role is tied to identity and to close marginalised communities, finding a balance in this work can be difficult and can lead to overwork and the risk of burnout. The discussion of burnout also arose when talking to Hannah:

> I'll be sad when it's [Understorey] not here because I think it was doing a great thing but also, this is the imperfect metaphor, but it's kind of the tragedy of the commons. I don't think anyone at Green Lab set out to own a coworking space. My guess is, based on just what some people have said, it's also a lot of admin for one person that thought this could be a cool idea for everyone to share. So, tragedy of the commons is the idea that no one will look after it and I think with a project like this when it has a very high burden load but it's non-profit or volunteer that burden might fall on one person that gets burned out.

Hannah draws on Hardin's (1968) prevalent idea of the tragedy of the commons to explain the closure of the Understorey. Although some commons scholars would argue that an uncared-for commons eliminates its status as a commons altogether (Bollier, 2014, 2021; De Angelis, 2017; Gibson-Graham et al., 2013; Huron, 2018; Mies, 2014; Ostrum, 1990), what Hannah is addressing is key and points us to the question proposed by Gibson-Graham (2006): How is a commons produced and sustained? A commons requires collective care (or management) to exist. Hannah highlights how the workload of running the Understorey could have been spread further amongst the Understorey community. Although having someone in a waged role can be a huge strength to a community project (to compensate them and secure a stable presence throughout a project) this can also lead to this worker taking on the heaviest load *because* they have a paid role. The Understorey is an example where distributions of work matter and highlights the risk of too much responsibility resting on one person's shoulders and how this can lead to the end of a project.

The cost of continuing to run the Understorey was another barrier to continuing the Understorey with the user memberships unable to cover the costs. Not only did the Understorey arise after the COVID-19 pandemic, it was running during subsequent lockdowns and existed within the context of a rising cost-of-living crisis in New Zealand. Visiting Understorey Tuatoru included a membership fee but could also include transport costs such as petrol and parking costs to get into the inner city. The overall instability of membership impacted on the reliability of this income stream for The Green Lab. Molly highlighted another important balance in running the coworking space. Molly reflects on what this looks like from her experience working as an events creator:

> When you're running events or you're running a space, you don't want to give that sense of stress and urgency all the time, because it's exhausting. And you don't want to feel like you're pushing people and pressuring people. But then, unfortunately, that is the urgency that event organisers and people that run spaces have all the time. I need you to show up. I need you to be part of this.

This is a tension of running a space to serve a community that requires a monetary income and relies on that community in part to fund it. Among these different factors, the key component of the decision to close the Understorey is identifying when it is time to stop a project. The Understorey project had proven to have created a lot of meaning and benefits but could not be sustained in its current context. As their name states, The Green *Lab* experimented with different versions of the project and part of its purpose was to try out ways of placemaking in the city. The aim of their projects was to be experimental and to use their time and energy to apply ideas like a scientist in a laboratory. Hannah highlighted this for me in our conversation:

> I'll be sad that it's going away. But I understand. I feel like I've seen this in other organisations that are non-profits or people trying to experiment with something. It doesn't mean they want that to be their new career. So, I don't think The Green Lab is like, 'we're a coworking space, I live for this'.

This conversation with Hannah was eye opening for me. Through her understanding of the experimental nature of The Green Lab I was able to recognize my own limiting beliefs of what the end of a project means. Instead, what is perhaps more important is that a group of people have created a space which is centred on wellbeing and people have engaged with it. They have collectively fostered a set of values and could recognize when their project was no longer working. Dombroski et al. (2019) provide a way to relate to temporary commons whereby *an* end is not *the* end, and the impact of a project is not limited to what is visible or tangible, but perhaps the more experiential, imaginative, and memorable components that carry with people's experiences of such projects (Dombroski et al., 2019). The Green Lab could have continued to keep the Understorey open longer and try to make it work, but they knew when to call it and this does not erase the impact the space had on the people who engaged with it.

Looking ahead, there was the consideration of looking for hubs that were already established that The Green Lab could move into rather than creating a new space. This way the activation of the space could be shared more broadly. When discussing the closure with members they were all keen to hear if the Understorey was going to be set up again to rejoin. In the meantime, they had planned to work from libraries or work from home and some people were interested in looking out for another coworking space that suited their needs. Since the closing of Understorey Tuatoru, two of the Understorey desks have been moved to Toi Auaha, a new space in the inner city for artists ranging from jewellers to writers to digital artists. In December 2022, 17 local artists moved into the 12 studio spaces on site. This is an important new artist space in the city as the loss of inner-city infrastructure has been a significant challenge for artists in Christchurch (The Green Lab, 2022f). At the time of writing, Wednesday Writers has continued at Toi Auaha and Queer Games Night has been hosted at an inner-city café but the Understorey has not been reestablished.

The Green Lab are familiar with the temporary use of space in the city as an organisation who emerged from the rubble of the Canterbury earthquakes. The Green Lab acknowledge that their city is always in flux, that mental health is a key community concern, and that they want to foster ways for communities to care for themselves. The Understorey was a unique coworking space that put wellbeing at the centre of decision-making. In doing so, the coworking space was able to support the work needs of members through an accessible workspace and enhanced member's wellbeing beyond being a worker. The Understorey members I have talked to have expressed part of their process of navigating a balance within their work life. This balance is seen in the ways people are seeking workspace that incorporates and supports their identity and politics and acknowledging the social, creative and relational needs within their lives that ultimately impact their work. The Understorey has been a way to achieve this balance.

5.5 A Workspace Commons

Through my fieldwork at the Understorey, I see the participation of members and staff in the coworking space as a form of commoning that fosters a workspace commons. To create a workspace commons, Understorey members and staff have negotiated the sharing of space (multiple iterations, variety of purposes), activated space (intentional safe spaces, built capacities

to support other members through networking, socializing, check ins), and created collaborative relationships (learning from one another, matching workers with resources). They care for this commons collectively through their contributions to and participation in the Understorey. I also identify this as an urban commons, which is marked by the two traits of saturated space and the collaboration of strangers (Huron, 2015). The Green Lab provided the means to create this commons through securing physical space in the city to establish a coworking space, by providing staff members and organising volunteers to host the Understorey, and in coordinating a range of events for coworkers and outside visitors to engage in. But to foster this workspace as a commons requires the care of Understorey members, visitors and staff collectively. Drawing on Gibson-Graham, Cameron and Healy's (2013) definition, the commons are a property, practice or knowledge, in which:

- Access is shared and wide
- Use is negotiated by a community
- Benefit is widely distributed to community members (and beyond)
- Care is performed by community members
- Responsibility is assumed by community members.
- The formal or legal ownership of the commons can take any form (p. 135)

For the Understorey, this looks like sharing access, use, benefit, care, and responsibility of a workspace commons. For example, access of the workspace commons is achieved through the pay scale. The pay scale enables easeful access to use the space through the koha tier as well as through pooling member's payments through the collaborative multi-tiered pay scale. Having these different membership fees can balance the overall contributions by members towards funding the space. Use of the workspace commons has been demonstrated in this chapter through a variety of examples. Beyond the practical elements of the workspace such as the use of Wi-Fi, printing and desk space, the Understorey has been used to fulfil social needs of groups and individuals. This chapter has shown the ways these uses have been negotiated on a one-to-one basis such as the memorial hosted for a colleague, and through the establishment of public group events that support specific communities in the city.

The benefits of the workspace commons are distributed to individual workers, organisations using the space, visitors to the Understorey and its events and to The Welder. For example, when interviewing Sophie, she expressed the personal benefit of being able to work next to other freelancers as well as the impact the Understorey had on The Welder. She noted how the Understorey activated The Welder, brought "different people through" and created a regular group of supporters for the other businesses in The Welder.

Care of a commons is performed by community members and for the workspace commons this includes the maintenance of the Understorey by members both physically (caring for plants, doing the dishes, locking up at the end of the day) but also in reproducing its ethos through participating in community check ins or supporting and uplifting diverse identities and experiences. This care is also seen through The Green Lab's design of the space and leadership through 'walking the talk'.

Responsibility of the workspace commons includes formal arrangements of responsibility such as opening or closing the Understorey and hosting at the front desk. Responsibility can also be seen through The Green Lab maintaining social accountability. Responsibility is also taken on by paid staff members and the board of The Green Lab. A commons can exist through any form of property ownership. To create this workspace commons, The Green Lab have rented spaces across the city to host the Understorey. Some of the furniture in the Understorey was provided by businesses for use in exchange for product visibility. This meant The Green Lab did not have to own all the furniture used to outfit their space and could borrow it. Here private property is used for collective benefit. Key to a commons is the community relationships that sustain it (Dombroski et al., 2023) and as Gibson-Graham (2006) argue, a commoning community is created out of 'doing' together. At the Understorey, caring for the workspace brings a community into being. My understanding of this workspace commons is summarized in Table 8.

Table 8

Workspace Commons Identi-Kit - 'Resource Layer'

Commons Identi-Kit for the Workspace Commons					
Access	**Use**	**Benefit**	**Care**	**Responsibility**	**Property**
Shared and wide	*Negotiated by a community*	*Widely distributed to community members (and beyond)*	*Performed by community members*	*Assumed by community members*	*Any form of ownership (private, state, or open access)*
Open to all Free and koha based access as well as pay scale that creates a flexible membership model with sliding/self-determining fees	All members The Green Lab staff Visitors (non-members)	Members Visitors (non-members) Specific identity groups e.g. local Rainbow and Māori communities	The Green Lab staff Understorey members	Member-volunteers The Green Lab staff The Green Lab Board	Reduced renting of public and private spaces in the city

Adapted from Gibson-Graham et al. (2013)

I have categorised the workspace commons as the 'resource layer' of commoning at the Understorey. This is because I first theorised the Understorey as a workspace commons: a physical, tangible 'resource' that workers could access, use, benefit, and care for and did so collectively. But then the Understorey closed. This led me to question if it was possible to understand the Understorey as a commons at all. I could read the closure of the Understorey in a few ways. One way was that this commons was a failure. The mere fact that it had closed meant it had not worked.

Another was that it was not collective *enough*, that Green Lab staff and Understorey members needed to put in more time to ensure it was able to have a host to activate the space and more members needed to contribute through memberships. As I briefly reflected in Chapter Three, the closure of the Understorey made me question what counts as a commons altogether. Through continuing to read commons literature, what stuck out to me was the role of commoning as an action, as a verb (Bollier, 2014; Huron, 2018), and the impact that doing this action had on fostering different kinds of subjectivities (Dombroski et al., 2019; Dombroski et al., 2023; Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2016; Roelvink, 2020a; Singh, 2017). Understanding commons as mere 'resources' meant that if these are dissolved, the commoning and commons that have taken place are also dissolved, restricting their impact to their particular timeframe. Instead, various commons scholars helped me to think about commoning as a lively and affective experience and helped me to read the Understorey as a workspace commons despite its closure. In focusing on the act of commoning more so than the stability of a common resource, there is more that we can learn from commoning. For example, Dombroski et al. (2023) propose that large changes to a commons initiative could be understood "as the end of the conditions that fostered affective relations with the commons" (p. 8). Or it can be understood "as part of the cyclical process of the plant life: growth and proliferation leads to maturity which cycles back to transformation through decline and then regeneration through the spreading of seeds" (p. 8). Therefore the 'doing' of commoning, even if only briefly, provides practice in different ways of being together in the city (Dombroski et al., 2019). Although the specific space that I studied is no longer in action nor exists, it may be that parts of the ethos of the Understorey have travelled elsewhere through those who experienced the space and may continue to foster something different.

When the Understorey was open, I could understand it as a very tangible resource for a community of coworkers and surrounding identity groups. These tangible resource-like commons are still imbued with relationality because they are brought into being through collective labour. But something else was going on beyond the commoning of physical space and its relational dynamics. Upon reflection, the Understorey closed for wellbeing. In fact, wellbeing was cultivated and cared for throughout the creation, use and closure of the Understorey. Therefore, alongside the workspace commons was a wellbeing commons that was cared for by Understorey members and The Green Lab staff. I began thinking about The Understorey as *commoning worker wellbeing* and

this led me to think about the commoning at Understorey through two different layers. This 'deeper' layer of worker wellbeing is summarised in Table 9.

Table 9

Worker Wellbeing Commons Identi-Kit - 'Deeper Layer'

Commons Identi-Kit for the Worker Wellbeing Commons					
Access	**Use**	**Benefit**	**Care**	**Responsibility**	**Property**
Shared and wide	*Negotiated by a community*	*Widely distributed to community members (and beyond)*	*Performed by community members*	*Assumed by community members*	*Any form of ownership (private, state, or open access)*
Open to all	All members The Green Lab staff Visitors to Understorey	All members Visitors to Understorey	All members The Green Lab staff	All members The Green Lab staff	Intangible

Source: Adapted from Gibson-Graham et al. (2013)

This 'deeper layer' of commoning is not a tangible 'thing' being commoned, instead it is worker wellbeing. I call this a 'deeper' layer of commoning not because it is deeper in some sort of hierarchy of importance but because it captures the affects of commoning that cannot be seen in the same way the very tangible workspace commons can be seen and interacted with. The deeper layer is hidden from sight and needs to be surfaced. These two layers of commoning are interconnected and ultimately inseparable but labelling them this way helps me to identify two important aspects that are active in the process of commoning. These aspects include the material resources of commons that help commoners to reproduce life and the affective dynamics of commons that can influence shifts in subjectivities.

I see new subjectivities cultivated around worker wellbeing as Understorey members were commoning a different kind of work culture that was not focused on productivity but wellbeing. This deeper layer of commoning is important because of its contributions to healing the brokenness of work. The Understorey was filled by workers who by the nature of their work (freelance, artist, contractor) are individualised and often isolated. These workers can face a higher likelihood of entrepreneurial self-management that can lead to 'extensification' of work (Brydges, 2024) as well as a lack of connection to other workers (Spinuzzi et al., 2019; Worth, 2024). The Understorey provides a place to be with other workers in the city, helping to alleviate isolation and invite members to be more than a worker but a community member. The isolation and disconnection experienced by workers is reflected clearly in the experiences of freelance and creative workers, such as those at the Understorey. But other kinds of workers in the Anglosphere are also reporting meaninglessness and mental health impacts from isolation in work with alarming rates of unhappiness, loneliness and disengagement (Gallup, 2024; WorkSafe, 2021). Therefore, the meaning and connection created through the Understorey showcases the strength of commoning wellbeing to avoid exploitation and alienation in work.

Rather than reading the closure of Understorey Tuatoru as the result of the dominance of barriers that threaten to squash organisations like The Green Lab and commoning projects like the Understorey, such as small funding pools, low attendance, and climbing rental prices, I see the commitment to protect worker wellbeing at the centre of The Green Lab's decision-making. It was because wellbeing was cared for, and was being threatened, that ultimately led to the closure of the Understorey. For Gibson-Graham (2006), "whether to deplete, maintain, or grow the commons is a major focus of ethical decision making" (p. 97). As shown in Chapter Four, the capacity to common repair knowledge expanded through the repair roadshow. This was significant to the repair movement in Ōtautahi and showed a broad enthusiasm and support for repair. The closing of the Understorey was equally significant and was part of this community's ethical decision-making. From these two examples we can see how a commons can expand out and multiply or contract and halt. In either case, these commons hold important contributions for shifts in subjectivities.

5.6 Conclusion: Commoning Workspace

In this chapter I have explored the ways that members of the Understorey are creating accessible, supportive and meaningful workspace. I did this through describing a typical week at the Understorey and by reflecting on some of the broader dynamics of the coworking space and the challenges they faced. By the end of the chapter, I argue that Understorey members are commoning workspace. I argue that they have created a workspace commons and I use a commons identi-kit to demonstrate this. I have identified how use is negotiated, how benefits are distributed, how care is performed, and how responsibility is assumed. I also argue that there is a second, 'deeper layer' of commoning taking place. This deeper layer of commoning is of worker wellbeing. I will expand on this deeper layer of commoning in Chapter Six. My first research question asks what factors have enabled a commons to emerge in post-quake Christchurch? What this chapter has demonstrated is that commoning at the Understorey requires space, time, and care. In Chapter Six, I will elaborate on the role of space, time, and care as conditions for commoning.

In Chapter Four, I showed how a community formed through connecting to objects, collectivising the repair of objects and commoning repair knowledge. In this chapter, I have begun to think about the ways workers might connect to their bodies and to others' bodies and collectivise the care of bodies. I have also built on the argument made in Chapter Four that commoning holds important potential to shift subjectivities and that this can be seen through a 'deeper layer' of commoning that goes beyond the care of repair knowledge or workspace. The reason that these deeper layers of commoning are important is because of their wider implications for repairing the brokenness of production and consumption through cultivating a repair sensibility and for healing the brokenness of work through cultivating worker wellbeing. In the next chapter, I discuss these deeper layers of commoning.

Chapter Six: Deeper Commoning

The commoning at the repair café and the Understorey resists dominant norms of work in the Anglosphere. At the repair café, the community is (at large) pushing back against a dominant throwaway culture. Participants of the repair café began to gain, or deepen, embodied repair knowledge at the repair café. As they repaired broken objects, they were also repairing broken processes of production and consumption. At the Understorey, the community have pushed back on norms of productivity and what it means to be a worker in the Anglosphere and have built a culture of care. Understorey members highlight the importance of being repaired by the material environment, where a space and the social support within it can work as a healing intervention for people's relationship to the workplace, to work and to their city. Both projects have fostered relationships and practices that enable them to repair part of the brokenness of work in the Anglosphere. This is what I will discuss in depth in this chapter.

Ōtautahi Repair Revolution have collectivized repair labour and created and cared for a repair knowledge commons. This happened through the interactions of teaching and learning from each other, where repairers drew on the past to make sense of the strengths and flaws of current manufacturing processes and identified what they needed to support their repair efforts. Their collective knowledge is possible because people shared time and space with one another to care for objects. At the same time, their commoning enabled them to create and care for a repair sensibility that contributes to a broader repair culture. Overall, those involved at the repair café were shifting from a consumer subjectivity to a repair subjectivity.

The members of the Understorey created and cared for a workspace commons. Understorey staff and Understorey members pushed back against the productivist worker subjectivity that has dominated work life in the Anglosphere. They reinforced a new subjectivity of work that involves paying attention to the embodied experience of work. This involved collective attention to wellbeing over productivity. Members of the Understorey had a space to go to work where others were encouraging wellbeing, but not for the purpose of productivity. All of this was possible because Understorey members shared space and time with one another to co-work and foster a

different kind of work environment. At the same time, their commoning enabled them to create and care for worker wellbeing. Overall, those involved at the Understorey were shifting from a productivist subjectivity to a wellbeing subjectivity.

The question that remains is what made these commons possible? I begin this chapter by answering my first research question, *what factors have enabled a commons to emerge in post-quake Christchurch?* In the first part of the chapter, I discuss how space, time, and care are the three factors that contribute to creating these commons. I then use the second part of this chapter to expand on the deeper layers of commoning that I have identified. By doing so I will have answered my second research question, *how can these commons inform theories of work?* In this second part of the chapter, I begin by discussing the commoning of a repair sensibility through Bruno Latour's idea of 'learning to be affected' to explain a process of attunement happening at the repair café. I argue that repairers are able to attune to the process of repair and that this is important for closing the metabolic rift. I then discuss the commoning of worker wellbeing through Black feminist theories of self-care (Hersey, 2022; Kim & Schalk, 2021; Wiens & MacDonald, 2021) to identify a form of (radical) collective care at the Understorey. I argue that Understorey staff and members paid attention to the embodied experience of work and of diverse bodies and that this enabled them to centre wellbeing over productivity. This care for bodies acts as a form of resistance to 'grind culture'. This collective care for worker wellbeing is a way of protecting against exploitation and alienation. At the end of the chapter, I outline the theoretical contributions my research has for theories of commoning and work.

6.1 Creating Commons: Space, Time and Care

In Chapters Four and Five, I identified practices of commoning undertaken by Ōtautahi Repair Revolution and the Understorey. I identified two 'layers' of commoning at each field site. First, a 'resource layer', including the repair knowledge commons at repair café and the workspace commons at the Understorey. Secondly, I identified a 'deeper layer' of commoning, including a repair sensibility at the repair café and worker wellbeing at the Understorey which I will explain further later in this chapter. In this section, I discuss space, time, and care as the key conditions of these commons. This triad of space, time and care that I identify are also reflected in other scholar's

discussions of the commons. For example, for Massimo De Angelis, "conceptualizing the commons involves three things at the same time" (De Angelis & Stavrides, 2010, p. 3). First, all commons involve a pool of (non-commodified) resources. Second, the commons are created and sustained by communities. Third, the commons are created and reproduced through a social process (commoning) (De Angelis & Stavrides, 2010). I see parallels to De Angelis' first element, a pool of resources, with my emphasis on the importance of space that communities require to common. Secondly, I place emphasis on time as the means through which communities are able to create and sustain commons. Third, the social process that creates and reproduces the commons is, for me, about care and the specific kind of community that arises through this process. Similar to De Angelis (De Angelis & Stavrides, 2010), Bollier and Helfrich (2019) organise their 'patterns of commoning' into three spheres of activity: provisioning, peer governance, and social life and call this the 'triad of commoning'. Again, I see connections between provisioning and space, peer governance and time, and social life and care. It appears that space, time and care play an important role in the commons. How are these three elements important in the case of Ōtautahi Repair Revolution and the Understorey?

6.1.1 Space

I first want to discuss the role of space for commons. This is because space has a large role to play in commons literature and many commons scholars are concerned about enclosures of space. Whether looking back at the historical enclosures of the commons or looking around at prominent capitalist influences in cities that can threaten shared use of space, commons scholars are interested in how to reclaim space for commoning (Huron, 2018). Although the definition of commons has expanded beyond the original focus on physical natural resources and towards more intangible forms like knowledge and cultural commons (Feinberg et al., 2021; Hess, 2008), space still plays an important role in enabling practices of commoning. This was clear through the two field sites of this research. For example, space was required to gather together, to plug in tools and machines, to work and observe, and to store materials before commoners were able to common repair knowledge and commoning workspace most obviously requires a space to work. But even when the two communities were commoning something that is less tangible, such as a repair sensibility or worker wellbeing, this commoning is still material and is still connected to, and dependent on,

space and place (see De Angelis 2017, p. 68-69). In the case of the two field sites, their commoning relies on access to space in the city.

As discussed in Chapter Two, more of the global population is expected to live in urban areas in the coming decades (United Nations, 2018) and therefore cities are increasingly important spaces for commoning. Peter Linebaugh (2014) argues that cities must be 'commonized' and argues that commons ought not to be limited to the woodlands and rivers associated with rural spaces. This focus on the city as a site of commoning is represented by studies of urban commons. Amanda Huron (2015) defines urban commons by two distinct traits. First urban commons are "enacted in saturated space, (. . .) space that is already densely packed with people, competing uses, and capitalist investment", secondly urban commons are "constituted by the coming together of strangers" (p. 963). The competing uses of saturated space may involve: struggles for 'land back' by Indigenous peoples and their allies, eager developers and their vast plans to transform city infrastructure, city councils grappling with multi-year vision reports, environmental councils investment into the extension of local wildlife habitat, residents participation within and hopes for the city they work and live in, and businesses investing in retail and office space. Such dynamics and tensions of saturated space are also unfolding in different ways at the two field sites.

In the case of Christchurch, the ruptures (Cretney & Nissen, 2023; Pickles, 2016) caused by the Canterbury earthquakes led to new ways of approaching the use of the city's landscape, including the designation of a 'red zone' that has become a large green space in the city. As many suburbs in the eastern part of the city were demolished, vast amounts of land were dedicated to restoration and community projects. The Riverlution Ecohub building, previously a residential house that sits on the border of the red zone, was allocated to Richmond Community Garden following the earthquakes and is broadly a space for environmental action and care (e.g. community gardening, plastics upcycling, food growing workshops). Ōtautahi Repair Revolution was easily able to fit into the Riverlution Ecohub as both groups (Ōtautahi Repair Revolution and Richmond Community Garden) share similar environmental interests. This meant accessing space in the city was relatively easy for Ōtautahi Repair Revolution as this space was already dedicated to environmental action.

Space is even more accessible to the repair café due to the nature of their commoning which is practiced in concentration once per month. There is an ease in the way Ōtautahi Repair Revolution gathers and activates their repair events in the hub and then disassembles and disperses over the course of 3 hours. Through a collaborative effort, the repair café has been transported to other community hubs across the city and there are a range of spaces that the repair café has been successfully hosted in such as the central city library or in community halls. This has demonstrated an abundance of space in the city that is suited to hosting a repair event and overall, an ease to activating spaces for commoning repair knowledge.

When envisioning the future of repair, Zac imagined multiple repair cafés located across the city in each suburb. In his vision, this abundance of repair cafés would ensure repair was available and that it would become a familiar part of life in the city. While permanent spaces dedicated to repair would increase opportunities to repair in the city, the repair knowledge commons does not require permanent occupancy of space to be successful. Instead, it arrives in a burst of tinkering, needling, and hammering and is packed away ready to begin again next month. The repair café provides a temporary but routine opportunity for people to collaborate in maintaining the things they own.

The ruptures of the Canterbury earthquakes also led to new ways of using space in the inner city and a newfound recognition of residents as placemakers (Cloke & Conradson, 2018; Cloke et al., 2023; Dombroski et al., 2023). The earthquakes quite literally created new spaces in the city in the form of vacant lots and residents began to experiment with these spaces, including the temporary greening projects of The Green Lab as *Greening the Rubble*. This enabled residents and visitors of Christchurch to use and experience the city differently (Cloke & Conradson, 2018; Cloke et al., 2023; Cretney, 2019; Dombroski, 2024b). When creating the Understorey in 2021, access to space in the city had become more constricted and more costly as the city was reshaped and repopulated through the rebuild, becoming more ‘saturated’, in Huron’s (2015) sense, after the initial recovery of the earthquakes (Cloke et al., 2023). The Green Lab required continual use of a space to host their coworking project and were supported by their subsidized rental arrangements but had temporary security through these agreements and required community buy-in to partly finance the project. Unlike Ōtautahi Repair Revolution, The Green Lab were managing the challenges of saturated space to a larger degree.

Part of the difficulty of running a community space like the Understorey is the competitive market for space, particularly in the inner city. Many not-for-profit organisations lean on the support of dedicated community spaces afforded by councils as well as council and public funding. What was important for The Green Lab was to have leadership over a space in the inner city to create a particular politics in the space. Having space to cultivate a particular politics was an important and powerful part of the Understorey, which in part worked to (re)claim space for non-white, Māori and LGBTQ+ communities (as well as for artists, startups, students, non-profits, environmental groups, social enterprises). In Chapter Four I discussed the impact that the locations of the Understorey iterations had on their project. Focusing on Understorey Tuatoru, an important part of this iteration was its location within The Welder, a 'white' and commercial space. The Green Lab were aware of the cultural connotations of The Welder. Therefore, it was important to create a space that could exist without the automatic white, straight, able bodied 'settings' to the space. In knowing that The Welder was not an obvious space for their intended community to enter, they paid attention to inviting people in. The Green Lab invited people in through their events such as Whare Tīhau and Queer Games Night and had to make themselves known to these groups through their events and on social media. Being a leader in a space required that The Green Lab had a space of their own to settle into, to shape and to invite others into, which required more frameworks and resources than Ōtautahi Repair Revolution's short uses of the Riverlution Ecohub.

Space was a necessary resource for both of these commoning communities. Although the fight for more space that is permanent, affordable (if not free) and for community without the stresses of a competitive, saturated city is important, ownership and long-term access to space are not inherently required for successful commoning (Dombroski et al, 2019). Both broadening the possibilities of commoning through reclaiming space long term and seeking the current success of commoning in temporary, loaned, or shared spaces are important tasks of reclaiming practices of commoning in the Anglosphere. What each community revealed to me through their temporary use of space is the importance of *occupying* space (Dawney et al., 2015, p. 9; Ferreri, 2015). Regardless of the length of time these spaces were occupied, what was clear was the impact their ethos had in creating an affective atmosphere in these spaces during this time (Cloke & Conradson, 2018). This was reflected in Zac's description of "everything being tipped on its head" when walking through the door to the repair café because it functions outside of "our current economic model". Or

Hayley's description of the coworking space as a soft place that does not feel harsh and does not "feel like work" and that the physical environment of the Understorey means that people would not behave in a "traditional office way" but would be relaxed. On the one hand, I want to highlight that the purposeful temporary use of space, such as the repair café in the Ecohub, can enable commons to arise easily and provide an insight to the vast possibilities for particular forms of commoning in the city. On the other hand, securing more space for more people to devise new ways of sharing and working together without the stresses of accessing space in the city is crucial.

Expanding the spaces for urban commoning is likely to require collaboration. Perhaps through what De Angelis calls 'boundary commoning', "the practice of sharing material resources, knowledge and/or practices between different commons systems. Thus, internal elements of one commons system are included into the boundaries of another system, establishing an exogenous interaction" (Ruiz Cayuela, 2021, p. 1551). Bollier & Helfrich (2019) envision a role for the state to support ecosystems of commoning and argue that the state must find ways to "provide time, space, assistance, legal authority and organizational systems for people to devise their own solutions to problems" (p. 291). Alongside gaining space for commons, having time to common is another important factor that enables the commons in this research to emerge and is what I turn to next.

6.1.2 Time

The work of creating and reproducing a commons requires time (García-López et al., 2021; Mies, 2014) and having time to care for a commons is influenced by the context of commoner's lives and by the commons itself (Dombroski, 2024b; Poderi, 2021). There are different amounts of time involved in creating (or reclaiming) commons than there is in maintaining a commons over time (Huron, 2015). The depths of time needed to care for a commons can also change throughout a common's existence, such as the revitalization of a language which snowballs and strengthens over time or the establishment of a food forest that grows and becomes a sufficient ecosystem. Another important consideration is that people do not always want to continue to contribute to a commons project and the long-term maintenance of a commons requires care for future commoners (Huron, 2015). In the case of the repair knowledge commons and the workspace commons, these are recent commons that have been created and require their own kind of maintenance. For example, time is

given to the repair café once per month and time during the standard work week was dedicated across the collective to the Understorey.

Ōtautahi Repair Revolution made it clear that it becomes easier to run the repair events, and maintain the repair knowledge commons, when someone was acting as a coordinator to organize and oversee the repair events. Having this facilitator alongside the staff member at the Ecohub, ensured dedicated time was allocated towards the repair events and that scaffolding of the event was in place for volunteers to participate within. Volunteer repairers gave their time (many after their waged work) to participate at the repair café events. This included the time it took to pack their cars with tools and materials and transport them to the hub to ensure a diversity of repairs. It is not only the time repairers put towards their engagement at the repair café but also the way they prioritized their time to collaborate and share their skills rather than work as an individual. For example, the time it took a repairer during an event to teach someone a new skill or provide oversight and guidance on another repairer's work, rather than focusing on fixing the most items they could in one night. It is in these moments of collaboration and sharing that the repair knowledge commons is created and reproduced. The Understorey also made it clear that it is easier to maintain the coworking commons through the coordination of time given by staff and members to keep the space open and hosted. However, dedicating *enough* time to the Understorey ultimately depleted The Green Lab's capacity for other projects and this was crucial in the decision to close the Understorey. Although members' volunteer time helped to support the running of the space, this was not enough to maintain consistency. As commons require the continual labour of commoning, time is inevitably required for the reproduction of commons.

Time is also significant to theories of work and postwork. An impact of the dominance of waged work in the Anglosphere is that time is seen to be sold 'to the market' and time is assessed through notions of productivity and profitability (Azzellini, 2018; Bailey & Madden, 2017; Marx, 1867/1990). This relationship to time informs a culture of work that focuses on maximizing time, of using rest time as a means to become more productive and finding ways to offload and free up time to become more efficient (Black, 1986; Hersey, 2022). Here time is something to be honed and used for all it is 'worth', as captured by the phrase 'time is money' (Gregory, 2015). This shapes not just how time is treated and experienced but also informs "societal relations and

subjectivities" (Diprose, 2020, p. 243). For Marx (1867/1990), the commodification of workers' labour power (their time) creates a form of alienation and exploitation. Worker's time is displaced from them as it is bought and directed by employers in exchange for a wage. In places where a wage is necessary to live well, many workers must sell their time. For postwork and degrowth scholars, time must be set free from the compulsion to work (Acaroglu, 2020; MacLeavy & Lapworth, 2020; Weeks, 2016). The use of time should focus on "producing only those things truly necessary for the reproduction of society" (Saito, p. 191). These scholars strategize how to shrink or eliminate the time dedicated to waged work, whether through a universal basic income, through automation or through commons (Chamberlain, 2018; MacLeavy & Lapworth, 2020; Nedelsky & Malleson, 2023; Williams & Srnicek, 2013). Both of the commons in this research offer ways to think differently about time as it relates to work.

For example, at the repair café time was valued as a resource to gift to others. This marks an important difference in relationships to work-time that are often alienating and coerced. When speaking to repairers it became clear that the repair events were an opportunity to gift their time to others. Repairers were valuing their time for how it enabled them to build relationships and provide help to others. Interestingly, Alan does use his time performing repair labour 'on the market' through his professional repair business but also gifts his time to others at the repair café. As Alan and other repairers voiced in Chapter Four, he does not want to be paid for his time at the repair café. Significantly Alan identifies a freedom of the repair café in that it is not constrained by needing to 'keep the lights on' and exists without the financial pressures of a repair business. As the repair café does not require substantial monetary support to run, the time that volunteers are providing is the fuel that keeps the repair café alight. Repairers did feel that a dedicated coordinator should be paid for their time, but people wanted to repair without receiving payment. In valuing time through the lens of a gift, this decommodifies the time taken to repair and highlights the relationships that surround their repair labour, bringing into focus the collective aim to foster and share repair skills and knowledge. Time as a gift to be given reinjects autonomy and relationality into this time, offering a different evaluation of the role and use of time that prioritizes collective aims and rests on reciprocity and trust. Such notions of time are also reflected in the ethics and practices of time banking where the sharing of labour is seen to contribute to a collective

interdependence (see Diprose, 2020). Repairers are dedicating their time as a gift to others and this pooling of time as a collective has enabled them to produce a repair knowledge commons.

In the case of the Understorey, work time is appropriated to build a different kind of work culture. In the Understorey, members used the coworking space to perform their paid work and at the same time, pushed against dominant work norms. In this example, time 'on the market' as a paid worker can be funnelled into a commons, a commons that transforms the experience of performing waged work. Understorey members use their time to work but also to common, pushing back against worker norms, and this has produced a wellbeing commons. As Saito (2020/2024) explains, the previous generation of degrowth theorists focused on fostering creative and social activities for the time spent *outside* work. Much like postwork theorists, they focused on ways to reduce work hours as much as possible (often through automation), so that "even if labour is tedious or taxing, it will be easier to bear" (Saito, 2024, p. 194). However, Marx was interested in 'attractive work', of eliminating the meaninglessness from work and injecting satisfaction, rather than erase work completely (Saito, 2020/2024). Often 'work time' is seen as time that is distinct from the rest of life, and it is thought that 'nonwork time' is required to break free from the problems with work. Mitchell et al. (2003) as well as Morrow and Dombroski (2015) demonstrate how spheres of 'work' and 'non-work' are not so neatly separate but intersect and overlap in the many spaces of life, in the home, in the workplace, in community spaces and beyond. The Understorey provides yet another example of the intersecting nature of the production of life's work where paid work, community care and commoning are enacted in the same space. Transforming work 'from the inside' during work hours is not simply about evading labour but finding out how to make work a better experience for workers. This appropriation of time, time that is more than simply 'productive', is one way of reframing work time.

Overall, time can be constricted or available for the care of commons in various ways. What has been important to me in this research is thinking about how time dedicated to paid work in the Anglosphere can impact how people use their time overall. As previously discussed, paid work in the Anglosphere is intensifying and encroaching in many people's lives and there is also a gendering of non-work time that can inform and impact the kinds of work people participate in (Granter et al., 2015; Niazi et al., 2024; Organo et al., 2013). Thinking about how to build desirable

worlds in the here and now is in part a practical matter of what people can do with their time. Postwork scholars are particularly concerned with the way that work takes up time through a persistent work culture. Commons provide a way to collectivize and share the possibilities of people's time. The commons I have discussed here offer some ways that we can identify and further imagine what meaningful work could look like outside and inside of formal workplaces and the role that time has to play in this. Whereby time is repurposed, where workers gain more autonomy over their time and where new meanings of time come to the forefront.

6.1.3 Care

Lastly, I want to discuss the role of care in commons. Commons scholars have identified the way care plays an important role in reproducing commons in several ways. First, care is part of the labour that sustains a commons as much of the work of reproducing commons involves forms of care work (Dombroski, 2024b; García-López et al., 2021). Secondly, care is part of what sustains the relationships between commoners as commons require the careful negotiation between commoners to collaborate effectively (Bollier & Helfrich, 2019; Brandtner et al., 2023; De Angelis, 2017; Dombroski, 2024b; García-López et al., 2021). It is not simply caring for a commons that ensures that commons are successful, but the responsive and receptive care required for successful relationships with others. But what brings people together in the first place? I argue that the motivation to common rests on care for something specific and that this is a necessary factor of the commons. What a commons community cares about can change over time and is likely to differ at least slightly between members (Huron, 2015). But care for something is what draws people together to create and sustain a commons. What is being cared for by commoners is particularly important for drawing a commons community together in an urban commons context.

Amanda Huron (2015) includes two key characteristics in her definition of urban commons. First, urban commons are commons located in saturated spaces. Secondly, urban commons involve working with strangers. By 'strangers' she means "people who do not come from the same place geographically, culturally, or perhaps even politically" (Huron, 2015, p. 969). She argues that commoning in an urban environment is more challenging than any other due to these two characteristics. This is because people living in rural places with smaller populations are likely closer to one another or at least familiar with each other, their relationships potentially connecting

them multiple generations into the past (Huron, 2015). Saturated urban spaces, however, are full of strangers that must work harder to form new connections and ties (Huron, 2015). In both instances, ongoing care for commons includes challenges and tensions that arise when producing 'community' (Diprose, 2016; Dombroski, 2024b; Huron, 2015).

So, what motivates people to come together and to *work together*? For Huron, what motivates strangers to work together is diverse. Engaging in commoning can come at a point of crisis (such as after a natural disaster) or through a mutual desire to address an important need (such as housing or food security). Both of the commons of this research are a part of urban settings and involve 'strangers' who must create ties with one another to work together. That being said, Christchurch has a relatively small city population considering New Zealand's small 5.2 million national population and is therefore rather well-connected. What makes the commoners 'strangers' to one another, in my eyes, is their lack of experience working together and collaborating in such a way as an urban commons requires.

Ōtautahi Repair Revolution began from a shared excitement to fix everyday 'stuff' and from a motivation to play a part in shifting away from a dominant throwaway culture. This was a call to action that resonated with others beyond the original group of the intentional community house, leading to the creation of the Richmond repair café. The Understorey began from a recognition that accessible space was needed for inner city artists, freelancers and not-for-profits (and the like) as well as a personal connection of the director of The Green Lab (at that time) to create space for the communities closest to them. From these starting motivations, the commoner communities began to form around each of these projects. If comparing the two field sites, it is clear that these two communities are very different. For example, the Understorey is a radically equity-seeking space with attention to disability, colonisation, and queerness among other things. The space has a gen z and millennial 'vibe' about it and is evidently oriented by leftist politics. In comparison, the repair café is a mix of people, some of whom want to save money, some who feel strongly about waste, and who are of a wide range of ages. In some ways, the repair café functions like an intergenerational community such as those found at churches, marae and community clubs, that bring together people who have very different backgrounds. Viv articulates this formation of community at the repair café:

> Where else in life do we come together as a disparate group of people around a shared value? There aren't very many. And yet those spaces are the most meaningful places. We have these echo chambers or socially defined groups that we find ourselves in, we live in streets with people who've got the same kind of amounts of money as us, or at the same stage of life. Or we find ourselves in online spaces where the algorithm has put us together. [The repair café] It's a commonality, but it's not necessarily a commonality of life experience or points of view or political alignment. And we used to in the commons, the literal commons, we used to find ourselves rubbing alongside people with different interests and values. So its exploring other ways of being together, even when all these urges push us to be different and confrontational.

Viv has captured what makes a commons community which is a commonality built from doing together. At the repair café, a commoner community is built around the labour of repair. As a community of practice, the repair café provides a space to interact with people outside of one another's political associations or socioeconomic grouping, as Viv explains above. Such relationships built through the act of repair may provide the social bonds to soften the edge of an opposing belief or political view as a commonality has been established. However, at the Understorey, a commoner community is built around an explicit political alignment. Having members at the Understorey with opposing political views would be clearly awkward in this space. Although the community were formed through the commoning of workspace, they were notably reaffirming a political identity. At the same time, this is not to say that everyone who used the Understorey was there for this reason. Sometimes people participate in commons because it makes the most sense for them to do so, not necessarily because it is an intentional and political act. This could be the case for both of the field sites. Although repair is largely framed as an act of environmental advocacy, the motivations to participate at repair events can just as significantly be driven by social connection, financial stability, networking, a sense of community, love for an object, a sense of achievement, or simply being curious to see how it works. Although Understorey members spoke about being drawn to the Understorey because of its inclusivity or because it had a work culture they liked compared to other coworking spaces, it is possible that some of the people who used the Understorey may have done so simply because it was a convenient and accessible coworking space. It is important to consider the people, and therefore the perspectives, that may

not be contributing to the creation of a commons. However, exclusion is also a part of creating communities and does not automatically signal a shortcoming. For example, intentional exclusion was a strategy used to secure use of the Understorey for Queer and Māori folk to be together. Such exclusions are nuanced parts of the creation of community. Overall, care for a commons, whether driven by politics or a practice, brings a collective of 'strangers' together as commoners. The different motivations for the care of commons provide multiple entry points to foster many kinds of commons.

6.1.4 From Creating Commons to Deeper Commoning

I argue that having space to common in, time to produce commons and care for something are the three most significant factors that have enabled commons to emerge in post-quake Christchurch. This answers my first research question. One additional factor that made these commons possible was funding, a resource many contemporary commons partially rely on (Ruiz Cayuela, 2021). However, the three factors of space, time and care were the most significant for creating and maintaining these commons. Although funding is often an important resource for many communities to access space (through renting or hiring space) and regain time (through wages for labour) in a city like Christchurch, funding is not a primary factor for creating these commons but a current means to access space, time and other materials that were required for commoning. In the hopes that funding becomes less of a requirement for commoning in the Anglosphere, the factors of space, time and care remain the key factors for the creation of commons. Without space, time, and care, these commoning projects would not have been able to exist. These three factors of space, time, and care also contribute to the 'deeper layers' of commoning that I have identified in Chapters Four and Five and I will discuss these deeper layers of commoning and the impacts they have for repairing work shortly.

In answering my first research question, I contribute empirically to theories of the commons by highlighting space, time and care as the key factors of commoning in post-quake Christchurch. Specifically, I contribute to theories of urban commons by highlighting opportunities to access space for commoning in the city. Some commons scholars highlight the way that cities are increasingly enclosed spaces that can force commoning out (Harvey, 2012; Stavrides, 2015) and others highlight the opportunities for the use of different kinds of space in the city for commoning,

such as transitional spaces (Dombroski et al., 2019). What I have found is that the city holds both exclusions and opportunities to create urban commons that emerge specifically within place (Cloke & Conradson, 2018; Cretney, 2019; Dombroski et al., 2019) and specific to the aims of the commons project. Not all urban commons projects aim for complete occupation of space and are able to be successful because of this, without diluting their impact. The commons projects that aim for complete occupation of space are likely to face larger barriers in a saturated city and require broader cross-sector support. I also contribute to theories of urban commons by applying the concept of life's work (Mitchell et al., 2003; Morrow and Dombroski, 2015) to identify appropriations of (paid) work time that are used to common workspace. By identifying the intersecting nature of the production of life's work, opportunities to common a different work culture are evident and are already possible. Finally, like Dombroski (2024b), I highlight the role of care in creating a commons and therefore a commons community. What motivates people to care for a commons is specific, sometimes this is around a practice and sometimes this is around a particular politics. Furthermore, the reason why each commoner cares for a commons can be very different, but a shared care for something is what brings commoners together.

As enclosures of the commons led to waged work in the Anglosphere, reclaiming commons can help to challenge waged work. Different kinds of commons challenge waged work more directly than others, such as commons that enable commoners to live by supporting essential human needs (food, shelter, health). While the two commons of this research do not challenge waged work in this way, they do support different ways of producing and consuming and create meaningful work that helps to repair the brokenness of work in the Anglosphere. I argue that this is possible through the 'deeper commoning' that I have identified through the 'deeper layers' of commoning at the repair café and the Understorey. This deeper commoning captures the affects of commoning that hold important potential for shifting subjectivities. As Brandtner et al. (2023) and Wagenaar and Bartels (2024) emphasize, commons are not just mere resources or property but are dynamic and relational and a key interest for commons scholars is the production of commoner subjectivities (Stavrides, 2012). It is not just the commoning of resources or the creation of commoner subjectivities that makes commoning significant but how, together, these lead to the cultivation of different ways of being in the world. As Neera Singh (2017) states "the commons (. . .) are not just resources for supporting material existence but are sources for nurturance of our subjectivity"

(p. 762). Therefore "revival of the commons, then, becomes critical not simply from the perspective of restoration of access and control over physical resources, but from the perspective of (. . .) finding a way to produce alternate subjectivities and alternate worlds" (Singh, 2017, p. 762). What deeper commoning showcases are the different ways of being in the world that people are enacting as they participate in the two commons.

I call this 'deeper' commoning because this form of commoning needs to be surfaced. Unlike repair knowledge or workspace, the deeper layers of a repair sensibility and worker wellbeing cannot be seen or interacted with. This layer describes shifts happening to commoners as part of their experience in the commons, compared to the outwards 'doing' of commoning. Deeper commoning describes shifts in culture and subjectivity which are intangible and are unfolding within each person. The use of 'deeper' as a descriptor is not intended to create a binary of shallow and deep with the implication of one layer of commoning being valued over the other. The resource layer is not 'shallow' or less significant as a result of the 'deeper' layer of commoning. However, compared to identifying the tangible resources being commoned (knowledge, workspace), identifying the intangible shifts in subjectivity requires an intentional surfacing to analyse them.

Furthermore, the layers of commoning I describe are not severed but are interconnected. This layering reflects the layering of whakapapa. Whakapapa consists of connected layers placed upon one another and links all things, animate and inanimate (Ngata & Ngata, 2019; Roberts, 2013). Although whakapapa is often used to discuss human genealogical connection which can invoke a fixed set of connections and relations, "whakapapa, read in light of its layering nuance, enables us to think of things in the world as constantly moving" (Mika, 2014, p. 54). Like whakapapa, my use of 'layering' involves a multiplicity of layers that weave together. In this sense, one layer of commoning does not sit above the other in a hierarchy, instead they are enmeshed. The term 'layers' is useful in capturing the dynamics of commoning at the two field sites because the more people common repair knowledge and coworking space, the more a repair sensibility and worker wellbeing are able to form. These layers build with each other. Although commoning requires having a resource to collectively care for (Bollier, 2014; De Angelis, 2017; Gibson-Graham et al., 2013; Huron, 2018), once the two commons communities formed around the care of a resource,

this set the deeper commoning into motion and the interconnected dynamism between the layers began. Next, I discuss these deeper layers and their implications for repairing work.

6.2 Repairing Things, Attuning Ourselves

People make decisions to repair or dispose their broken items from embodied habits and currently many people in New Zealand discard broken items out of sight (Blumhardt & Prince, 2022; Diprose et al., 2023; United Nations Environment Programme, 2021). Diprose et al. (2023) theorize this common response as a throw-it-away subjectivity. However, Ōtautahi Repair Revolution acknowledges the dominant throwaway culture that is present in New Zealand and they work collectively to instead *repair* items at the repair café. For some people engaged with the repair café, repairing is a new response to the breakdown of their items and a new set of skills and knowledge that they are beginning to learn. For others, repair is a very familiar and habitual practice that they continue to cultivate. These varied experiences meet one another at the repair café. As this happens, participants create and care for a repair knowledge commons. But I argue that Ōtautahi Repair Revolution are also commoning at a deeper layer as they foster a repair sensibility. Caring for this repair sensibility is I argue, what creates shifts towards a repair subjectivity. This deeper layer of commoning can be understood through theories of 'learning to be affected' and of touch. Drawing on Latour (2004) and Puig de la Bellacasa (2017), in what follows I discuss the way repairers and visitors of the repair café are learning to be affected through the care of objects, leading them to 'attune' to the process of repair and make shifts towards a repair subjectivity.

Visitors to the repair café are able to see with their own eyes (and sometimes feel with their own hands), what it takes to repair an item. They have sat with repairers who problem-solve, replace parts and make a mend. Others have learnt firsthand why their item could not be repaired at all. They are shown the tiny but mighty component that makes the difference between a broken or usable appliance. Having attended the repair café, many of the visitors and the repairers have started to make different choices in the maintenance of their items, drawing on the diversity of repairers' recommendations. Some have gone on to support their local repair business or advocate for the New Zealand right to repair amendment bill. It is clear that such experience with repair

may increase possibilities for producing, consuming and maintaining possessions differently. Bruno Latour (2004) has thought about how such a shift may happen, specifically through the body. He uses his idea of learning to be affected to "describe the ways in which a body comes to 'interface' with its surroundings in such a way as to increase its capacity to act" (Latour, 2004, as cited in Dombroski, 2024a, p. 137). Drawing on this idea for my argument, learning to be affected is something that can happen through the body's interaction with broken objects at the repair café. Latour (2004) uses the example of perfume, where a person becomes trained in the perfume industry "through the use of odour kits until able to distinguish a wide range of odours not distinguishable to those who have not learned to be affected in this way" (Latour, 2004, as cited in Dombroski, 2024a, p. 137). Learning to be affected involves bodily learning, a process where bodies become more receptive to and are put into motion by the world that surrounds them (Cameron et al., 2011). Cameron et al. (2011) and Dombroski (2018) have each drawn on the idea of learning to be affected. For example, Cameron and colleagues (2011) use the idea to think about how community gardeners can learn to be affected by the climate and by community gardens and undergo embodied forms of learning that help them respond to a climate changing world. For Dombroski (2018), learning to be affected is useful for thinking about the way caregivers can cultivate a form of maternal intuition through responding to their infants' excreta signals. Similarly, learning to be affected is useful for thinking about the way participants at the repair café become *attuned* to the process of repair.

For some, learning about repair has come about by entering the repair café and witnessing the disassembly and reassembly of items. For others who are more familiar with repairing their things, the repair café may be part of their continual engagement with repair, with the repair café providing an opportunity to deepen and diversify their repair skills. Both kinds of engagements with repair can involve a process of learning to be affected. At the repair café, learning to be affected happens through bodily interaction with objects. Touch has an important role to play here. Maria Puig de la Bellacasa's work is particularly helpful in thinking about such interaction between bodies and objects. Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) theorizes touch as a co-transformative engagement, where "to touch is to be touched" (p. 114) and where touch has an "affective charge" (p. 98). Much focus is given to how human actors touch objects and, in this case, have a positive impact in repairing them. But as repairers touch the objects they repair, the objects also 'touch' them. The objects have their

own agency within the process of repair and can inspire significant emotional responses from those *they* touch. In both directions, human repairers and objects impact one another through the process of repair and maintenance (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). For objects to be touched is seen in the process of their repair. For repairers to be touched by objects is reflected in the way repairers learn to be affected.

In learning to be affected by objects, repairers must be receptive and responsive to objects in order to repair them and this involves 'attuning' to the process of repair. Attuning to the process of repair includes recognizing that an item is broken, diagnosing the problem, gathering relevant tools and materials, taking the item apart and putting it back together. An important part of people's attunement to objects is in their engagement with the *mess* of repair. The mess of repair includes the outcome of untangling, disassembling and unpicking an item and is where everything comes apart as well as the range of emotions that can arise in the experience of trying to repair an item. For example, how one tiny metal screw can 'screw up' the chances of replacing a battery. Or how delicate a repairer must be with a near invisible thread that they painstakingly line up and pierce through fabric. The mess of repair is also in the dirty, food-encrusted, chipped, and stained items. This feature of items in need of repair is highly contrasted to the neat, clean, 'aesthetically pleasing' version of the items that is initially portrayed through their advertising and first-hand purchase. But in order to make a repair, repairers must come into contact with such mess. The owner themselves may too stumble upon this mess that was perhaps previously hidden inside the item. Touching this mess or sticking with the dissatisfying emotions that can arise within the process of repair, can often be required to achieve a successful repair. Repairers can increase their acceptance of such mess (physical and emotional) through continual engagement, often leading them to try different strategies to maintain the objects as they react to this mess. Repairing an item does not necessarily eliminate the evidence of this mess. In fact, repairers may strategically highlight the change and imperfection of an item through visible repair, such as adding colourful patches to clothes.

The mess of repair also includes the joys of performing a successful repair, the satisfaction in reassembling what was only moments before a shamble of parts. Appreciating the quality of an item and its intelligent and future-thinking design. The delight in minimalist components that

easily fit back together. The ease of removing a smooth sliding panel to reveal what is underneath. Or weighty textiles that hold their integrity as they are sliced and resewn. Repair does not always require discomfort but an increased capacity to face a range of emotions and levels of difficulty in attempts to repair an item. For example, Alan explained in Chapter Four how taking an item apart is familiar to him as a professional repairer but potentially confronting for the owner of the item and daunting for him in managing their response in the context of repairing at the repair cafe. In Chapter Four, Imogen conveyed her frustration over her poorly made socks that often cannot be repaired due to their low-quality construction. For Imogen, finding socks that are better quality will allow for a more satisfying use of her repair skill in the future. Both Alan and Imogen face new challenges as they continue to practice repair.

Another aspect of attuning to the process of repair was captured by Viv who described in Chapter Four that an item is not a singular thing but 'a thousand things'. Such a discovery and acknowledgement of the many hard-working parts contained within, whether it be the wires, wheels and motors in an electronic item or the cotton and polyester threads interwoven in a textile, showcase the familiarization needed to repair an item. Repairers must identify how each part impacts the other and therefore which part needs to be taken care of. Repairers must notice how materials are acting and reacting to different conditions and methods of repair and adjust their decisions accordingly. When time permits repairers are able to experiment with new techniques, new tools they have acquired and new materials they have found, gaining more understanding of what does and does not work.

As repairers and visitors continue to engage at the repair café, attuning to the process of repair may become clearer. While some repairers continue to rely on manuals and tutorials or others' guidance, more and more the practice of repair is able to become intuitive over time. As people continue to respond and engage with items, becoming familiar with one kind such as a toaster, vacuum or jug, or gaining familiarity of an issue that spans across a range of items, they may develop an embodied intuition. Perhaps no longer needing to refer to manuals or YouTube videos.

As Ōtautahi Repair Revolution encourage visitors of the repair café to attempt repairs themselves, this creates a culture of openness to try repairs without being an expert repairer. Rather than simply

receive a repair service provided by members of the community, visitors were drawn in to be repairers themselves. This creates an opportunity for visitors to the repair café to become more closely attuned to repair, even if only through a 'small' act of reattaching the sole of a shoe or unpicking a zip. However small, this contact with broken items and their repair – such as squeezing sticky glue from a tube and pressing the sole of the shoe back to the body – enabled visitors to be part of the process of repair and to 'be touched' by objects.

This increased capacity to repair can and does occur at a more individual or household level. However, learning to be affected at the repair café increases the possibilities to be affected and the kinds of learning that take place. This is because the capacities to be affected by objects and to attune to the process of repair is supported by being in a collective. The collective knowledge, labour, sharing of tools and materials, Facebook pages, online group chats, and bringing together those who already have embodied knowledge multiplies the possibilities to learn, to make a successful repair and to overcome the difficulties of repair. As Zac expressed in Chapter Four, having someone in person to teach him made a significant difference in his ability to repair but was for the repairer, a split second.

Being part of a collective can also inspire different emotional links. In Chapter Four, Viv describes the "thrill" of repairing in a collective that can replace the thrill of shopping. She also describes a primal delight of repair for everyone in the room regardless of their motivation to repair objects. Such affective encounters with repair can 'touch' or 'move' people towards repairing their possessions rather than throw them away, shifting them from a disposing consumer to a careful repairer. As Imogen discussed in Chapter Four, her relationship to her possessions shifted through her engagement with repair, whereby she will one day have a sock draw filled with socks she can and will want to repair. Repairers are able to attune to repair more broadly and more deeply because of their participation in a collective. It has required the pooling of knowledge and skills to gain this particular bodily experience of repair.

In Chapter Four Zac explained that part of the advocacy for repair is about making professional repair services accessible in order to "validate the role of the repairer as a necessary job". While it is important to have efficient and effective professional repair services, it is also important to have

affective engagement with repair. This is because of the potential to be moved (to be *touched*) by the repair of objects in order to shift from a throw-it-away response towards a repair sensibility. Although the repair café does aim to fix items to bring them back into use, they also emphasize experimentation and connection and do not claim to be able to fix items in the same way as a professional repair service. As Alan explained in Chapter Four, most people do not get to see what happens during a repair as customers of repair services drop off their item to be fixed. The repair café instead provides the opportunity for anyone to see and feel a sense of what it is like to repair, whether they are performing a repair or watching it happen. Such affective encounters with repair are where people come into contact with the breakdown of their items, the messy repair process, the attempts, the success, the failures and the waste that is left. Such affective encounters are not simply about fixing a kettle but can help to repair something much deeper: our relationship to the metabolic flows and natural systems that we depend on.

As I explored in Chapter Two, humans are (unequally) exceeding many environmental limits and are creating and disposing of an overwhelming amount of waste, contributing to a rift between humans and the natural systems that sustain them. Theories of degrowth and of the circular economy are proposed as a way to shift from these forms of production and consumption in the Anglosphere. But enacting these new kinds of economies involve different relationships to materials. Singh (2017) discusses the role that subjectivities have for different ways of being in the world which provides a source of hope for new ways of interacting with, as well as producing and consuming 'stuff' (see also García-López et al., 2021). Singh (2017) highlights commons as sites of "affective encounters productive of novel subjectivities" (p. 767). Singh (2017) describes how practices of commoning enable the "emergence of other-than-capitalist subjectivities" (p. 751). Through their commoning, Ōtautahi Repair Revolution are cultivating a repair subjectivity. This shift towards a repair subjectivity was captured nicely in Chapter Four through a quote from Viv:

> People who come to repair café could just as easily drop that broken thing in the bin and go down to [store name] and buy another one made by a slave. But they choose not to, they do something more sophisticated, and they engage with how that thing works and how it might be fixed and they go, 'well maybe there's something smarter we can do'".

In commoning repair knowledge and a repair sensibility, the community are able to attune to the process of repair and are forming repairer subjectivities which are not only important for performing circular economies but offer a way to begin to heal the metabolic rift.

Attuning to the process of repair holds transformational potential as it contributes towards what Savini (2023) calls 'degrowth circularity'. Degrowth circularity involves circular practices partnered with reducing production and consumption to downscale economies. Degrowth circularity requires labours of reuse, repair, and refusal as well as networks of relationships to form well-connected circular economies (Llorente-González & Vence, 2020; Savini, 2023). Savini (2023) notes that the idea of circular economies has gained a lot of interest as a way to respond to waste, particularly amongst policymakers who face the challenge of mounting waste and the depletion of resources. However, much of circular economies thinking is dominated by techno-managerial and pro-growth assumptions that often ignore the role of profit in producing waste (Corvellec et al., 2022; Friant, 2020; Morrow & Davies, 2022). Many circular propositions simply tweak economies to create more circularity that generates economic value from waste, rather than transforming economies through a circularity that downscales production and consumption (Savini, 2023; Saito, 2020/2024). Circular actions in these mainstream approaches often focus on corporate forms of resource efficiency which have monetary returns that are built on consumer choices (e.g. responsible eco-consumers and packaging return schemes) (Hobson, 2016; Savini 2023). With this focus, growth does not get problematized as it can create circular resources.

Furthermore, circular economy approaches often lack consideration for the role of labour in implementing forms of circularity, both in the form of paid labour (e.g. 'green' or 'circular economy' jobs) and everyday labour (e.g. household waste management) that are performed by a range of actors (Llorente-González & Vence, 2020). Instead, circular economies thinking has been dominated by a focus on technology and large-scale industrial systems and often leaves out the socio-cultural transformations that circular economies require (Hobson, 2016; Llorente-González & Vence, 2020). Morrow and Davies (2022) have brought attention to a loss of concern for the social dimensions of circular economies which were once at the core of circular economy discourse. The social dimensions include social, ethical and ecological concerns found in permaculture and ecological design that were influential in circular economy discourse in the 1970s. However, the

social dimensions were replaced by a technocentric and capitalocentric approach and the application of circular economies is now largely policy-led rather than activist driven and with a focus on consultancy-level management of material flows (Friant et al., 2020; Morrow & Davies, 2022).

The work of Ōtautahi Repair Revolution is just one example that demonstrates how crucial labour is to a 'higher order' form of circularity like repair and the deeper socio-cultural shifts that are integral to this labour. Repair is an incredibly tangible process that involves a detailed understanding and engagement with an item. This involves touching, observing and interacting during the process of repair. Making an informed decision about repair cannot be done without being accustomed to what repair looks and feels like. Although some forms of circularity, like recycling, may be able to be automated in particular ways, it only takes one visit to a repair café to know that this is not the case when repairing items. Ōtautahi Repair Revolution also demonstrates the central role of 'social dimensions' in the labour of repair. This includes the relationship building and collaboration between repairers, the empowerment of learning repair skills, sewing someone's only warm pyjamas, or providing 'human repair' that tends to our own human needs for care and repair. Repair requires the coming together of and coordination between owners of items and repairers and the appropriate knowledge and materials needed to perform a repair. This is often a coming together of concerns, personal stories, previous attempts, asking for help, and unique and personalized solutions. As an act of production that reinstates use-value, repair shows a way towards more caring material use that focuses on the longevity and quality of what is produced. A repair intervention enables the already-produced item to continue in use, eliminating the need for a replacement item. This contributes towards what Savini (2023) calls 'degrowth circularity', whereby circular economies support cycles of material re-use that ultimately downscale the volume of production, consumption and suggests a path towards keeping within planetary limits.

In this way repairing *stuff* is one way to start to 'repair' the metabolic rift. The metabolic rift captures the socioecological disconnect of humans from the natural systems that sustain them (Goburdhone & Dombroski, 2023; Moore, 2000). Repairing this rift requires fostering a different, more caring relationship to nature that is aware of the many nutrient cycles that everyone depends

on (Goburdhone & Dombroski, 2023). One part of this rift is the intensive extraction of resources and harmful production processes that create everyday belongings. What's more, the continual disposal of these items are causing even more harm to these depleted systems. Instead, repairers collectively intervening in throwaway culture through learning to be affected by objects provides one way to begin to heal this rift. This does not mean everyone must know how to repair everything they own or having to take on this responsibility alone, but to reclaim and expand the collective capacity to repair, to undergo an embodied attunement to repair that is enabled by the collective, to maintain and keep what is owned rather than replace and consume more and to reflect on the decision-making of manufacturers that determine the repairability of items. Learning to be affected and therefore attuning to repair can help to create new attachments to 'stuff' and foster new ways of being in the world.

Ōtautahi Repair Revolution acknowledges the current throw-it-away culture that is dominant in New Zealand and in the Anglosphere more broadly. In response, they have joined together around this concern and common repair knowledge at the repair café. As a result, a deeper layer of commoning takes place and fosters a repair sensibility. This deeper layer occurs as repairers and visitors of the repair café learn to be affected and attune to the process of repair. These affective encounters with repair enable collective repair subjectivities to emerge and be shaped by collective care for repair knowledge. What this deeper commoning provides is an insight into what it can look like to leave a trajectory of perpetual consumption. In this section, I have demonstrated the potential that attuning to repair has for creating new subjectivities, for shifting towards a degrowth circularity and for healing the metabolic rift.

In answering my second research question, I contribute to theories of circular economies and work. As Morrow and Davies (2022) make clear, the social dimensions of circular economies have increasingly faded out of sight despite their necessary role in the implementation of circular solutions. These social dimensions include "social impacts, equity, justice, ethics, practices, [and] values" (Morrow & Davies, 2022, p. 533). My research demonstrates that these social dimensions remain vital to participate and strengthen circular economies, including a degrowth circularity (Savini, 2023). Circular economies require socio-cultural transformations, and this includes transformations of labour, specifically the inclusion of messy forms of labour like repair which are

particularly important for downscaling consumption and material use. I have shown how collectives have an important role to play in supporting this labour of circular economies. The deeper commoning I have discussed shows how learning to be affected by objects allows participants of the repair café to undergo an embodied attunement to repair that enables shifts towards a repair subjectivity. By acknowledging the messy forms of labour that are necessary for circular economies and the role of deeper commoning for enabling socio-cultural shifts, repair labour is highlighted as a key site for healing the metabolic rift.

6.3 Repairing Space, Repairing Bodies

Currently workers in the Anglosphere are experiencing pressure to work longer and harder and feelings of meaninglessness in work persist (Ballard, 2021; Dahlgreen, 2015; Granter et al., 2015; Niazi et al., 2024). The COVID-19 pandemic created new kinds of work pressures including the closure of offices and the shift to work from home which launched many workers into a new territory of work that was often overwhelming and isolating (Al-Habaibeh et al., 2021). Now with increasing living costs, more pressure amounts to secure work that provides enough monetary relief. Simultaneously, the hope to find meaningful waged work continues. Within this context, The Green Lab created the Understorey for a range of workers to have accessible workspace in the inner city and to support a range of identity groups often marginalized in the city. As members used the Understorey, they formed as a community of commoners that care for a workspace commons, one that works to make the Understorey an accessible, safe and inclusive space. But I argue that Understorey members are also commoning a deeper layer through creating and caring for worker wellbeing. Worker wellbeing is fostered as The Green Lab and members of the Understorey care for bodies. Their care for bodies responds to the diverse needs of bodies but not for the purpose of productivity. Instead, their care for bodies fosters collective wellbeing. This deeper layer of commoning worker wellbeing is understood through theories of care and resistance from writers of the Black feminist tradition (Kim & Schalk, 2021; Wiens & MacDonald, 2021), particularly activist Tricia Hersey's (2022) work on 'rest as resistance'. Drawing on their engagements with the body, care and resistance, I argue that the collective care for bodies at the Understorey produces worker wellbeing that enables a shift from a productivist subjectivity to a wellbeing subjectivity.

Theories of alienation capture a sense of estrangement or disconnection between workers and their work, particularly in the context of the capitalist mode of production (Øversveen, 2022). In Chapter Two I discussed four kinds of alienation outlined by Marx. Marx (1867/1990, 1932/1964) describes the effects of capitalist production on workers including the alienation of the worker from their activity, from their products, from their fellows, and from their species-being. Marx's theory of alienation in the capitalist mode of production helps to inform understandings of the alienation typical of the productivist work ethic (Weeks, 2016). The individualizing nature of the productivist work ethic creates similar antagonistic relationships between workers and influences a particularly competitive work culture in the Anglosphere. However, alienated work could be resisted in part through disrupting the individualisation of workers and building solidarity among workers. As workers who are highly dependent on their waged work are particularly exploitable, collective efforts to resist alienation in work are key.

In the context of waged work, improved wellbeing is often linked to the benefit of increased productivity (Watson et al., 2023). While workplace wellbeing initiatives work to increase employee productivity, they often fail to challenge the causes of unwellness (Watson et al., 2023). Employees are taught skills to handle stress and anxiety while often simultaneously overworked and underpaid (Murtola & Vallelly, 2022). Wellbeing is often approached through a neoliberal narrative, where poor wellbeing is framed as a moral failing on the part of the individual who lacks resilience (Dale & Burrell, 2014; Murtola & Vallelly, 2022; Watson et al., 2023). The focus on productivity reduces this care for wellbeing from a relation to a regimented object of care (Bellacasta, 2017, p. 186). While it is predicted that by 2026 global corporate spending on workplace wellness initiatives will reach $94.6 billion (USD), reports of burnout and meaninglessness in work continue to climb (Croft et al., 2024).

Beyond the workplace, notions of wellbeing are also often individualist and productivity-oriented and are most clearly reflected in the popular notion of 'self-care' (Kim & Schalk, 2021; Murtola & Vallelly, 2022; Rosenbaum & Tamlor, 2022). 'Self-care' has been trending on mainstream social media platforms for nearly a decade with an emphasis on consumption as the answer to everyday stressors (Wiens & MacDonald, 2021). In 2024, the $1.8 trillion global self-care industry included a range of optimizing technologies, memberships, medications, and a host of cosmetic

products and services that draw attention away from the causes of unwellness (McKinsey & Company, 2024). These forms of self-care do not challenge, for example, existing work culture, systematic oppression, or make a commitment to political action (Wiens & MacDonald, 2021). Both inside and outside of work, wellbeing is largely framed as an individual responsibility, a framing that is heavily relied upon to increase people's capacities to produce and consume. However, collective practices of wellbeing provide an alternative.

Black feminist, Queer and disability theorists (often writing at the intersection of such positionalities) have written on the importance of rest and the role of the body for collective wellbeing and their work is useful for thinking about the worker wellbeing produced at the Understorey. Many of these writers (re)claim the term 'self-care', with its radical origins, as a concept of political survival, drawing often on Audre Lorde's work titled *A Burst of Light* (1988/2017), and the quote: "caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare" (Lorde, 2017, p. 130). This self-care is not about consumption, nor is it isolated to the individual (Hersey, 2022).

As Kim and Schalk (2021) explain:

> The self for Lorde was never about the individual, bounded body but about how the self exists in relation to and in support of other bodies. In this sense, self-care is socially reproductive, productive of both a social field and a viable future and time for socially dispossessed populations (p. 339)

Such self-care is an act that both disrupts who care is afforded to and ideas of "who has the right to a livable life under the constraints of a colonial, capitalist, heteropatriarchy" (Wiens & MacDonald, 2021, p. 233) From this position, self-care is not only about survival against oppression but an act of resistance which reasserts value of the self and the collective (Caldera, 2020; Rosenbaum & Talmore, 2022).

The work of activist Tricia Hersey (2022) helps me to think about the role of self-preservation for resisting hyper-productivity. In her activist manifesto she describes rest as a form of resistance to

both capitalist productivism and white supremacy, writing from her context in North America. She reflects on the ways the body has been treated as property, the abuse of non-white bodies in reproducing capitalism and white supremacy and the exploitation of bodies for productivity and profit (Hersey, 2022). She reflects on her own unnecessary c-section due to her doctor's rush to move on to the next patient and on witnessing children in school being denied toilet breaks in favour of productivity (Hersey, 2022). She critiques 'grind culture' which glorifies hard work and encourages competition that weakens the love of self and community (Hersey, 2022). This has correlations to Marx's (1867/1990, 1932/1964) third form of alienation where workers are disconnected from and in opposition to each other. Hersey also discusses the 'legacy of exhaustion' in striving towards 'Black excellence' in order to be seen as equal as white people (Hersey, 2022). However, Hersey highlights the body as a site of liberation, for "wherever our bodies are, we can find rest" (Meraji, 2022). For Hersey, intentional and active rest can act as a tool of refusal, not to rest for the purpose of more productivity but to reclaim a sense of worth outside of productivity (Hersey, 2022). And when this is practiced collectively, rest can be a way to reconnect and subvert (Hersey, 2022). Hersey draws on examples of disrupting productivity through forms of rest, such as her ancestors who slowed down production in cotton fields and the recent 'quiet quitting' phenomena in workplaces across the world (Formica & Sfodera, 2022; Meraji, 2022). Such 'self-care' goes beyond the individual and beyond its current form as consumerist self-improvement.

Such a resistance of productivity is evident at the Understorey. This occurs through paying attention to the body, and in particular different kinds of bodies, which creates collective wellbeing. This attention to bodies is about the embodied experience of work and also the care for the diverse identities of those working at the Understorey, which informs different wellbeing needs. First, Understorey members paid attention to their bodies, both emotionally and physically. This is exemplified through the encouragement to take time away from computer screens, to sit together to take a break, and to participate in community check-ins. This was also seen in The Green Lab's recognition of the impacts of living with chronic illness and the staff members who were provided with a level of work that meet their needs. Secondly, people were talking about their lived experiences openly. The conversations that took place at the Understorey were open and honest about people's circumstances as well as their lived experiences. For example, the workshops that involved budgeting personal finances, expressions of difficult family dynamics or troubling life

events. These conversations were common and reinforced the understanding that such topics could be brought to the table. This also includes the conversations about discrimination, structural inequality, a system of capitalism and a history of colonialism, uncovering some of the systematic causes of unwellness (Sheridan et al., 2024; Stats NZ, 2022; Vargas et al., 2020). Thirdly, the physical environment, filled with plants, connects members back to a sense of aliveness. As an environmentally-oriented organisation, The Green Lab focuses on the importance of human-nature connection through their projects, including in the Understorey. As Understorey members engaged in these practices, they were increasingly affected by others' attention to bodies and creating space to be well, increasing the normalcy of this culture of work. This collective care for worker wellbeing is a way of protecting against exploitation and alienation.

Caring for bodies at the Understorey involves giving attention to the embodied experience of work but also caring for diverse bodies. The Understorey worked to resist more than just 'capitalist bullshit', as described by Molly in Chapter Five, but also the racism, sexism, and homophobia in the city. Chapter Five showed the ways that Māori bodies, nonbinary bodies, women's bodies, chronically ill bodies and disabled bodies were all paid attention. Worker wellbeing is not only caring for the shared need to rest, move, express emotion, and socialise, but wellbeing that is diverse and reflects cultural connection (such as meeting with other migrants or (re)connecting to te reo Māori), identity expression, and solidarity. This is not only about a workplace that is safe but one that actively makes visible these identities in the city. Overall, Understorey staff and members push back against the individualist productive worker subjectivity that has dominated work life and resist alienated work. They cultivate a new subjectivity that pays attention to the embodied experience of work and includes collective attention to wellbeing over productivity that supports others to also care for wellbeing, which involves diverse needs. This is possible through the commoning of workspace which enables this wellbeing-focused work culture to be fostered.

Although Marx (1867/1990) argued that all waged work is exploitative, rest as resistance provides a means to address forms of self-exploitation common through the individualized productivist work ethic and to resist forms of alienation described by Marx. Specifically, I see the self and collective care fostered at the Understorey as a means to resist alienation between workers as workers take on responsibility for others' wellbeing and as a way to build resistance to forms of

self-exploitation. Ilyas (2023) and Gkitsa (2023) have each written about the role of 'commons-based' coworking spaces as spaces that can create solidarity among workers, particularly freelance workers. I see the commoning of worker wellbeing at the Understorey as an important example of solidarity building, not just as workers aiming to be productive but as people with many needs. Their commoning provides diverse forms of support for wellbeing beyond just income. For example, Hannah and Hayley described in Chapter Five how the Understorey enabled them to tend to other parts of themselves, such as pursuing their creative projects, or working outside of 'productive' modes of work. As McKinnon and colleagues (2020) highlight, wellbeing in work is diverse and involves more than financial gain and includes meaningful work as well as social, physical, and community wellbeing. Therefore, the narrow notion of work wellbeing for productivity misses many forms of wellbeing that were met for workers in the Understorey.

Reshaping workspace through collective care for bodies is therefore one way to start to 'repair' worker's relationship to work. Burnout, alienation and exploitation are rife in work in the Anglosphere. Repairing this requires a different, more holistic and regenerative approach to work that turns away from the narrow and endless pursuit of productivity (Weeks, 2016). Theories of postwork imagine what possibilities could open up by shifting away from a work-centric culture. Although still grappling with the influential notion of 'productivity', and the powerful drive for sustainability, the Understorey shows one way to collectively resist such pressures of productivity by caring for bodies and prioritising broader aspects of life that inform wellbeing like revitalising language, social connection and building relationships amongst identity groups. The Understorey showcases practices of care but also provides an alternative narrative to the individual, competitive worker and exemplifies a form of worker wellbeing that shows what work could look like outside of productivism. Workers connecting to and caring for their bodies and to others' bodies may help to 'repair' part of the brokenness of work in the Anglosphere.

The Green Lab acknowledged a shared need for space in the city to work and in response, they created the Understorey. The members of the Understorey collectively cared for the workspace commons which in turn enabled care in the form of worker wellbeing. This deeper layer of worker wellbeing occurs as members of the Understorey pay attention to the embodied experience of work, including the diverse lived experiences of its members. As a result, collective wellbeing

subjectivities were able to emerge and be shaped by collective care for wellbeing. What this deeper layer provides is an example of what it looks like to be more-than-productive collectively.

In this section, I have demonstrated the potential that collective care has for creating new worker subjectivities. I have continued to answer my second research question in this section and in doing so, I contribute to theories of work by theorizing care as a form of collective resistance. By applying Hersey's (2022) idea of rest as resistance, I have highlighted the ways workers can resist productivism through attention to bodies at work. This provides a means to resist alienation, particularly Marx's description of alienation between fellows. This is a particularly important starting point for unalienating work in the Anglosphere as disrupting the antagonism between workers in the face of the productivist work ethic can help workers to resist self-exploitation and resist the increasing pressures of work. My research demonstrates that this resistance requires collective forms of care which creates a form of worker solidarity. I have shown how collectives have an important role to play as the deeper commoning of worker wellbeing creates affective encounters between workers at the Understorey who are aware and responsive to one another.

6.4 Conclusion: Repairing Work

At the beginning of this chapter I answered my first research question: what factors have enabled a commons to emerge in post-quake Christchurch? The factors that were most important for these commons were space, time and care. Firstly, space is required for commons whether the resource being cared for is as physical as a garden plot or as intangible as knowledge. While space in the city may be saturated, it is also diverse and different kinds of opportunities are available for different kinds of commons to occupy. Secondly, time is necessary for performing any kind of work and can be constricted or available for the care of commons in various ways. Most relevant to this research is how time can be constricted by the need to engage in waged work. But time spent performing waged work can also be time spent participating in commons that can transform work, as demonstrated by the Understorey. Although time is often measured monetarily, new meanings of time can emerge in commons, as demonstrated by repairers. Thirdly, care is what brings together the strangers of urban commons and the different reasons to care provide many

entry points for people to create and foster commons. Through answering my first research question, I identified the factors necessary for these commons.

However, I also identified a deeper layer of commoning taking place at each commons and through expanding on these deeper layers, I was able to answer my second research question: how can these commons inform theories of work? First, circular economies scholars highlight the importance of everyday labour for enacting circular economies. I agree that this labour is essential to circular economies and show how commoning has an important role to play in supporting this labour. This is because commoning repair not only shifts practices, but it also enables the development of a repair subjectivity that strengthen repairers' attachment to circular production and consumption. Latour's (2004) idea of learning to be affected enabled me to explain a process of attunement at the repair café. I argued that this attunement to repair is important for enacting circular economies and holds potential for closing the metabolic rift, whereby production is brought back into planetary limits and further environmental destruction is avoided.

Second, Marxist theories of alienation highlight an antagonism between workers in the face of the productivist work ethic and the potential for self-exploitation in the increasing intensification of work. I have emphasized how the collectivism necessary for commoning workspace can also enable coworkers to form solidarity around a different kind of work culture that resists alienation and self-exploitation in work. I used Hersey's and Black feminist scholars' work on self-care to explain the commoning of worker wellbeing at the Understorey. I argued that workers can resist productivism through collective attention to bodies at work and that this can help workers to resist alienation. In the deeper layers of commons we can see how commoning produces alternate subjectivities, subjectivities and 'modes of being human' (Singh, 2017) that can shift away from ecological crisis and alienated work.

By looking at commons as they exist in place, we can see how relating in the commons creates opportunities for responding to current problems with work in the Anglosphere and can generate different ways of being. Such new ways of being involve new kinds of worker subjectivities that have been fostered through the two commons in this thesis. In learning to attune to the process of repair and reimagine how to interact with 'stuff' and with others, more people in the Anglosphere

may return to, or make a new commitment to, circular ways of being that are less resource dependent and more in tune with the limits of our planet. In caring for their bodies and others' bodies and in reimagining the way they perform their work alongside others, workers in the Anglosphere may strengthen new work norms that help to protect them and others against exploitation and alienation and create more spaces within which to repair relationships with work, the city and with each other.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

In a world that continues to be impacted by a changing climate, global pandemics, and technological developments, work must also change with it. Importantly, work in the Anglosphere must change for the benefit of people and the planet. In this thesis, I have argued that such changes to work in the Anglosphere can arise from experiments in doing work differently. I argued that commons and their communities have a role to play in creating new possibilities for a different work culture. This thesis has demonstrated the ways people are commoning everyday maintenance and care in the context of a repair café and a coworking space. The two field sites of this research have provided important insights into the affective encounters that come from experimenting with a different way of working. Their commoning suggests that more sustainable and caring alternatives are possible and are already here. In this final chapter, I revisit each of the key steps in my argument and lay out the key contributions of this thesis.

7.1 Summary of my Argument

The purpose of this research has been to investigate how people in the Anglosphere are working collectively to address the problems with dominant configurations of work and to bring a commons perspective into discussion with theories of work to enrich conceptualizations of both work and the commons. As Cameron (2015) notes, the Anthropocene is the result of many experiments and methods of living whose impacts on the Earth were not fully understood, resulting in catastrophic climate changes. In the same vein, the many collectives around the world who are engaging in and experimenting with commoning practices and who care for vast kinds of commons will be impacting the Earth, cities and people in ways yet to be revealed. Social researchers can also take on an experimental approach and look for what already exists that contributes to desirable economies and desirable worlds and work to make this stronger, without knowing what the result will be. Inspired by this call, this research has focused on two organisations who are experimenting with different ways of working together and are performing and prefiguring different kinds of work culture. What can be learnt from this engagement with the two urban commons is the role of commoning for addressing the problems of work.

I began by diversifying the definition of a 'work life' in Chapter Two, *Mapping the Problems of Work*. I drew on feminist economists, geographers and Marxist feminists to understand the diversity of work. In this chapter, I explored four significant problems with work in the Anglosphere. This included keeping within planetary limits when producing and consuming, addressing current inequalities of access to time and protecting against worker exploitation and alienation in waged work. I argued that collective action is key to responding to these four significant problems and drew on commons literature to outline a framework for studying the commons. My theoretical framework drew on a diverse economies approach to the commons and included the commons identi-kit created by Gibson-Graham, Cameron and Healy (2013). This framework helped me to see a diversity of commons practices and identify two layers of commoning taking place at each of the two field sites. The framework also helped me to think about the particularities of collective action of both the repair café and the coworking space and to pay attention to the relational dynamics of commoning, understood as a collective doing that forms community.

In Chapter Three, *Seeking Economic Diversity,* I discussed my methods for engaging in and researching collective action and commoning, beginning with the offerings of feminist methodologies. Feminist methodologies helped me to think carefully about knowledge creation and the active role of researchers in knowledge production. Drawing on the contributions of feminist methodologies, the diverse economies approach provided a 'weak theory' methodological approach for researching economies. The diverse economies approach focuses on highlighting more-than-capitalist practices that are often overshadowed in economic analysis. This focus on economic diversity helped to direct attention to what can be learnt from diverse economic practices as they unfold in place. To participate in and research collective action and commoning, I used ethnographic-inspired participant observation and semi-structured interviews.

In Chapter Four, *Resisting Throwaway Culture,* I turned to my first field site. I began by exploring the forms of planned obsolescence that are largely to blame for the cause of broken and irrepairable 'stuff' and the responses from governments and communities who are working hard to change this normalized manufacturing practice in the move towards circular production and consumption. I then detailed a night at the repair café. I argued that Ōtautahi Repair Revolution are commoning a

repair knowledge commons. In order to analyze the urban commons, I used Gibson-Graham, Cameron and Healy's (2013) commons identi-kit to map their commoning practices. Through this process I made a distinction between a 'resource' layer and a 'deeper' layer of commoning that are created and cared for at the field sites. I argued that Ōtautahi Repair Revolution are commoning repair knowledge as well as commoning a 'deeper layer' of a repair sensibility.

In Chapter Five, *Resisting Productivity,* I turned to my second field site. I began by exploring the significance of shared workspaces for freelance and creative workers in the Anglosphere as well as the context of Christchurch as a city made of diverse but often marginalised groups. I then introduced The Green Lab and their role in post-quake Christchurch as well as describing the iterations of their coworking project, the Understorey. I detailed a week of working at the Understorey and argued that the members and staff of the Understorey are commoning a workspace commons. Again, I used Gibson-Graham, Cameron and Healy's (2013) commons identi-kit to map their commoning practices and highlighted a 'resource' layer and a 'deeper' layer of commoning that are created and cared for. I argued that Understorey members and staff are commoning workspace as well as commoning a 'deeper layer' of worker wellbeing.

In Chapter Six, *Deeper Commoning*, I answered my two research questions. I used the first part of the chapter to discuss the three most significant factors for both the repair and coworking commons, providing a comparison in the ways space, time and care were significant to each commons. I argued that space, time and care are the three most important factors of commoning for the repair café and the Understorey. This enabled me to address the first research question: what factors have enabled a commons to emerge in post-quake Christchurch? In the second part of the chapter, I discussed the deeper layers of commoning of both the repair and coworking commons which provide possibilities for addressing the problems with work. I argued that participants at the repair café are learning to be affected by the objects at the repair café and are able to attune to the process of repair. As a result, a repair subjectivity is fostered, one who is more likely to repair their possessions than to throw them away. I use this to argue that this engagement with repair offers a way of healing the metabolic rift. Next, I argued that Understorey members pay attention to the embodied experience of work, creating a form of (radical) collective care. As a result, worker wellbeing is fostered, creating new worker subjectivities (wellbeing subjectivity) that are more

than ‘productive’. I use this to argue that such engagement with the body offers a way to protect against exploitation and alienation. Overall, I have argued that commoning provides a means to repair the brokenness of work in the Anglosphere. Through discussing the deeper layers of commoning, I was able to answer my second research question: how can these commons inform theories of work? In researching these commoning practices, I have contributed to a larger body of research on work and the commons. The contributions of this thesis relate to the role of commoning for transforming current configurations of work and are outlined in the following section.

7.2 Contributions of this Thesis

The main contributions of this thesis relate to the possibilities of commons to transform current configurations of work in the Anglosphere and include empirical and theoretical contributions. Answering my first research question contributes empirically to commons theory concerned with the creation and maintenance of commons. I do so by highlighting space, time and care as the key factors of commoning in post-quake Christchurch. First, I contribute to theories of urban commons by highlighting opportunities to access space for commoning in the city. Some commons scholars highlight the way that cities are increasingly enclosed spaces that can force commoning out (Harvey, 2012; Stavrides, 2015) and others highlight the opportunities for the use of different kinds of space in the city for commoning, such as transitional spaces (Dombroski et al., 2019). I argue that the city holds both exclusions and opportunities to create urban commons that emerge specifically within place (Cloke & Conradson, 2018; Cretney, 2019; Dombroski et al., 2019) and specific to the aims of the commons project. Not all urban commons projects aim for complete occupation of space and are able to be successful because of this, without diluting their impact. The commons projects that aim for complete occupation of space face larger barriers in a saturated city and require broader cross-sector support.

Second, I contribute to theories of urban commons by applying the concept of life’s work (Mitchell et al., 2003; Morrow and Dombroski, 2015) to identify appropriations of (paid) work time that are used to common workspace. By identifying the intersecting nature of the production of life’s work, opportunities to common a different work culture are evident and are already possible. Third, I

build on Dombroski's (2024b) emphasis on care as key to creating a commons and therefore a commons community. I argue that what motivates people to care for a commons is specific and in the case of repair this is around a practice and in the case of the Understorey this is around a particular politics. I argue that the reason why each commoner cares for a commons can be very different, but a shared care for something is what brings commoners together.

This thesis is grounded in the commoning practices of two communities, but it also seeks to make a theoretical contribution. I contribute to theories of the commons, circular economies and work. First, this thesis has fleshed out commoning as a multi-layer process, using the commons identi-kit tool (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013) to articulate these layers. My analysis of multiple layers of commoning identifies commons as a way of reproducing life through a 'resource' layer and the affects of commoning through a 'deeper' layer. This extends upon scholars' attention to both the material impacts of commons for reproducing life and the affective impacts of the commons for shifting subjectivities (e.g. Ruiz Cayuela, 2021, 2022). Through participating in the commons, commoners gained something more than a resource to share and care for, they gained a different way of being a worker. Using deeper commoning as a way to recognise different ways of being (or different subjectivities) enabled me to demonstrate the layered outcome of commoning I had seen in my fieldwork.

Second, I contribute to theories of circular economies. As Morrow and Davies (2022) make clear, the social dimensions of circular economies have increasingly faded out of sight despite their necessary role in the implementation of circular solutions. My research demonstrates that these social dimensions remain vital to participate and strengthen circular economies, including Savini's (2023) concept of a degrowth circularity. Circular economies require socio-cultural transformations, and this includes transformations of labour, specifically the inclusion of messy forms of labour like repair which are particularly important for downscaling consumption and material use. I have shown how collectives have an important role to play in supporting this important labour of circular economies. The deeper commoning I have discussed shows how learning to be affected by objects allows participants of the repair café to undergo an embodied attunement to repair that enables shifts towards a repair subjectivity that is significant to circular economies.

In this thesis I contributed to the concept of learning to be affected (Latour, 2004) through the study of a process of attunement, where repairers learnt to be affected by objects in order to attune to the process of repair. I also demonstrated what can be gained by considering the role of attunement to enact the concept of degrowth circularity (Savini, 2023). As Savini (2023) demonstrates, it is important to not just think about circular economies but a degrowth circularity, as it is clear that we need to move beyond circular economies as ways of creating 'circular' material flows for business value. Learning to attune to the process of repair provides one way to enact degrowth circularity.

Third, I contribute to theories of work by theorizing care as a form of collective resistance. By applying Hersey's (2022) idea of rest as resistance, I have highlighted the ways workers can resist productivism through attention to bodies at work. The collective care for bodies at the Understorey produces worker wellbeing that enables a shift from a productivist subjectivity to a wellbeing subjectivity. This provides a means to resist alienation, particularly Marx's description of alienation between fellows. This is a particularly important starting point for unalienating work in the Anglosphere as disrupting the antagonism between workers in the face of the productivist work ethic can help workers to resist self-exploitation and resist the increasing pressures of work. My research demonstrates that this resistance requires collective forms of care which creates a form of worker solidarity.

7.3 Final Reflections

As we collectively face more disaster with oncoming climate-related events, I find hope in the collective action that has been born from the rupture of earthquake disaster in Christchurch, in the immediate aftermath and more than a decade later. Although not knowing it at the time, the creative and experimental projects that emerged in the city after the disaster would put the city on a new path, with this experimental and commons-like activity becoming increasingly familiar to those who live there. To prepare for future events, we must build livelihoods that take seriously the ways that we all rely upon the Earth and on each other and this requires bringing these connections to the forefront, particularly in spaces where we can be individualised and disconnected most. Creating different ways of working and ways to reconnect to or create new commons ought to be part of this and an experimental approach is worth trying.

How to do this is still an open-ended task. This open-endedness is both unnerving and hopeful. Unknown disruptions and events can swoop in and change the state of the world dramatically in positive ways, albeit in harsh ways too. There are many possibilities out there already for different ways of working, let alone what their knock-on effects may bring. This thesis began with questions I asked myself as a worker in the stockroom of a shoe shop with a pair of scissors in my hands. While increasingly learning about the state of business and the economy, I was all the more aware that I was entangled in the performance of consumerism and had to execute a task that contributed to a mounting pile of waste I could no longer ignore.

Just as I began to imagine a different way of working at the shoe shop, the communities in this thesis have imagined and enacted a different way of working in the city. As more experiments of collective action arise, the more possibilities for a different work future arise. Within this future, I hope that more workplaces make the space to foster a work culture that cares for people and their layered experience in the world. Recognising that we ought not to leave important parts of ourselves 'at the door' and instead have our work serve us as much as we serve it. Finally, I hope that 'business as usual' continues to move towards the visions of a repair revolution so that imperfect shoes (among a thousand other things) are not cut up and discarded at the bottom of a bin but are placed into the hands of repairers, in the many forms they take.

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Appendix One: Interview Questions

Ōtautahi Repair Revolution

1. How long have you been involved with Repair Revolution?
2. How did you find out about Repair Revolution?
3. What led you to get involved with Repair Revolution?
4. What role do you have at the repair café?
5. What motivates you to continue to participate?
6. Are there any barriers to participating?
7. What are your thoughts on payments for repair?
8. What do you think are the barriers to participating in repair more broadly?
9. What are your favourite and least favourite parts about participating at the repair café?
10. How would you describe the repair community?
11. How do you think community or personal repair can become more accessible?
12. What are your thoughts on the right to repair legislation?

Questions for Specific Repair Volunteers

Alan: What is the difference between repairing in your repair business and volunteer repairing?

Alan: What is it like working alongside other repair volunteers?

Imogen: What has it been like to set up your own repair event?

Viv: What are the origins of the take it apart table?

Zac: What do you think motivates people to come to repair events?

Zac: How did the repair revolution come about? How is it funded?

Zac: How do you understand the sustainability of its leadership? What is your ultimate vision for repair revolution?

The Understorey

1. How long have you been using the Understorey?

2. What led you to make the decision to come and use the Understorey?

3. Would you consider yourself a regular user of the Understorey?

4. What work do you do at the Understorey?

5. What is your favourite and least favourite parts about using the Understorey?

6. Is there anything unique about the Understorey that you could not get from a different workspace?

7. Do you have any responsibilities for caring for the Understorey?

8. How would you describe the community at the Understorey?

9. In what ways does using the Understorey enhance your work life/occupational wellbeing?

10. Have you been a part of any of the other projects by The Green Lab? Do you think you would have known about these other projects if it weren't for the Understorey?

11. Has The Green Lab had any impact on how you feel about non-profit organisations/projects, urban greening, and inclusive spaces?

12. As the Understorey is coming to a close (for now), where do you think you will do the work you had been doing at the Understorey? Another coworking space? At home?

Questions for Specific Understorey Members

Sophie: Is there any indication that other businesses in The Welder benefit in any way from the Understory being in The Welder?

Appendix Two: Information and Consent Form

Department of Management, Marketing and Entrepreneurship
Email: lila.laird@pg.canterbury.ac.nz
HREC Ref: HREC 2022/57/LR-PS

Diverse Perspectives on Work: Working Towards a Resilient Urban Commons.

Information Sheet for participants

You are invited to participate in a research study that is interested in the ways communities are reshaping work through commons. This study is being conducted by Lila Laird from the University of Canterbury | Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha. Other research team members include Matthew Scobie, Kelly Dombroski and Billy O'Steen (Lila's supervisors). The study is being carried out as a requirement for a doctoral degree (PhD).

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this research is to understand how the relationship between work and commoning is taking place in Ōtautahi Christchurch. 'Commoning' has been understood as the act of a community coming together to create and care for a collective resource. The organisation you're involved with has been identified as an exciting example of this. This research is interested in finding out about the possibilities of 'commoning' to nurture community relationships. The information from this research will help to identify the role of coworking or repair as part of diverse perspectives on work and commoning.

Why have you received this invitation?

You are invited to participate in this research because I have learnt of the work taking place at the organisation you're involved with. Your participation is voluntary (your choice). If you

decide not to participate, there are no consequences. Your decision will not affect your relationship with me, the University of Canterbury, or any member of the research team.

What is involved in participating?

If you choose to take part in this research, you will participate in an interview. This interview will take place (hopefully) face-to-face or online via Zoom. I will contact you to arrange a suitable time and location. The interview will involve me introducing myself, answering any questions you have, and confirming your consent to participate. Then, I will begin the interview and will ask you questions about:

- Your role in the group (volunteer, employee, attendee).
- When and why you first became involved, if this reason has changed over time.
- Why you are interested in this organisation and what it means to you.
- How you feel you benefit from your involvement.

I estimate the interview will take 20-30 minutes.

Will the interview be recorded?

With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded using a portable recorder or using Zoom's audio-recording feature. The recording will be used to create a written transcript of the interview, which I will analyse as part of the research. If you choose to review a copy of the interview transcript, I will provide this to you within four weeks of the interview. I will ask you to provide any amendments (changes) or additions via email within four weeks.

Are there any benefits from taking part in this research?

A goal of this research is to provide an opportunity for participants to be reflective about their experiences and that participants will develop further understanding of commoning work by doing so. Some outputs from the research include a summary of research findings, the thesis, and publications, which may be of interest.

Are there any risks involved in this research?

There is the potential that this research will involve 'social risks' as the researcher has pre-established relationships with some participants. Please be assured that confidentiality will be kept. The researcher will check in with you about any quotes that relate to you as a participant before they are put into the thesis and you will be given the opportunity to review your interview transcript.

What if you change your mind during or after the study?

You are free to withdraw at any time. To do this, please let me know either during the interview or after the interview has finished. I will remove any information you have provided up to that point from the data set if it is still possible. Once data analysis has commenced on 1st May 2023[13], removal of your data may not be possible.

What will happen to the information you provide?

I will transfer the audio recording to a password-protected file on the University of Canterbury computer server and then delete this from the recording device as soon as practical. All data will be confidential. To ensure your identity is not known to anyone outside of the research team, I will keep your signed consent form in a file separate from your interview transcript. If you choose not to be identified, your name will be changed to a pseudonym (a fake name) whenever it appears in the transcript and anywhere else. I will store the file that links your real name and your pseudonym individually on a password-protected, secure device.

All study data will be stored in password-protected files on the University of Canterbury's computer network. All data will be destroyed ten years after completion of the study/publication of study findings. I (Lila) will be responsible for making sure that only members of the research team use your data for the purposes mentioned in this information sheet.

Will the results of the study be published?

The results of this research will be published in a Doctoral thesis. This thesis will be available to the general public through the University of Canterbury library. Results may be published in

[13] This date was extended for the interview I conducted in Palmerston North, June 2023.

peer-reviewed, academic journals. Results may also be presented during conferences or seminars to wider professional and academic communities. Your organisation may be named in such research outputs stemming from the study and your quotes may also be used. Where you request anonymity, you will not be identifiable in any publication. A summary of results will be sent to all participants who request a copy.

Who can you contact if you have any questions or concerns?

If you have any questions about the research, please contact: Lila Laird (lila.laird@pg.canterbury.ac.nz) and any concerns, please contact: Matthew Scobie (matthew.scobie@canterbury.ac.nz). This study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). If you have a complaint about this research, please contact the Chair of the HREC at human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).

What happens next?

Please review the consent form. If you would like to participate, please sign, scan/take a photo of, and return the consent form to Lila at lila.laird@pg.canterbury.ac.nz or by hand.

Ngā mihi nui,
Lila Laird

Department of Management, Marketing and Entrepreneurship
Email: lila.laird@pg.canterbury.ac.nz
HREC Ref: HREC 2022/57/LR-PS

Diverse Perspectives on Work: Working Towards a Resilient Urban Commons
Participant Consent Form

- □ I have been given a full explanation of this project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

- □ I understand what is required of me if I agree to take part in the research.
- □ I understand that participation is voluntary, and I may withdraw at any time before 1st May 2023 without consequences. Withdrawal of participation will also include the withdrawal of any information I have provided should this remain possible.
- □ I am happy to be identified in the research: yes / no (please circle). If you circled no (would like my identity to remain confidential), please choose a pseudonym to be used:
- □ I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the research team.
- □ I understand that I will be offered a copy of the interview transcript to review and confirm.
- □ I agree to the use of quotations that come from this research.
- □ I understand that the data collected for this study will be used in the researchers' PhD thesis.
- □ I understand that a thesis is a public document and will be available through the UC Library.
- □ I understand that all data collected for the study will be kept in locked and secure facilities and/or in password protected electronic form. I understand the data will be destroyed after ten years.
- □ I agree to be audio recorded during the interview. I understand how this recording will be stored and used.
- □ I would like a summary of the results of the project.
- □ I understand that I can contact the researcher Lila Laird (email: lila.laird@pg.canterbury.ac.nz) or supervisor Matthew Scobie (email: matthew.scobie@canterbury.ac.nz) for further information. If I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Human Research Ethics Committee, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch, (email: human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).
- □ By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project.

*Name:*_____ *Signed:*_____ *Date:*_____

Email address *(for report of findings, if applicable:* _____

Please return this consent form by way of email to lila.laird@pg.canterbury.ac.nz or by hand.

Appendix Three: Initial Thematic Templates

Repair

1. Circular economies
2. Their 'why' for participating
3. Their contributions
    3.1. Responsibilities for the repair café
4. Their role at the repair café
    4.1. Type of repair labour
5. Diverse Economic Practices
    5.1. Non-monetary compensation
6. Community
    6.1. Relationship building
7. Planned obsolescence
8. Object agency
9. Context, facts and descriptions

Understorey

1. Coworking space
    1.1. Different iterations
    1.2. Welder location versus past locations
2. Their 'why' for participating
3. Their contributions
4. Role in Understorey (e.g. closing and opening, sense of responsibility)
    4.1. Benefits they receive
5. Coworking spaces
    5.1. Traditional vs. Understorey
    5.2. Upsides and downsides to coworking spaces
6. Anti-capitalism / Alternative culture

    6.1. Queering (“disrupting capitalist bullshit”)
    6.2. Collaboration over competition
7. Belonging
    7.1. Performativity (performative spaces vs. genuine inclusion)
    7.2. Queer team
    7.3. Decolonisation / Te Tiriti
    7.4. Understorey Community
8. Diverse Economic Practices
    8.1. Pay scale
9. Other
    9.1. The strength of organisational processes
    9.2. Constraints (time, attendance, quantitative evidence)
    9.3. Understorey closing
    9.4. Negotiating work-life balance
    9.5. Post-quake Christchurch / transitioning city
    9.6 Context, fact and descriptions

Appendix Four: Refined Thematic Templates

Repair

1. Commoning
    1.1. Access
    1.2. Use
    1.3. Benefit
    1.4. Care
    1.5. Responsibility
    1.6. Property
2. My (Lila) role at repair
    2.1. Looking after repairers
    2.2. Data collecting
3. Biggest challenges for repair cafés
4. Repairer-owner relationship
    4.1. Setting and managing expectations
5. Gender
6. Running the events
    6.1. Starting where we are
    6.2. Volunteering as an abundance
7. Relationship with materials
    7.1. Appalling waste
    7.2. Reuse examples
    7.3. Learning to repair
8. Their ‘why’ for participating
    8.1. Intergenerational community
    8.2. What stops people from participating
9. Making repair accessible
10. Context, fact and descriptions

Understorey

1. Commoning
    1.1. Access
    1.2. Use
    1.3. Benefit
    1.4. Care
    1.5. Responsibility
    1.6. Property
2. Doing work differently
    2.1. Negotiating work-life balance
    2.2. Non-productivist logics
    2.3. Working for social and environmental organisations
3. Diverse Economic Practices
4. Subjectivity / Positionality / Worker identity
5. Counterculture
    5.1. Queering
    5.2. Anti-capitalism
    5.3. Political Alignment
6. Belonging / Identity inclusion
    6.1. Queer
    6.2. Māori
    6.3. Understorey Community
7. The Understorey
    7.1. Different iterations
    7.2. Understory closing
    7.3. Constraints to making a commons work
8. Drawbacks / least favourite parts of Understorey
9. Coworking spaces
    9.1. Traditional workspace vs. Understorey
    9.2. Affect of space

10. Context, facts and descriptions