

Prefigurative Politics and Plant-Based Food: Quiet Activism Within Sydney's Foodscapes

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Chair: Prof James D Sidaway
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Date/Time: Friday, 25 August 2017, 3.30pm – 5.00pm

Place: Earth Lab, AS2-02-03, NUS

Abstract

The livestock industry, sprawling over one third of the earth's non-ice terrestrial surface, is a key driver of planetary change. Various propositions are being assembled as to how societies should respond to growing awareness that current patterns of growing global meat consumption are unsustainable – ranging from more intensive farming, in vitro meat production, to abandoning livestock production altogether. In this paper we explore the latter proposition in the context of Australia – where established political economies and cultural norms have resulted in one of the world's highest per capita rates of meat consumption – three times what is considered healthy. We approach the production and promotion of plant-based food as a type of prefigurative politics in which proponents employ a variety of strategies that assemble skills, knowledges and materials oriented at plant-based food futures.



Our research, based on a city wide audit of plant-based food businesses, initiatives and proponents, reveals a growing, dynamic and innovative community employing a quiet activism oriented at contesting meat cultures. We focus on the visceral politics employed by plant-based food makers, the supportive strategies implemented by plant-based food advocates, and the politics of labelling where diverse plant-based communities are bonded by the practices of making and eating rather than a singular overriding identity or narrative. We also consider some of the apprehensions within this community in regards to gender, food justice, cost, and the policing of particular identities. The paper concludes with a discussion on the potential and problems facing plant-based food proponents wanting to contribute to broader socioecological change.

About the Speaker

Andrew McGregor is a human geographer and Associate Professor in the Department of Geography and Planning at Macquarie University. He has previously worked in at Victoria University of Wellington and Otago University. He is author of *Southeast Asian Development* (Routledge 2008) and lead editor of *The Routledge Handbook of Southeast Asian Development* (with Lisa Law and Fiona Miller) due out in 2018. He is former Editor-in-Chief of *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* (2010-2015) and enjoys vegan icecream.

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