UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

Growing Community, Cultivating Place: Race, Politics, and Values in the San Diego-Tijuana Urban Agriculture Movement

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of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Anthropology

by

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University of California San Diego

2024

DEDICATION

To the sweetest dude man baby pants out there, my Leo boy.
Thank you for your companionship over these years—I miss you dearly.
I hope you're having fun playing with tennis balls, swimming,
and blessing the beyond being the silly, sweet boy you are.

EPIGRAPH

"…farming [is] a way of life. No matter how the harvest will turn out, whether or not there will be enough food to eat, in simply sowing seed and caring tenderly for plants under nature's guidance there is joy."

Masanobu Fukuoka, *One Straw Revolution* (1978: 113-114)

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Now let's get on with it.

VITA

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Growing Community, Cultivating Place: Race, Politics, and Values in the San Diego-Tijuana Urban Agriculture Movement

by

Belinda Cherie Ramírez

Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

University of California San Diego, 2024

Professor Joseph D. Hankins, Chair

In disparate contexts, urban agriculture has been heralded as the solution to many perceived social ills: community food insecurity, corporatization of the food system, and the food deserts in which many underserved populations reside. The urban agriculture movement is therefore not only an ecological or environmental one—it is also resoundingly social, political, and ethical. This dissertation therefore investigates the relationship between urban food

production, race and class, political economy, and the formation of place-based community in the San Diego-Tijuana metropolitan region. Grounded in thirty-six months of ethnographic and mixed methods fieldwork in San Diego and Tijuana, I analyze the complexities, contradictions, and nuances of what it means to be a food producer situated in a larger social movement pushed forward from multiple angles, including community-based organizations, non-profits, and regional government. To do this, I emphasize four main values that govern food producers' engagement with their work, especially as they push against mainstream neoliberal market values—those are self-determination, connection to land, community, and hope through prefigurative politics. In uplifting these counter-hegemonic values embodied by urban agriculturalists, I deliver three main propositions about the use of urban agriculture in this area: (1) the culture of urban agriculture aims to produce ethical subjects ready for an alternative politico-economic future; (2) urban agriculture has the potential to be both a radical, liberatory countermovement as well as a neoliberal enterprise that reengages capitalist logics; and (3) urban food producers struggle with competing forms of valuation derived from this radical versus neoliberal tension. This account of urban agriculture reveals that urban food production in underserved areas is a significant act in a growing borderland foodscape, where understandings of where food is sourced and what it means to eat and grow ethically shape local communities. Within these communities, practitioners and residents debate, define, and transform contemporary values around food production, social equity, and belonging. This work focuses a critical lens on capitalist modes of production and unequal food distribution models, furthering the anthropological study of how the retraction of governmental social services in light of neoliberal policies most negatively affects the poor and marginalized.

Introduction

The Construction of a Food-Growing Community of Practice in San Diego and Tijuana

> When you think about it, it is odd that something as important to our health and general well-being as food is so often sold strictly on the basis of price. The value of [marketing to relationships] is that it allows many kinds of information besides price to travel up and down the food chain: stories as well as numbers, qualities as well as quantities, values rather than "value."
>
> -Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma* (2006: 244)

> When we change the way we grow our food, we change our food, we change society, we change our values.
>
> -Wendell Berry, in his preface to Masanobu Fukuoka's *One Straw Revolution* (1978: xii)

> [We are] a society that knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.
>
> -Frederick Harry Pitts, *Value* (2021: 2)

When I started fieldwork in 2017, one of my first tentative steps into the world of urban food growing was to volunteer at and get a tour of Suzie's Farm in the Tijuana River Estuary. The farm was a 140-acre space just a few miles from the U.S.-México border. After volunteering I took home bags full of spicy peppers and strawberries I had picked, as well as carrots and bread purchased from the farm stand. Just a week after my visit, a video was posted to the farm's Facebook page. On June 26, 2017, Lucila De Alejandro, co-owner of Suzie's, announced that the farm was closing. In a tearful message to the farm's social media followers, Lucila expressed her hopes and desires for the farm, both when starting the enterprise and now, knowing it had come to an end. She said:

> We started [Suzie's Farm] because we had a dream to feed our children the best food available. We knew we weren't the only people who wanted this, and we wanted to give that gift to others—most specifically, our San Diego community.

> We wanted also to bring people down to the farm. That was the most important element—not just people getting their food, but people seeing where their food was grown, getting to know their farmer, and understanding that connection between the source of their energy, and how that energy would convert within them to be the energy that they would put out into the planet among our fellow citizens. To be filled with good energy, knowing that the exchange of good energy creates more good energy.
>
> We have been supported by the most amazing people. We have expanded our community. We couldn't do it without you. Suzie's Farm has grown, but our profits have not. Growing in San Diego County is not cheap. There are a lot of associated costs with that. [Because of this,] we are going to close our San Diego location. We have not been able to make Suzie's Farm profitable, as much as we have tried—and believe me, we have tried.
>
> This will be a legacy for people when they grow old. They will remember the farm where they picked pumpkins, and they swung on a swing, and they got to see where their food was grown. And they knew that that food came from people who cared. My god, did we care!
>
> The mission doesn't die—we're closing this location. And I know, I know that this is not the end of Suzie's Farm. It's the closing of a place—and there's significance in that—but it's not the end of an idea, or a mission, or a memory, or a life. It is still our mission to cultivate, educate, and inspire. And *my* personal mission to help heal and serve.

Lucila's heartfelt, if not a bit melodramatic, monologue demonstrated the kinds of values that motivated the creation of Suzie's Farm back in 2004. These included good and healthy food (in contrast, assumedly, to a plethora of accessible unhealthy foods), sharing and community building, and, most importantly, connecting community to the self-sufficient process of creating good, healthy food on land that is tended to and cared for. They had expanded their reach into local farmers' markets, restaurants, gave farm tours, and offered a CSA (community-supported agriculture) program (Moran 2017; Parente 2017). However, it appeared that despite these efforts and their motivating values, over time another value was also required to keep Suzie's Farm afloat: capital. Without value in the form of capital, the farm was losing five figures a week,

according to Lucila, ultimately making it an unviable and unprofitable business (Zaragoza 2017). As Lucila said in the video, however, the other values in the form of “ideas” or “missions” remain, in spite of the lack of economic value.

This story of the closure of Suzie’s Farm and the resulting discussion of the motivations for that urban agriculture endeavor demonstrate the tensions between differing forms of social and moral values that permeate the urban agriculture and food movements. In fact, a large push within the food justice and sovereignty movements is aimed at shifting emphasis from neoliberal systems of value production—as primary motivating factors within a capitalist political economic structure—to other forms of valuation, such as those based on community, autonomy, and place- or space-making.

I illustrate this as shown in Figure 1, with “neoliberal values” on the left signifying those capitalist market and social logics that privilege values and ethics such as profit, individualism, private property, commodification, and market dependence. An arrow moves us away from those neoliberal values and toward "urban agriculture values,” or those motivating ethics that focus instead on concepts of community, place-making and -keeping, connection to land, autonomy, and other values, which represents the efforts of many urban agriculture practitioners to shift emphasis way from capital accumulation, profit, and market logics and toward these other social and ethical values. Matthew Canfield sums up this movement well in his book *Translating Food Sovereignty*: “food emerge[s] as a symbolic and material battleground over neoliberalism but also seem[s] to offer a practical way to build alternatives to it” (2022: 9). At the same time, a second arrow takes us back to the neoliberal values, which signifies the extreme difficulty to substantively shift away from the hegemonic forms of valuation. As Raj Patel writes in *The Value*

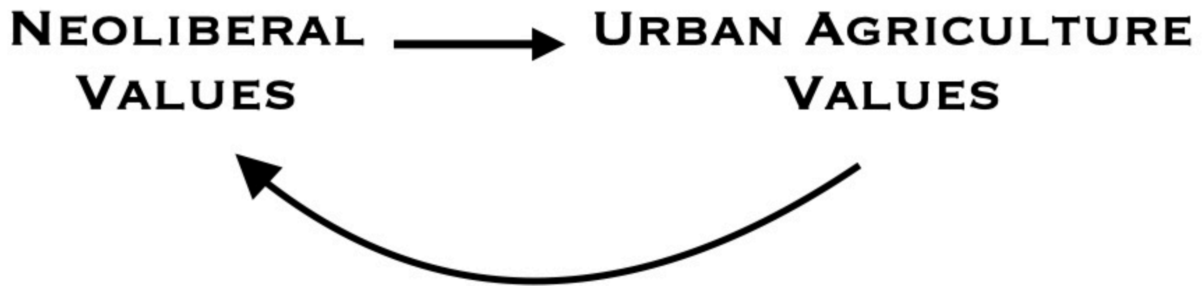


Figure 1. Shifting forms of values.

of Nothing, "Under market society, the social bonds of exchange fall under the sign of profit" (2009: 57). Frederick Pitts writes on this topic even more acerbically: "A closed case for much of mainstream economic thinking, the issue of value is a pressing one because it exposed the tension at the heart of the social and political processes that render all things equivalent and comparable under the single measure of price. These processes are increasingly at stake politically" (2021: 1). This represents a cycle, with those engaged in urban agricultural efforts continually, circularly, and dialectically attempting to get away from neoliberal values emphasizing profit, money, commodification, and individualism as their main guiding values and toward other forms of valuation, while also always being driven back to capitalist logics as the primary way to value food, labor, land, etc., and then once again striving to move away from it.[1]

In this dissertation, I will explore these topics of value, community, and place and the

[1] Here and throughout this dissertation I will be using "neoliberal(ism)" and "capitalism" fairly interchangeably to refer to the unique formation of free-market capitalism—often referred to as "neoliberal capitalism"—that many theorists have argued we are currently living in.

relationship between them within the urban agriculture movement, especially as they affect efforts at self-determination for people of color and as these concepts are tied together under the umbrella of hope for a better and different future. I argue that urban agriculture serves as a site for urban food growers to negotiate personal and collective value and meaning—including the act of place-making and -keeping (the creation of place; place as an action) and connection to land—as well as for community and hope making, and therefore also for spaces of autonomous self-sufficiency and political, economic, and ethical organizing.

The Push and Pull of Values within the Urban Agriculture Movement

This dissertation inquires into the relationship between urban agrarian social movements, race and class, political economy, ethics, and the formation of place- and values-based community in the United States and México, particularly in San Diego, California and Tijuana, Baja California. I make this inquiry to provide a more holistic perspective on urban agricultural efforts, which is not only a leisurely activity for the affluent, but can and often does also serve more politically radical[2] and racially resilient endeavors with visions of autonomy and self-dependence. There is a precedent for such place-based community building in the urban agriculture movement in other areas of the United States and México, as well, which will be elicited throughout the chapters herein. In such examples, the concept of place—building off of Lefebvre's concept of the social production of place—is important to those engaged in urban agriculture projects and is intimately intertwined with the concept of community or personal

[2] Here, I mean radical in the way the Latin etymology implies: a politics that get at the roots of the matter. In this case, getting at the roots of food insecurity, racial and social oppression, poverty, disconnection from nature and collective action, and an overall subordination to external domineering forces.

food production. Detroit, Michigan is a frequent and common example, where urban farming and gardening has grown to be an effective and powerful way for a dilapidated community reeling from the retreat of social and commercial services to come together and recreate a sense of social belonging and community cohesion. At the base of these efforts often lie the values of locality and neighborhood togetherness, based in the value of community building and time-gone nostalgia for a (perhaps fictional) period when such agriculturally-based communities were more prevalent (Halperin 1998). In México, urban agriculture has often developed in reaction to environmental degradation or exists as vestiges of agricultural pasts that were interrupted by the processes of urbanization (Losada et al 1998). In the Mexican context, place is also vitally important, but it of course manifests with a different set of underlying historical and material processes, which will be discussed later in this introduction.

In this dissertation I focus on the question of how community practices of urban agriculture operate with the political context of economic inequality, and, more specifically, I explore how resistance politics thereby affect the social and moral values of food producers in urban neighborhoods and their interaction and engagement with urban agriculture. This scenario echoes what James and Grace Lee Boggs have written: "You have to have a conflict before you can have politics. Politics involves taking sides. It means proposing or supporting particular plans, programs, perspectives which you believe are right" (2008 [1974]: 208). The conflicts around economic, health, and social inequality therefore lie at the center of the catalyst for urban agriculture. I do not make this kind of inquiry merely out of curiosity, but with the awareness that human values drive human behavior, which in turn shapes human institutions. Therefore, institutions that perpetuate oppression, environmental degradation, and all manner of social ills

cannot be reformed until there is a fundamental transformation in human consciousness. As Aldo Leopold has said, we cannot accomplish needed changes "without creating a new kind of people" (from Kellert and Speth 2009: 2). In *A Sand County Almanac*, Leopold also offers that, "Perhaps [a] shift of values can be achieved by reappraising things unnatural, tame, and confined in terms of things natural, wild, and free." (1949: xix) Untaming and re-naturalizing in an effort to create a new kind of people is one of the major ontological underpinnings of the urban agriculture movement.

I approach these questions about underlying values in the urban agriculture movement from the perspective that growers' ideologies, and, therefore, the movements borne of those ideologies, are inherently and necessarily contradictory, expressing values that both align with current political economic structures and push against those structures through radical politics. Urban food producers today often see their work as vital to the creation of ethical local community, self-sufficiency, connection to land and place, sustainable food systems, and as a site for the formation of larger movements toward equitable food distribution—all in a demonstration of what *could* be within a world lacking these things. Having to work toward such goals from within a capitalist, profit-driven system, however, produces anxiety over ways to realistically and effectively contribute to the movement, and cognitive dissonance for all, including both grassroots-based organizations and people working for state-driven attempts to contribute to the movement.

Throughout this dissertation I investigate the ways that food producers simultaneously hold both these radical *and* neoliberal values, what kinds of rationale they employ to make sense of the apparent contradictions of creating a sustainable system within an unsustainable one, and

how those values are or are not based in concepts of morality, social justice, class, race, ethnicity, and politics. Herein I highlight food production among underrepresented food growers and communities in urban settings in the U.S. and México in part to help develop the concept of "rooted communities" and deep democracy—where residents are knowledgeable, secure, and engaged in the issues and institutions that impact the quality of life in their community. This is especially important among groups that are often the most marginalized and silenced in our societies. Knowledge of the social complexities I outline in this dissertation can aid therefore in community-based efforts, rooted in local context, to place authentic demands on the institutions that affect them and mediate globalizing forces in ways beneficial to the urban poor (Appadurai 2001).

Ultimately, this dissertation explores the role Tijuana and San Diego-based urban agriculture[3] social movements have in affecting the political, social, and moral values of the communities in which they are situated—what Sidney Mintz calls the "outside meaning" of food (1995)—and, conversely, how those changing values shape the movements themselves. During my dissertation fieldwork I was able to examine the ways in which food producers relate to their work in urban agriculture projects, how they situate themselves within that work and the ideologies used to justify and motivate that work, which allowed me to piece together their narratives and patterns of ideology construction and maintenance so that I could understand the complexities, contradictions, and nuances of what it means to be a food producer situated in larger social movements pushed forward and against from multiple angles, including

[3] In this dissertation, I am focusing on community gardens and urban farms as measures of urban agriculture, though during my fieldwork I encountered many more versions of small-scale food growing in urban areas, such as home and school gardens and hydroponics and aquaponics.

community-based organizations, the third sector, and the state. The theoretical aim underlying this dissertation is to understand how values-based community practices of urban agriculture operate as a political reaction to neoliberal inequality, as well as how such politics structure the social and collective subjectivities of urban farmers and gardeners.

Values: Anthropology and Differing Models of Valuation

This dissertation builds on and advances various bodies of literature: social movements and neoliberal critiques, social and ethical values, food justice/sovereignty (chapter one), the social construction of place (chapters two and three), community and belonging (chapter three), and prefigurative politics and hope (chapter four). In an effort to understand urban agriculture from a place-based, community-driven, and value-laden perspective, I engage and utilize existing academic literature on urban agriculture and anthropology that grapples with these topics. I do so by focusing not on food preparation, acquisition, or consumption among disadvantaged communities, which tends to dominate the field of anthropology and food studies (Appadurai 1981; Carney 2015a, 2015b; Garth 2009, 2014, 2020). Instead I will build on and add to the burgeoning body of literature focused on food production and food producers, with an emphasis on food growers in urban settings (Guthman 2004; Holmes 2013).

The concept of value or meaning is useful for understanding urban agriculture. The forces of globalization and modernity have caused a shift in values—one that now relies on notions of capital, labor value, exchange, and other concepts interrogated by value theorists such as Karl Marx. In this section, I provide an idea of the anthropological and social scientific literature on social value. Much of this literature relies on the anthropological theorization and study of *value*,

which expands on ethical and economic theories of value such as those by Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, and Karl Marx.[4] Taking a cultural relativist approach, anthropological theories of value highlight that economic activities can only be fully understood in the context of the society that creates them. Because the concept of "value" is a social construct, it is defined differently according to the culture using the concept (Appadurai 1986; Graeber 2001; Myers 2001; Robbins 2007, 2009). As Appadurai wrote, "value…is never an inherent property of objects, but is a judgment made about them by subjects" (1986: 3). Early anthropological examples of this theorization can be found in the writings of Mauss (2001 [1925]) and Malinowski (2013 [1935]). David Graeber (2001) much later wrote about value as a model for human meaning making, and Fred Myers (2001) edited a book that explores the ways in which objects are used to construct identity and cultural difference.

This review will then provide a solid basis on which to understand how urban agriculture is an attempt to shift away from dominant, hegemonic neoliberal capitalist discourses of value and toward those based in community and place-making. In this latter estimation, value is not contained in things by themselves, but only in a total social context of people and objects. Value is therefore not given in nature, as is often presumed within a capitalist framework—instead, value is produced by human action and intentionality. In this way, value can be seen as the chains that link relations between things to relations between people (Gregory 2005 [1997]: 12). Indeed, the sites where urban agriculture happens and the people who perform it can be thought of as

[4] Although not the topic of focus in this dissertation, some interesting overlaps between the political economic notion of "value" and social "values" exists and has been heavily interrogated by many. For more on these topics, see Appadurai 1986; Araghi 2003; Baudrillard 1988; Eiss and Pedersen 2002; Elson 1979; Ferguson 1988; Keenan 1993; Korkotsides 2013; Marx 1996 [1894]; Patel 2009; Pedersen 2002, 2012; Pitts 2021; Ricardo 1891 [1817]; Smith 2005 [1776]; and Whitaker 1904.

bastions representing conflict between different values and different social groups, or conflict even *within* social groups and within individuals, which appear as dilemmas. Within a capitalist framework that privileges utilitarian ethics, different, conflicting values are thought of as expressions of different preferences. However, the urban agriculture movement highlights a different ethic, relying on environmentalism, which claims that we require a radically new way of evaluating these differences. In other words, a new environmental ethic is needed (O'Neill et al 2008: 5-8; see also McMichael 2013). These concepts are further explored below.

The Anthropological Study of Values

Over the last half-century, there has been an upsurge of anthropological texts dealing with food, with increases in globalized food in the 1950s and then, especially, with increased neoliberal capitalist structural reforms and policies in the 1980s. According to Mintz and Du Bois (2002), this upsurge in anthropological inquiries into the study of food is due to "globalization; the general affluence of Western societies and their growing cosmopolitanism; and the inclusivist tendencies of U.S. society, which spurs even disciplines (and professions, such as journalism and business) without anthropology's strong inclusivist ethic to consider cross-cultural variations in foodways" (111). The same historically, economically, and politically-based values that encourage urban agriculture in the West, therefore, also encourage the study of food by researchers and academics.

David Graeber (2001) elaborates a Marxist understanding of value, but also details how value is used in different ways across and within the disciplines. Graeber explains that neoliberal capitalism reduces everything in the whole world into a single standard of value under a

monolithic, global system of measurement. In fact, Graeber goes so far as to say that capitalism is itself a system of measurement. It measures the value and worth of every object, every piece of land, and every human capacity or relationship to that system (xi). Going further, Graeber states that value is best seen in light of the way in which actions become meaningful to the actor by being incorporated in some larger, social totality—even if the totality in question exists primarily in the actor's imagination (xii).

According to Graeber, there are three large streams of thought when it comes to value: these are (1) the economic sense, (2) the linguistic sense, and (3) the sociological sense. The economic sense gets at the degree to which objects are desired, particularly as measured by how much others are willing to give up to get them. This sense of value has been about predicting individual behavior, which, as Graeber demonstrates, has a host of problems when it comes to irrational, collective human behavior. The economic sense of value attempts to understand social values in an objectified way that equalizes physical objects and intangible values. But, as can be predicted, these values do not behave in the same ways as physical objects, nor can they be acted upon in the same ways—instead, values exist within a web of social relations (2001: 9). The economistic approach attempts to reduce these social relations to objects, which is part of the inherent objectification that capitalism relies on.

The linguistic sense of value within anthropology, on the other hand, goes back to structural linguistics (Saussure 1966) and could be glossed instead as "meaningful difference" (2001: 1-2). Evans-Pritchard, for instance, noted that, "Values are embodied in words through which they influence behavior" (1940: 135). In this perspective, there is slippage of the term "value" to also mean something like "meaning" and "importance." This line of inquiry led to

structural linguistics and symbolic systems, but often overlooked the sociological use of the term value, which emphasizes what people think is good and proper in human life.

Finally, the sociological sense of value deals with conceptions of what is ultimately good, proper, or desirable in human life. Many scholars of anthropology at Harvard in the 1940s and 1950s, in fact, wanted anthropology to be the comparative study of values. This is because, as their reasoning went, culture is ultimately how values become ensconced in symbols and meanings (Parsons and Shils 1951), making the study of value (because anthropology is the study of culture, and culture is merely value tucked under symbols and meanings) a more central tenet of anthropology than other concepts. Kluckhohn, an anthropologist at Harvard in the 1940s and 1950s, defined values as "conceptions of the desirable," or "conceptions which play some sort of role in influencing the choices people make between different possible courses of action (1951: 395). In sum, values are ideas about what people ought to want. These then become the criteria by which people judge which desires they consider to be legitimate and worthwhile, and which they do not. Values, then, are not necessarily about existential questions of the meaning of life, but they are about what one could justifiably want from life (Graeber 2001: 3).

Drawing from this definition base, the cross-cultural study of values took on the appearance of value orientation theory. Value orientations are, according to Kluckhohn, "assumptions about the ends and purposes of human existence" and what constitutes fulfillment and frustration (1949: 358–59). In other words, value orientations mix ideas of the desirable with assumptions about the nature of the world in which one acts. In this way, the study of values gets at the heart of the anthropological project. Following Graeber, U.S. anthropology—in the Boasian tradition—saw the comparison of societies and cultures as a way to understand how to

organize difference in terms of structures of thought and feeling. At the core of the concept of "culture" were key patterns, symbols, or themes that could not be reduced to individual psychology—it was instead something that bound people together in an invisible ethos that could be understood through anthropology. In this estimation, what distinguishes different cultures is not simply what they believe the world to be like, but what they feel one can justifiably demand from it (2001: 5). Therefore, in this line of thought, anthropology should be the comparative study of practical philosophies of life.

Approaching anthropology as the study of values, however, did not wholly take off. Instead, anthropological concerns with issues of value developed in the 1960s in opposite directions—the economic sense of value and the linguistic sense of value, which have been discussed above. Graeber writes that in order to determine what people think is good and proper in human life (i.e. what they value), one must ask to what those people devote their creative energies. In essence, this is an attempt to discover how various groups would go about creating proper, valued people. In this dissertation and throughout my fieldwork, I tried to do just that—discover how those in the urban agriculture and food justice movements go about creating proper, valued people (and food). Highlighting values within urban agriculture therefore emphasizes the possibility of otherwise valuation—what I mean by this is that urban agriculture often manifests as an alternative to capitalist-drive values in that it pushes against and confronts those notions of profit, individualism, and dependency, instead replacing them with the possibility for community rather than isolationist individualization; for place-making rather than non-placed, inauthentic experiences; and for a re-connection to a sense of "nature" and a sense of community, whether that manifests as a connection to living non-human others and locales set

apart as "pristine wilderness," or as a re-connection to the processes of food production, cultivation, and distribution that many feel they have been lacking due to globalizing, industrial-scale food production (see again Figure 1).

Values and the Study of Food

Through this literature and disciplinary review, I am arguing that the study of values provides a meaningful lens through which to understand the urban agriculture movement. Besides expanding on ethical and economic theories of value such as those by Karl Marx, food studies has also contributed to this body of literature, emphasizing how the creation or consumption of food, whether vegetal or otherwise, is connected to the ways in which people feel about their food in relation to larger social schemas (Cavanaugh 2007; Chase and Grubinger 2014; Paxson 2012; Weiss 2012, 2016). In other words, food does not merely symbolize status and prestige—it is also a transformative substance through which social relations are manipulated and power is enacted (Fajans 1988: 143; Paxson 2012: 4). Chase and Grubinger (2014) put this succinctly: "Food systems are driven by the decisions people make, and those decisions are affected by values. People's values shape their perception of something's importance or worth, whether a tangible item that can be bought and sold or an aspect of quality of life that can only be experienced" (54). Some questions, then, are: what do people feel about growing food, and how do they attribute value to such an enterprise? What values do they attribute, and how are those values complicated and made messy in relation to other values they hold, as well as to larger societal values and structures such as those encouraged by the particular political and economic systems at play?

Sidney Mintz, who is considered a founding member of the anthropology of food, wrote about the symbolic meaning that food carries and the power such meaning has. He separates these into two categories: "inside meaning" and "outside meaning." Inside meaning refers to the symbolic values imbued on objects and actions, or the "interior embedding of significance in the activity of everyday life, with its specific associations…for the actors." (1995: 6). He writes that "Those who create such inside meaning do so by imparting significance to their own acts and the acts of those around them, in the fashion in which human beings have been giving their behavior such social significance as long as they have been human." (1995: 7). In the vein of symbolic anthropology, and connecting it to what he terms "outside meaning," Mintz explained that:

> The material world is invested with meaning; because people act in terms of understood meanings, meaning can be said to effectuate behaviors of certain kinds. Power and meaning are always connected… But the symbolic power of foods, like the symbolic power of dress or coiffure, is different from (even if related in some manner to) the tactical and structural power of that sets the outermost terms for the creation of meaning. The power within outside meaning sets terms for the creation of inside, or symbolic, meaning. (1995: 11)

So this "outside meaning" refers to larger forces manifested in certain institutions, governments, companies, etc. that constrain the social signification processes that are possible—in other words, outside meaning controls and shapes inside meaning. More specifically, he wrote that "outside meaning refers to the wider social significance of those changes effectuated by institutions and groups whose reach and power transcend both individuals and local communities: those who staff and manage the larger economic and political institutions and make them operate" (1995: 6). For Mintz, then, the study of value (or meaning, as the more expansive term he uses) needs to be understood not only as what individual or even community-level significance is placed on food or the practices around food growing, but also in terms of

what structural forces are at place that shape what we can even consider to be possible when imbuing food and food growing with symbolic meaning. These outside economic, political, and social forces—as forms of cultural hegemony or "value capture," as writer Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò describes (2020)—are exactly what shape our food system overall. And these same forces are what food growers and activists are questioning and challenging by taking part in the urban agriculture and food justice movements. Within the normative sphere of the larger food system, it is counter-hegemonic to engage in growing one's own food. This is what I mean by urban agriculture having a potentially radical orientation.

For instance, Heather Paxson writes in her book *The Life of Cheese* (2012) that artisanal cheese makers draw from various value sets that motivate them to be involved with cheese-making projects. However, their desire to work outside of the traditional food system runs into a problem when they themselves need to make a living off of their cheese businesses. Similarly, Brad Weiss applies anthropological theories of value to the local pork scene, interrogating the ways in which authenticity and concepts of "local" are created, maintained, and contested in local food movements as they pertain to pork (2012, 2016). Jillian Cavanaugh takes a related approach, considering the production of material and symbolic value as it is expressed through the ongoing commodification and transformation of Italian Bergamo salami (2007). Because of this work's emphasis on social values, it is frequently critiqued for being insufficiently political. In my work, I address this critique by centralizing political economic analyses and interrogating social values as situated within, constituted by, and reactive to those larger hegemonic structures.

But how can the study of value—both in the economic sense and in the social sense—be applied to food and the food system, and what can it reveal about those concepts? Food of course

embodies social relationships with its ability to delineate groups, as outlined by many anthropologists over the decades (Fajans 1988; Mintz 1985; Mintz and Du Bois 2002; Munn 1992 [1986]). When it comes to values, Jane Fajans helps us to explore social values as "the relative worth or salience, as defined in terms of contrastive relations with like elements of the total social system, of products, objects, actions, or beliefs" (Fajans 1988: 144). According to Fajans, values are symbolically represented as qualities embodied by products. These qualities, and the relative amounts or levels of them embodied in products, ultimately depend on the mode and amount of productive activity required for the production of the products. In this way, food can serve as a symbolic medium for the circulation or transference of value from one domain to another. However, it also acts as a transformative agent, constructing or changing the entities between which it mediates. Food therefore acts to maintain social control, to enhance prestige, to differentiate nature and society, and to construct aspects of person, gender, generation, status, and health (Fajans 1988: 145). The fact that food is a product of human labor also gives it a pragmatic social value—both to the food itself as well as to the needs that it satisfies. Who, where, and what inputs are needed to find, gather, or grow food all help define the value of that food (160).

Heather Paxson's work is especially helping in making the transition from the anthropological study of value to that study of value as applied to food and food studies. She echoes Graeber's sentiments about value and value-creation as applied to artisanal cheesemakers in the U.S. This can provide a productive lens through which to apply a theory of value to urban agriculture, as well. Paxson moves away from economic understandings of value by exploring forms of worth beyond exchange-value and the pleasures of eating. Indeed, the author argues for

understanding "unfinished commodities," which offer their makers a kind of ethical project through which they define their own values (2012: 13). Artisans struggle to balance competing values that move their work away from industrial food production while also earning them a profit in the market. This results in a sense of dissonance and anxiety that is integral to the experience of U.S. cheese makers today. The same can be said of urban food producers, who see their work as vital to the creation of local community, sustainable food systems, and as a site for the formation of larger movements toward equitable food distribution. Having to work toward such goals from within a capitalist, profit-driven system, however, produces anxiety over ways to realistically and effectively contribute to the movement, and cognitive dissonance for the less grassroots-based organizations based instead in state-driven attempts to contribute to the movement.

Continuing with Paxson's analysis of artisanal cheesemakers in the U.S., she explains that in a world in which it costs more to make things by hand than by machine, handcraft—and the irregularity and uniqueness it produces—is often fetishized by those who can afford to do so. Artisanal foods therefore are more about the narrow issues of distinction, class, and rank, than perhaps about the food items themselves. The same can be said of much of the U.S. food movement today. Very much a class and race and ethnicity-based movement, the food and food justice movements are dominated by wealthy white voices. However, people of color and otherwise disadvantaged individuals become involved in this movement as well, although for varying motivations and values. Besides the kinds of values embodied by food justice and food sovereignty as outlined by Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011) and Mares and Alkon (2011), Paxson contributes an understanding of a "reordering of values that are pervasive and enduring

in American culture—autonomy and self-determination, belief in the virtue (and reward) of hard work, a communitarian ethos of neighborliness, concern for the natural environment, and faith in future progress" (2012: 6). These same values, as applied to the urban agriculture movement in San Diego and Tijuana, are echoed throughout the chapters in this dissertation.

Furthermore, in a study of the motivational frames guiding urban agriculture organizations and businesses in the U.S., McClintock and Simpson (2018) identify six motivating values within urban agriculture.[5] These are and their dominant motivations are (1) Entrepreneurial: monetary (income/profitability), job training/workforce development; (2) Sustainable Development: food quality/fresh food, public health/nutrition, food security, sustainability, self-sufficiency, food sovereignty, and community-building; (3) Educational: that of youths and adults; (4) Eco-centric: environmental/agroecological, and sustainability; (5) DIY Secessionist: reclamation of the commons, recreational hobby, therapeutic/rehabilitation, alternative economy/anti-capitalist exchange, community-building, and self-sufficiency; and finally (6) Radical: social justice, food justice, food sovereignty, reclamation of the commons, and alternative economy/anti-capitalist exchange. These motivational frames and discourses are reproduced from the authors' article in chapter one of this dissertation to demonstrate the overlap and interconnection between these motivations or, as I believe they can be called, values. According to the authors, a wide range of objectives drive urban agriculture and that political orientations and discourses differ by geography, organizational type and size, and funding regimes. Paxson writes that food is an object of value that:

> transcends quantitative measures, whether of kilocalories or grams of fat, or in dollars and cents…. Through food, people solidify a sense of self and

[5] These will be discussed further in chapter 1, as well.

> connectedness to (or distance from) others. Food offers a strong anchor for identity because eating well—adequately, appropriately—holds not only the promise of being well (healthy) but also of being good (moral). (2012: 4; see also Garth 2020)

Food is therefore deeply cultural. This takes us back to Graeber's explanation of value as being fundamentally about what makes someone into a moral and proper person. Decidedly idiosyncratic and future-oriented, artisan cheesemaking in the United States is about making healthful and delicious food, but, more than that, it is about making a good life for oneself through pursuing engaging and gratifying work (5).

I argue that the same set of values applies to urban agriculture and urban agriculturalists—there is of course an existent desire to grow nutritious and healthy food, but there is a deeper, perhaps more existential desire to commit oneself to important tasks that contribute to the building of ethical community and to the larger goals of creating alternative food systems. In this way, the cultivating of crops and the crafting of a life mutually inform each other. Although speaking of cheese, Paxson echoes this sentiment in saying that, "artisan cheesemakers are united by a belief that the qualities that make their cheeses taste good are fundamentally connected to personal values that make the cheeses good for them to make" (5). This has the effect of crafting urban agriculture workers as ethical subjects of production (13). Such a valuation of artisan cheese-making or urban agriculture is part of the emergence of an agrarian form of life that is more future-oriented rather than nostalgic for a mythical pastoral past, as is often assumed and romanticized (Weiss 2012). In fact, as Chase and Grubinger claim:

> …alternative, locally oriented food systems are emerging that give more recognition and support to environmental and social values. Deeper consideration of non-market values in food systems is just beginning to gain credibility among policy makers, financiers, and scientists who are intellectually invested in

> mainstream financial models and technologies. (2014: 54)

The new ethos that emerges from this agrarian form of life is in contrast to industrial agriculture's technoscientific domination of nature, and instead seeks to work in collaboration with the agencies of pasture ecologies and ruminant life cycles. Paxson calls this a "post-pastoral ethos" (2012: 8). This ethos, however, is often "caught between competing value hierarchies, their optimism is often coupled with anxiety" (2012: 12). Jillian Cavanaugh (2007) takes a related approach, considering the production of material and symbolic value as it is expressed through the ongoing commodification and transformation of Italian Bergamo salami.

In this dissertation, I investigate the complicated ways that food producers negotiate the values they hold in relation to urban agriculture, what kinds of rationale they employ to make sense of the apparent contradictions of creating a sustainable system within an unsustainable one, and how those values are or are not based in concepts of social justice, class, race, ethnicity, and politics. Ultimately, those engaged in urban agriculture believe, as do I, that we collectively must develop a robust analytical framework that allows environmental and social values to be part of our economic calculations. As Chase and Grubinger put it:

> …food system decisions are aimed at achieving profits and continuous growth without substantive consideration of other values that are tied to well-being. Non-market values are dwarfed by the prime objective: to make money, and lots of it. Making money is arguably a good thing, but many problems arise because that objective is out of balance with values that are harder to put a price on. (55)

To get away from the disconnection and anonymity that are so tied up with industrial farming, alternative agricultural systems that are often practiced in urban agrarian settings (such as regenerative agriculture, agroecology, permaculture, etc.) again are attempting to shift values away from profit-centered models and toward others focused on issues of wellbeing, community,

and autonomy. Ultimately, here I make the broad argument that urban agriculture is a site for the collective and individual negotiation of value and meaning. The next section will describe in more depth how this happens.

Urban Agriculture and Dialectical Understandings of the Double Movement

According to Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011), the food movement manifests on a political spectrum from neoliberal to radical. Although food can be a source of material and cultural empowerment, it can also reflect and even create social and economic hierarchies. As food and food movements are used to perform identities, they simultaneously create exclusions and boundaries that mark a particular set of foodways (i.e. organic, local, slow foods, etc.) and identities as "right" and "proper" (Alkon and Agyeman 2011a; Pollan 2006). For example, Pudup (2008) writes about organized garden projects in the San Francisco Bay area that emphasize the use of the garden to produce new individual and collective subjectivities. "As gardening has become an increasingly favored response to the individual and collective disenfranchisements of neoliberal economic restructuring," Pudup writes, "so, too, organized garden projects have become sites where citizen-subjects are produced" through technologies of the self (2008: 1232). One of the reasons for this is because food and gardening can be fetishized to mask underlying social relations. Therefore, Pudup supports Guthman's (2004, 2011) claims that organized community gardening projects operate as spaces of neoliberal governmentality.

For many activists and scholars, urban agriculture—especially in the Global North—has become synonymous with sustainable food systems, standing in opposition to the dominant industrial agrifood system. Simultaneously, critical social scientists increasingly argue that urban

agriculture programs underwrite neoliberalism by filling the void left by the rolling back of the social safety net (McClintock 2014). At one end of the political spectrum, urban gardens and farms are radical tools of resistance against privatization and structural inequities in the capitalist, corporate food regime[6] (Cutts et al 2017; Eizenberg 2012; Johnston 2008; Shillington 2013). At the other end of the spectrum, farms and gardens serve neoliberal political goals when they aid in the retraction of the state (as in the case in Cuba [Altieri et al 1999; Premat 2009, 2012]), bolster capital logics of the food system, abet privatization and gentrification of the urban landscape, and downscale the sphere of social action from the structural to the individual (Allen and Guthman 2006; Alkon and Mares 2012; Cutts et al 2017; Guthman 2007, 2008; Pudup 2008). Particularly within a racialized, neoliberal setting, the food movement can in fact reproduce racialized market conditions and economic logics (Sbicca 2018). In their work in Seattle and Oakland, Alkon and Mares (2012) suggest that aspects of the urban agriculture movement can serve to relieve the state of its duty to provide basic services and, therefore, it fails to challenge a neoliberal political economy in which services that were once the province of the state are increasingly relegated to voluntary or market-based mechanisms. But is it also possible for urban agriculture to challenge this? Drawing from Monica White's work with Black farmers in Detroit (2010, 2011a, 2011b), it appears that urban agriculture can also be a way for underrepresented groups to fight against existing food systems or the lack of governmental social services and infrastructure (see also Appadurai 2001; Altieri et al 1999). But how can urban agriculture do both neoliberal and radical work at the same time?

Rather than pitting urban agriculture as needing to be on one side of this spectrum or the

[6] For more discussion on food regimes, see Friedman 1987, 1993; Friedman and McMichael 1989; Holt-Giménez and Shattuck 2011; and McMichael 2007, 2009, 2013.

other, it is instead more useful to see it as encompassing both simultaneously. Such contradictions are in fact inherent to urban agriculture and to many other projects existing under capitalist forces (Barron 2017; McClintock 2014). From this perspective, urban agriculture is not monolithic and *either* neoliberal *or* radical, as was emphasized in Holt-Giménez and Shattuck's estimation (2011). Instead, urban agriculture can be *both* neoliberal *and* a radical countermovement simultaneously (Barron 2017; Cutts et al 2017; McClintock 2014). Urban agriculture therefore arises from a protective, radical countermovement, "while at the same time entrenching the neoliberal organisation of contemporary urban political economies through its entanglement with multiple processes of neoliberalisation" (McClintock 2014: 147). An excellent example of this comes from Joshua Sbicca, who writes about Wild Willow Farm and Education Center on the U.S.-México border, where I also worked, and points directly at this often inherent contradiction in urban agriculture, usually borne of urban food growers' lack of faith in government to make real change: "…their skepticism of the state endured, evidenced by the rejection of capitalist wage labor relations; their response to the incongruities in labor law was an appeal to the value of self-sufficiency. Contradictorily, this often reinforced neoliberal subjectivities" (2018: 92). Embodying one value that is important to my analysis in this dissertation—that of self-sufficiency—in an attempt to get away from capitalist valuations of food and labor, also meant that farmers at Wild Willow were in fact unwittingly reproducing neoliberal perspectives in not centering economic justice in their work.[7] That is, not wanting to put a monetary value on labor and instead move towards self-sufficiency inevitably led to

[7] That is, because neoliberalization is, at least in part, a socialization process that relies on worker exploitation. As Sbicca writes, "The moral for allies in the food movement is not to forget the importance of economic justice" (2018: 102).

undervaluing labor economically and relying on volunteer work. This can be called the "double movement of urban agriculture," evoking Polanyi's double movement of capitalism (1944), driven by the simultaneous outgrowth from and reaction to crises of capitalism. This dialectic is bound up in what Pudup (2008) calls urban agriculture "projects" that include a radical re-envisioning of liberatory urban spaces, reformist aesthetic and sanitary improvement programs, and underwriting the production of the neoliberal city (Cutts et al 2017).

Applying this to my previous visualization in Figure 1, this "Double Movement of Urban Agriculture" could look something like what is shown below in Figure 2. Those in the urban agriculture movement attempt to shift the narrative from profit-driven, capitalist-based motives for growing food toward other values, such as community, autonomy, place-making, and others. At the same time, being situated within larger social, political, and economic systems that push for an orientation around capital accumulation, money, wealth, profit, individualism, etc., these urban agriculture efforts are constantly pushed back toward the value of having to subsist and survive by earning money, which often comes at the expense of the other social values they desire to highlight. This, like Figure 1, is shown in each box, indicating a movement or period of time in which these efforts are made. At the same time, in each iteration of this struggle, some movement is made toward an overall shift in values, represented by the spectrum between profit and other values shown at the top of Figure 2. In this dichotomy between being driven by "neoliberal values" versus being driven by "urban agriculture values," every time there is a struggle to shift towards the new systems of valuation some ground is gained, which is represented in this figure by each box, each periodization of struggle and contestation, moving incrementally towards other kinds of values. One could compare this to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s

"arc of the moral universe" being long but ultimately bending toward justice through active effort.

Some might argue that such a dichotomous binary between these different systems of valuation need not exist—that in fact through neoliberal logics the values of community, autonomy, being place-based, etc. can be achieved. In fact, some even argue that such capitalist approaches are the primary way of encouraging change and progress. However, I am operating from the understanding that although some semblance of social change can happen through capitalist markets and frameworks, that change is highly constrained by the limits of the logics, reach, and mechanisms of capitalism, and therefore do not help us get closer to thinking or operating outside of the framework of capital, profit, and accumulation (and its concomitant exploitation). As Patel writes, "The spirit of capitalism is jealous, and for it to thrive, different ways of thinking and valuing the world would need to be smothered" (2009: 60). In other words, the two cannot exist in the same space at the same time, since they are radically and existentially opposed to one another, and threatening to the others' existence. The logics of capitalism and the orientation around profit, individualism, exploitation, objectification, etc. only get us so far—and that "so far" is really a rather narrow and distorted reflection of the world. Instead of finagling capitalism to more accurately capture the true value of things in the world—by internalizing externalities, for instance, or employing ESG (environmental, social, and governance) investing strategies and encouraging a social responsibility orientation that has the common good at the

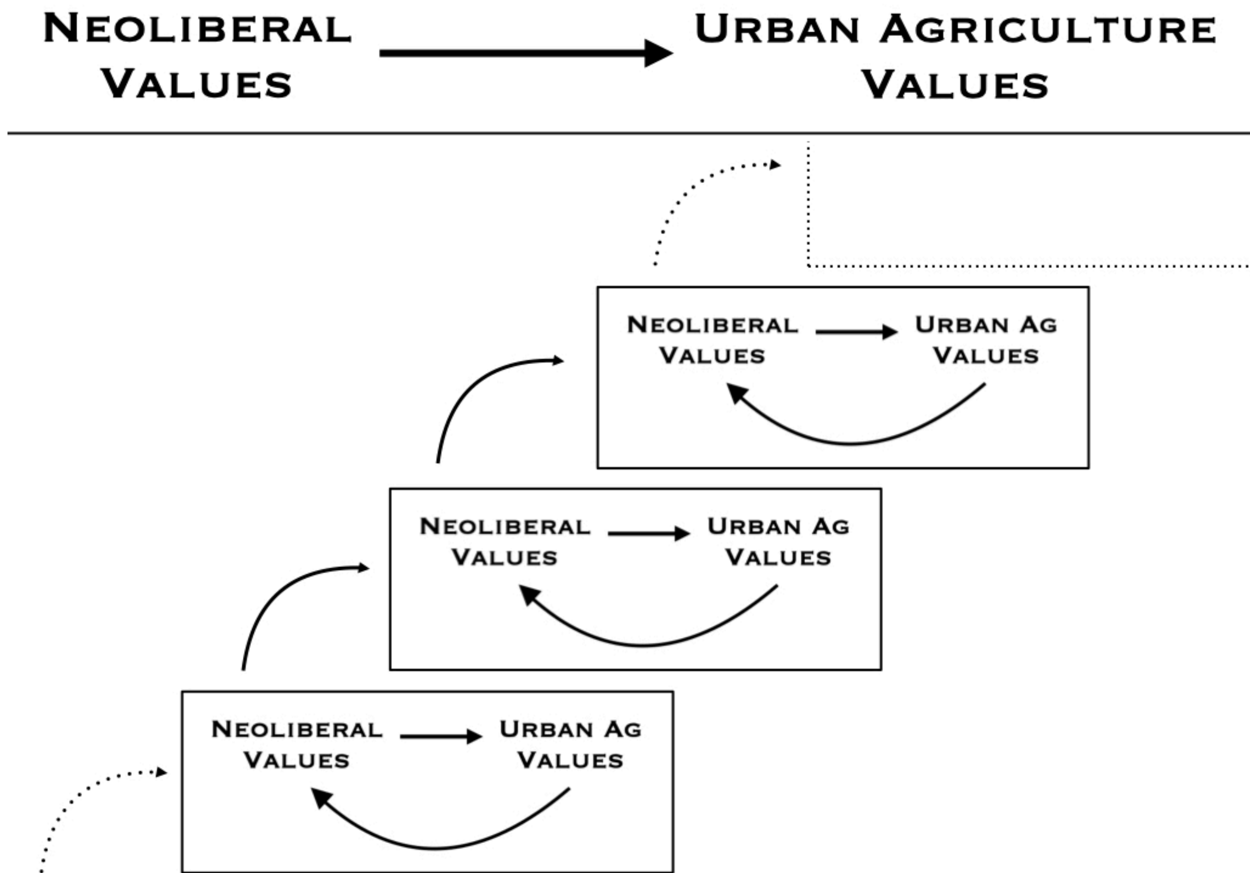


Figure 2. Shifting forms of values indefinitely over time, embedded with other moments of shifting forms of valuation.

center of decision-making, rather than individual gain[8]—we will have to seriously rethink and employ entirely new systems of valuation that do not rely on existing markets at all, such as those employed by those engaged in urban agriculture.

In Polanyi's theorization of the double movement, the first movement is characterized by

[8] All of these approaches are important to pursue, in my opinion, as a near-term strategy for improving market mechanisms and human and planetary flourishing. But it must be acknowledged and understood that these efforts can only get us so far outside of our current system when we rely on instruments such as pricing. They are, again, near-term strategies within a larger goal to achieve a radically different system of governance, market, and ways of relating to each other and the world around us.

disenfranchisement and objectification—the transforming of things in the world into objects to be governed, extracted, and divvied up. The second movement is characterized by a response from society. In the context of this dissertation, the first movement is related to the objectification of food, labor, land, and community, turning all of these into mere dollar signs. The second movement is the urban agriculture movement, where those engaged in growing their own food attempt to push back against this flattening and objectification and instead highlight other social values. Figure 1 describes how this happens at the micro level, and Figure 2 illustrated how, when zooming out, iterative gains can be made toward pushing the system into new forms of valuation outside of capitalist logics. Figure 2 can give the false impression, however, that such gains are inevitable and guaranteed as long as there are people fighting for them. To these points, Patel argues:

> Although the relative strength of movement and countermovement varies, this isn't a tug-of-war between markets pulling society forward into the future, and countermovements yanking it back into the past. Countermovements are built out of the politics that people have to hand, and with those politics and associations, entirely new institutions are built…. Social change, according to Polanyi's model, isn't a one-step-forward-one-step-back process….[it's] more like an infinite symphony, with one movement building from the previous one. (2009: 23)

A more nuanced and accurate representation of this "symphony" or "dance," then, is shown below in Figure 3. Not every iteration of the double movement pushes us toward new forms of valuation—sometimes, perhaps many times, gains are lost and we become further entrenched in capitalist logics and values. Although I believe and hope that overall, through the push and pull of the double movement, we are still headed toward new forms of valuation, there are many long periods of time where no evidence shows that such an outcome is guaranteed. The countermovement to hegemonic practices is therefore a constant necessity.

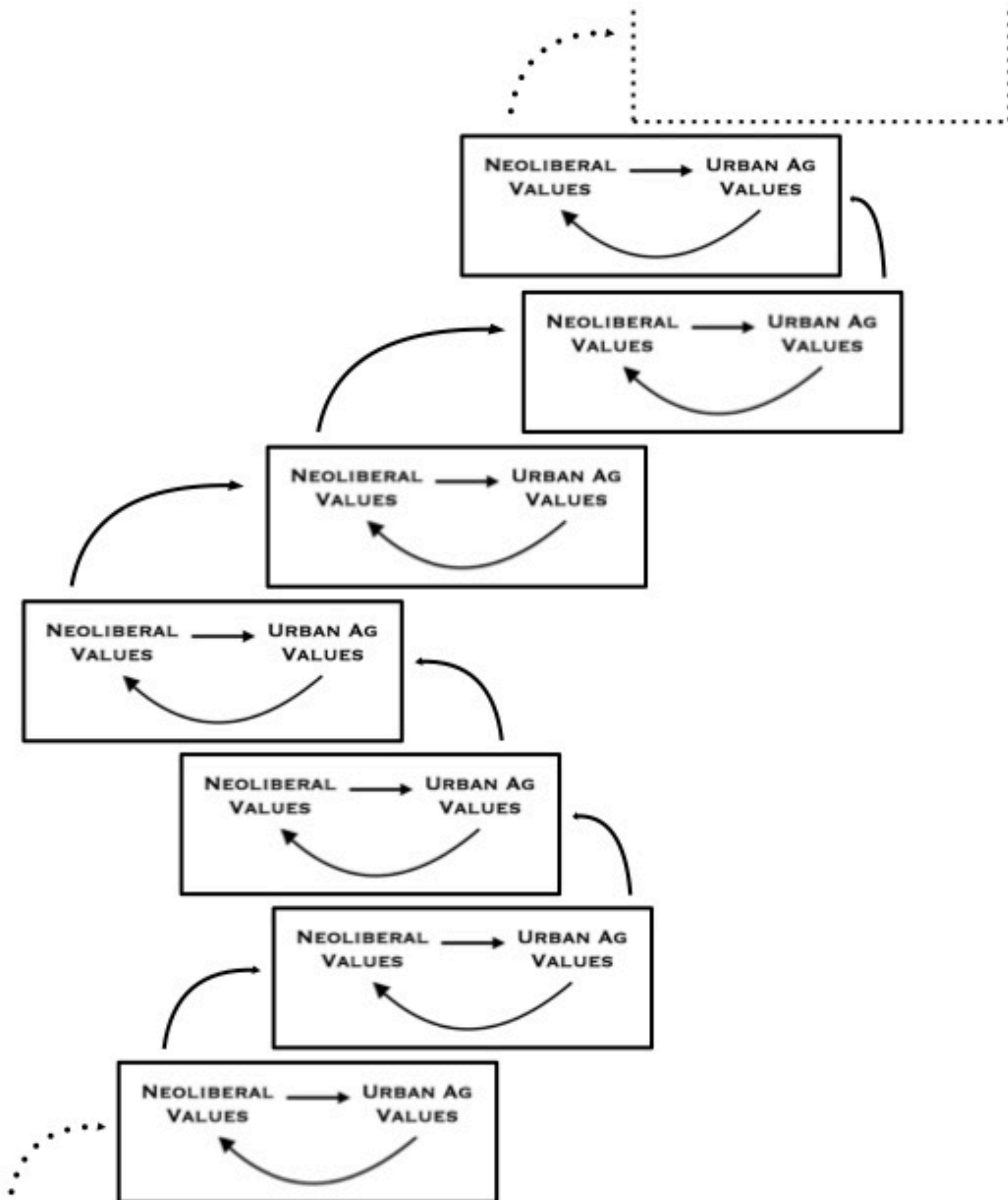


Figure 3. Shifting forms of value indefinitely over time, embedded with a symphony of moments of shifting forms of value that sometimes indicate gains for one side and at other times gains for the other side. This is a representation of the double movement of urban agriculture.

In all, this more nuanced approach and discourse around urban agriculture reflects a desire to move beyond assertions that urban agriculture projects are either inherently resistant to, or reproductive of, neoliberalism (or radicalism, for that matter). This suggests that there is a need to look at urban agriculture, and the larger food movement, through lenses more attuned to the contradictions, hybridities, and new possibilities that may be generated by the dialectical tension at the core of urban agriculture and the urban agriculture movement. It is essential to understand that this central tension is a product of the very same capitalist system from which it springs. In areas where both market and state failure have diminished wages and purchasing power, individuals and communities now play a much greater role in feeding people. In doing so, however, they also play an important role in cultivating citizenship and awakening political consciousness (Barron 2017; Levkoe 2006; Mares and Peña 2011). In other words, this is the anthropological study of a social movement, situated in the U.S.-México border region, taking into account the multifarious perspectives, values, and actors involved in this movement and allowing for uncertainty and hybridity in theoretical approaches. This, in turn, more closely reflects the complex social reality in which food, politics, and urban agriculture are bound up.

The Border Bioregion of San Diego and Tijuana

I conducted ethnographic fieldwork for my dissertation research among communities organized around urban agriculture in southern San Diego and Tijuana over the course of nearly four years. This cross-border region is a significant one for anthropological study as it very clearly reveals the ways in which neoliberal capitalism has transformed economies, landscapes, and values, and how it can morph and shape-shift to look like its alternatives (Polanyi 1944).

Urban agriculture, in its radical orientation, attempts to be one of those alternatives (Alkon and Mares 2012; McClintock 2014; Rosan 2017), making it an important site for revealing how knowledge, community, and place are produced, experienced, and shared among disadvantaged populations.

The San Diego-Tijuana metropolitan conurbation presents a unique case for the manifestation of urban agriculture. As the fourth largest bi-national conurbation with a population of over 5.3 million—about 40% of the entire U.S.-México border region population—and it being home to the busiest land-border crossing in the world with over 50 million crossing each year and around 300,000 per day, Tijuana-San Diego is a place where the border is both extremely permeable but also highly rigid. And although on one hand each space can be treated as one bioregional entity, they also have very different agricultural engagements. I will discuss each in turn in the following sections.

San Diego

California is known across the world as the agricultural powerhouse of the United States, with over a third of the country's vegetables and two-thirds of the country's fruits and nuts grown there (CDFA 2016). Although much of the agricultural industry is situated in the Central Valley of California, the southernmost area of the state also has deep agrarian roots. San Diego's excellent weather and Mediterranean-like climate make it an ideal growing space for a wide array of fruits, vegetables, and grains—although of course, water and labor issues are always at the fore. The overall total monetary value of production in San Diego County in 2020 equalled over $1.8 billion, with the top "crop" being nursery and cut flower products (mostly ornamental

trees and shrubs, succulents, and indoor flowering and foliage plants). Again, the climate of the county allows for the growing market demand for succulents across the nation, so this “crop” brought in the great majority of the total agricultural value, at just under $1.3 billion. Fruit and nut crops brought in about $3.5 million, vegetable and vine crops came in at $1.2 million, and field crops (hay, oats, etc.) at just $4.5 million. San Diego’s main contributions to domestic trade and consumption is therefore centered on nursery products as well as avocados (they lead in California for the sale of avocados). Most trade of fruit and vegetable products go to México (74% of exports) and Canada (13% of exports).

Indeed, agriculturalists in the area proudly tout that it is the county with the greatest number of small farms (less than 10 acres) in the United States and leads the nation in avocado and ornamental tree and shrub exports due to its various advantageous microclimates—a result of its unique topography and position on the coast (SDAWM 2016). This rich agricultural backdrop is sharply contrasted with high levels of inequality in the form of racial- and class-based segregation by geographical region, with concomitant food insecurity, obesity, and poverty among the disadvantaged (SDHC 2015; Wilkens 2017). This is exacerbated by San Diego’s neoliberal urban revitalization efforts that began in the 1970s, as well as its position on the U.S.-México border, making it home to many Mexican immigrants and migratory work. Southern San Diego, in particular, is characterized as a socioeconomically disadvantaged area of the city with large populations of Latinos, African Americans, and refugees from all over the world. In fact, San Diego County is not only home to the most small farms in the U.S., but also the most refugees in California (Morrissey 2017). This is partly a result of the city’s major military port.

Although urban agriculture has a big reputation in Rust Belt cities of the Midwest and Northeast, San Diego, as part of the growing "Sunbelt Cities" (Karjanen 2016), is also home to many community gardens, urban farms, and homesteads. San Diego's urban agriculture scene is not as robust as some other areas of the United States, such as Detroit, New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia, but the food movement has strong supporters and efforts to make San Diego "greener." According to the San Diego Community Gardening Network, there are around 100 registered community gardens in San Diego County. In the City of San Diego, there are perhaps around 50 community gardens, though of course it is difficult to get accurate numbers since not all gardens are open to the public (Sterman 2018). And certainly community gardens are only one measure of "urban agriculture." Urban farms, backyard and front yard gardens, hydroponic and aquaponic operations, are all elements of urban agriculture that many residents of San Diego engage in, but go uncounted.

That said, in the years leading up to 2010, many members of what would become the food movement that I knew in San Diego had organized into a group called the "One in Ten Coalition," which formed to advocate for every one in ten people to grow their own food by 2010.[9] To do this, they rallied community and City Council support to push for greater ease when building new community gardens. Community gardens in many cities lack a place in city zoning codes or are treated as development projects with many potential risks, thereby restricting and hampering their construction. The International Rescue Committee (IRC), for instance, has a well-established and important community garden space in Southeastern San Diego that is home

[9] Diane Moss (Project New Village), Ellee Igoe (Solidarity Farm), Mai Nguyen (National Young Farmers Coalition and a wheat farmer), Ellie Brown (San Diego Food System Alliance), and others were involved in the One in Ten Coalition and over the next ten years branched out to their own agricultural projects or organizations in the area.

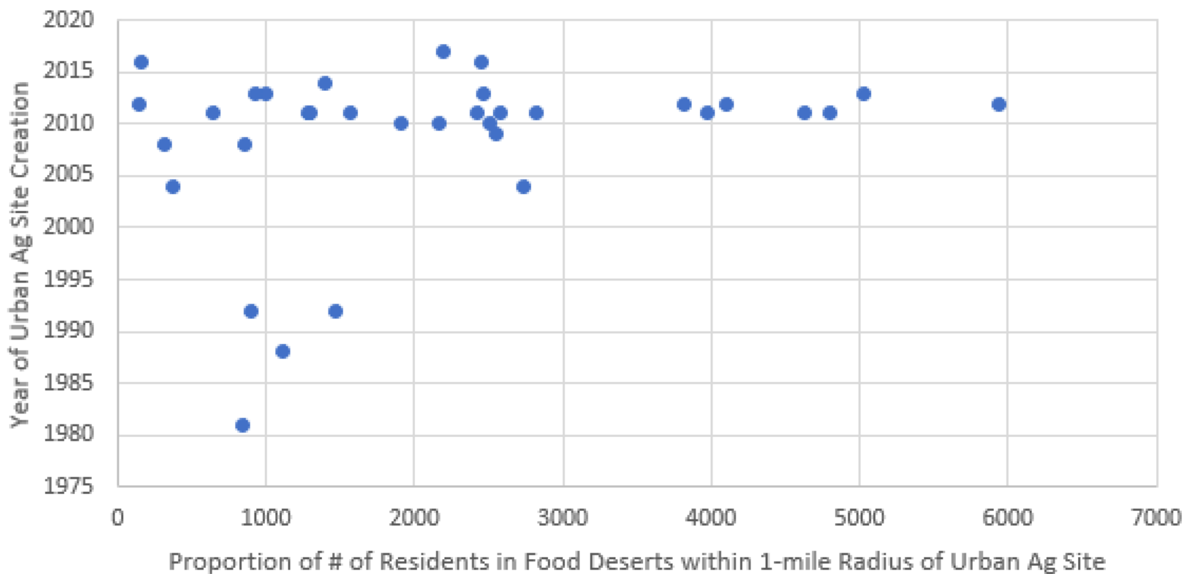


Figure 4a. I plotted 33 urban agriculture sites in San Diego County according to their year of origin and their proximity (within a 1-mile radius) to 2010 USDA census tract data reflecting food desert proportions. This graph highlights how the majority of the sites were created after 2011 local regulations made it much easier to obtain a permit to start a community garden. It also shows that the higher the density of residents in food desert census tracts, the fewer community gardens there are.

to many gardeners/farmers growing produce from around the world—however, having built their community space in 2009, they had to pay $46,000 to obtain a permit allowing them to build, and making them the first permitted community garden in San Diego. The One in Ten Coalition, therefore, pushed for changes in local regulation that were eventually passed in 2011, which allowed residents to start community gardens without the expensive permits ("Council Eases Community Garden Regulations" 2011). Because of the social momentum behind the One in Ten Coalition,[10] as well as the city council's passing of the new permitting requirements, dozens of new community gardens sprung up at that time. Additionally, in part because of the nature of the

[10] After the passing of this regulation, the Coalition morphed into what is now known as the San Diego Food System Alliance.

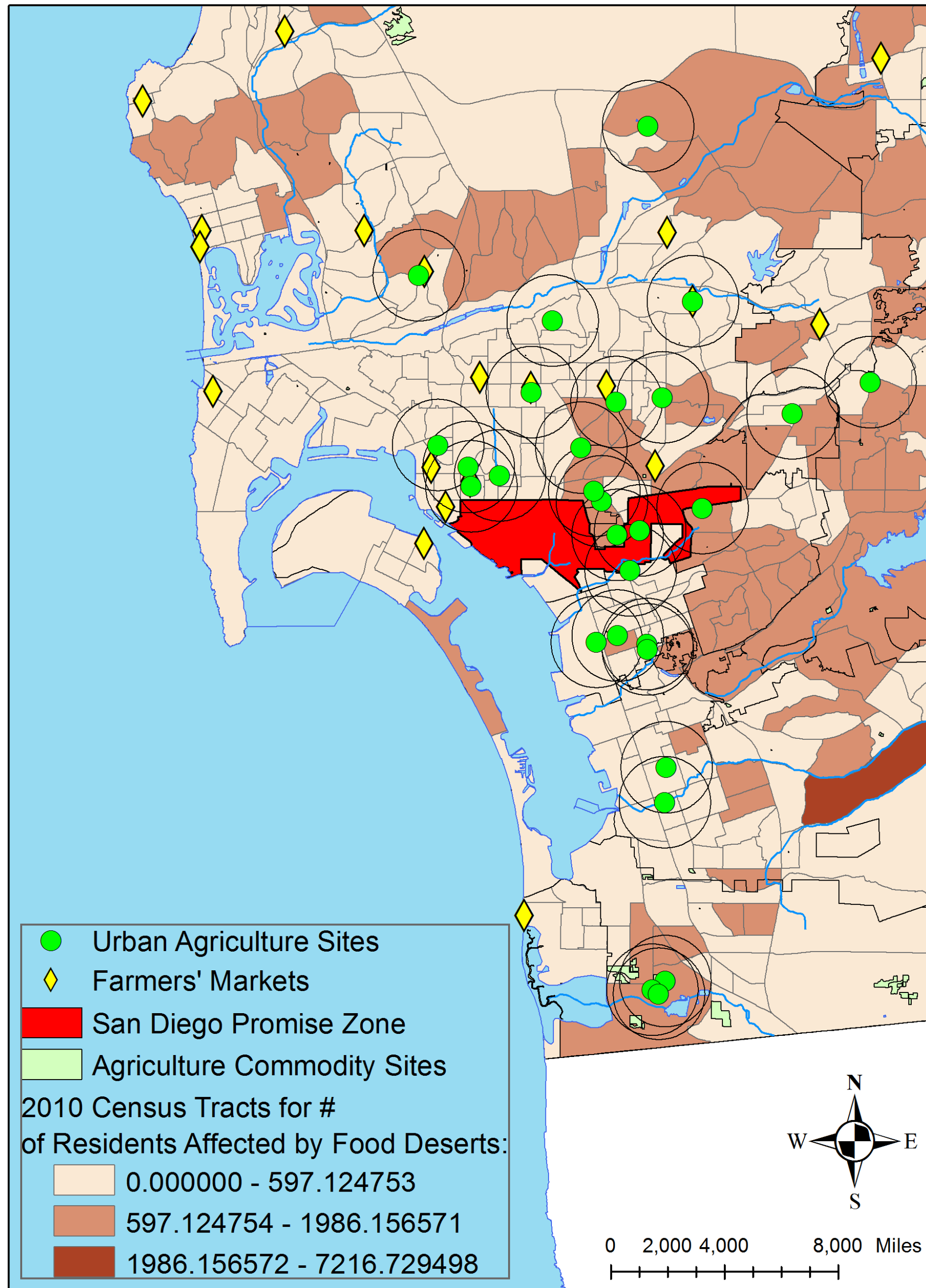


Figure 4b. This shows the same data as the graph in Figure 4a, minus year of origin for the urban agriculture sites. It also includes proximity to farmers' markets and the San Diego Promise Zone (in red).

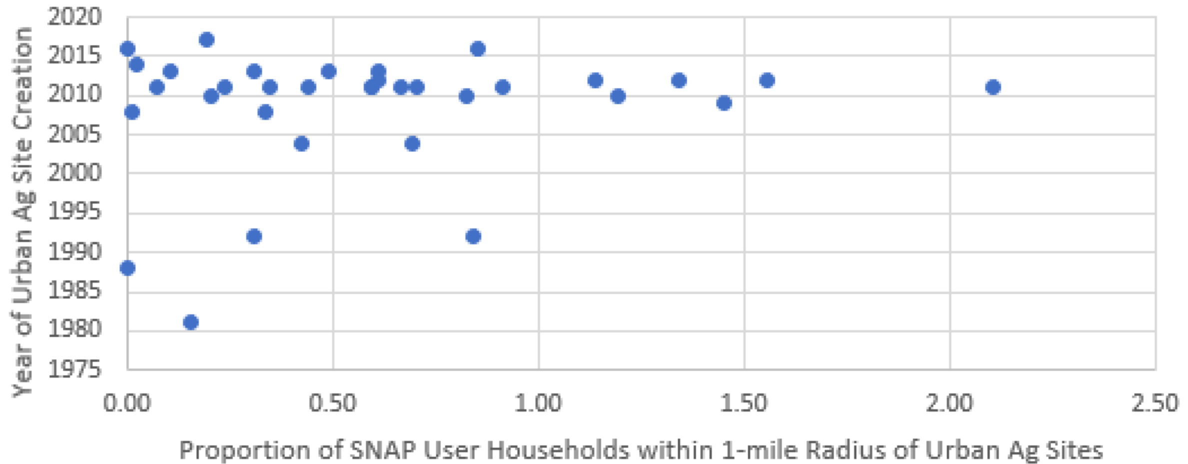


Figure 5a. I plotted 33 urban agriculture sites in San Diego County according to their year of origin and their proximity (within a 1-mile radius) to 2010 USDA census tract data reflecting SNAP-using household proportions. Like Figure 4a above, this graph highlights how the majority of the sites were created after the easing of community garden permitting regulations in 2011. It also shows that the higher the density of households receiving SNAP benefits, the fewer community gardens there are.

movement being less racial and social justice-centered and more interested in merely increasing food autonomy, many of these new gardens were built in areas of the city not characterized by food deserts but rather by low-income households. I worked with GIS data to visualize this scenario, related to the USDA's 2010 data on food deserts and SNAP (formerly known as "food stamps") users. Figure 4a shows data from 33 different urban agriculture sites (not just community gardens) in San Diego County and their relation to USDA food desert proximity. Figure 4b gives a map-oriented dimension to this data. And Figure 5a shows similar data, but instead compares those urban agriculture sites to SNAP user density. Figure 5b also gives a map-oriented dimension to this data.

San Diego Urban Agriculture Sites with 1-mile Radius Buffer

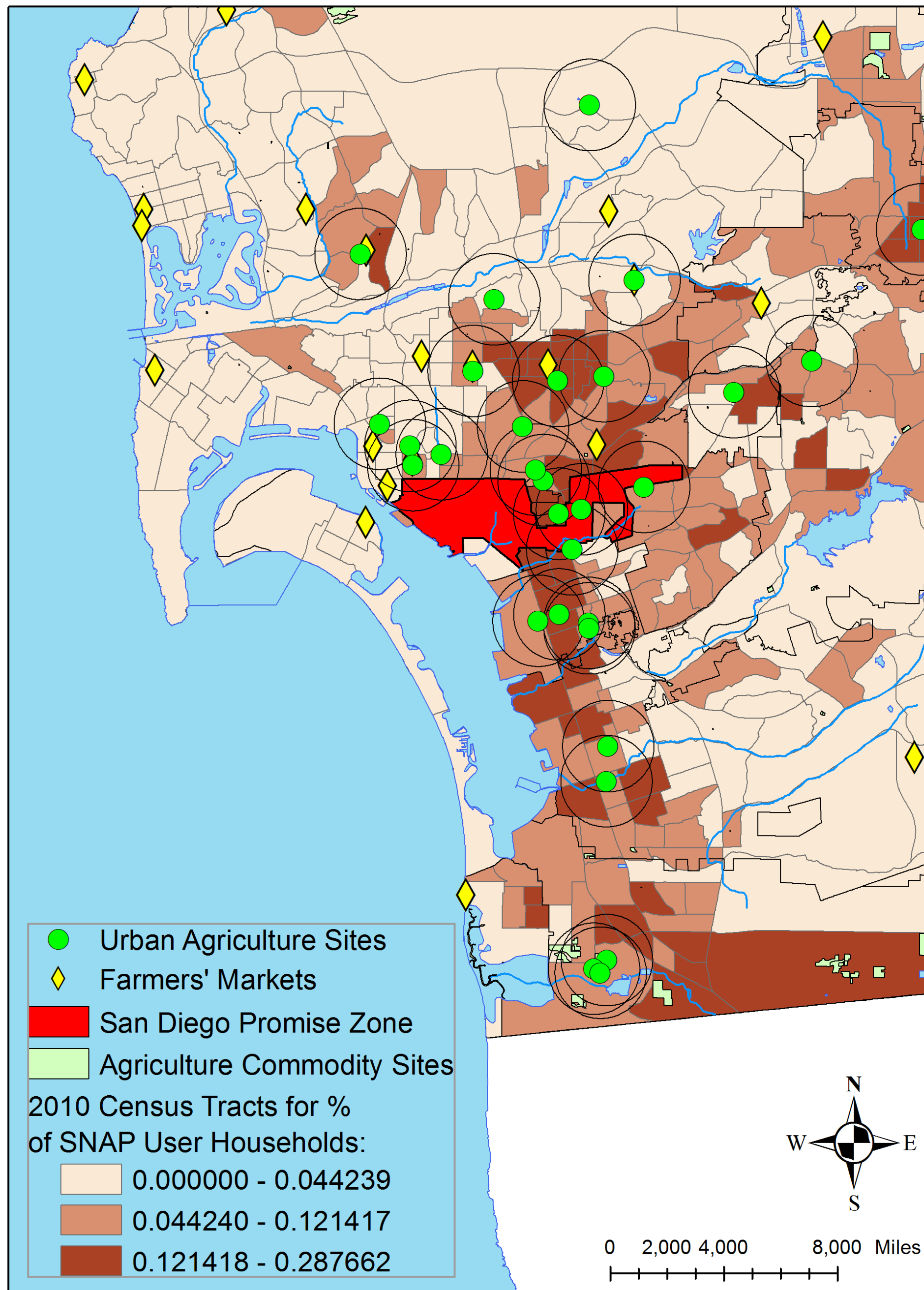


Figure 5b. This shows the same data as the graph in Figure 5a above, minus year of origin for the urban agriculture sites. It also includes proximity to farmers' markets and the San Diego Promise Zone (in red).

As with other major cities in the United States, then, San Diego (understood broadly to include surrounding cities, such as National City, Chula Vista, Lemon Grove, etc.) is an important space in which to understand the urban agriculture movement due to its unique historical settlement patterns, racial and ethnic distribution, infrastructural and development challenges, inequity, geography, and of course its relation to its sister city to the south, which I will cover next.

Tijuana

Tijuana, in comparison to San Diego, does not have such an agricultural emphasis nowadays, although the regions surrounding the city are dedicated to food production (largely wheat, barley, tomatoes, strawberries, and wine grapes) and export to the United States. México's *ejido* system of land distribution, with its roots in the Spanish colonization of the Americas, remained largely intact until the neoliberal reforms of the 1990s (Altieri and Toledo 2011; Joseph and Nugent 1994). However, just as in the United States, efforts over the decades had favored the shift from many small *ejidos* owned by Indigenous groups to consolidating many *ejidos* under a few non-Indigenous owners (Van Young 2001).

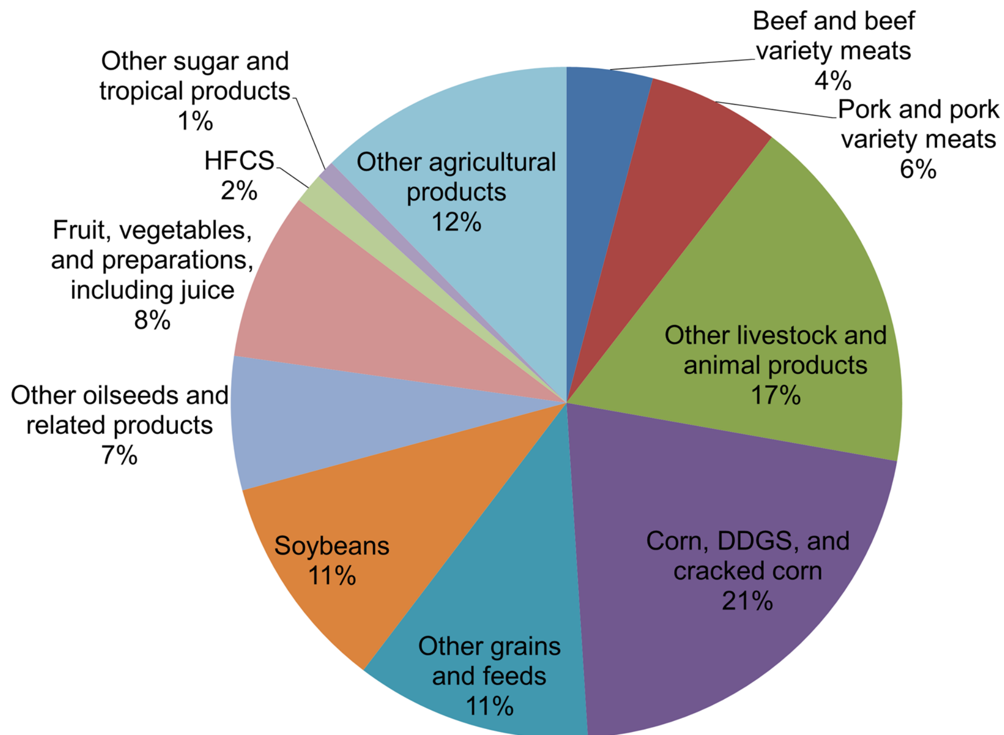
Following this pattern, Tijuana was established as a ranch settlement on part of a land grant in 1862. Despite this land consolidation, agricultural production decreased in México. The U.S.-led Green Revolution in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s contributed agricultural technologies to address this issue, but at the cost of being required to largely only grow high yield crops like wheat, corn, and rice (Holt-Giménez 2017). Structural adjustment programs and free trade agreements such as NAFTA—as well as constitutional changes encouraging the sale of *ejido*

lands in favor of larger and more efficient farms with money invested from private sources—pushed agriculture toward even more commercialized enterprises. Due to these circumstances and the agricultural sector's inability to keep up with exploding population growth beginning in the 1970s (Zenteno Quintero 1995), México went from being a net exporter of agricultural goods to a net importer. Its main trading partner is the United States, buying 81% of overall Mexican exports and supplying 69% of their imports. In the agricultural sector in 2021, México accounted for 15.5% of U.S. agricultural exports ($25.5 billion) and 22.3% of U.S. agricultural imports ($38 billion). The U.S. largely sends grains, oilseeds, and meat to México, and México sends to the U.S. vegetables, fruit, beverages, and distilled spirits (see Figures 6 and 7). Despite efforts to combat the country's increased dependence on imports from the U.S. and elsewhere—such as through the Plan de Ayala 2.0,[11] which attempted to do away with policies that write off small and medium-scale farmers in favor of large ones serving the goals of NAFTA trade agreements (Wise 2017)—México's reliance on trade with the U.S. is stronger than ever.

The state of Baja California, where Tijuana is situated, did not achieve statehood until 1952. The state makes up the northern part of the Baja California peninsula and is home to about 3.76 million people (the southern part of the peninsula makes up a different Mexican state, Baja California Sur). Of those, over 75% of the state's population lives in the urban centers of Tijuana, Mexicali, and Ensenada (Rivas-Landaverde 2020). A 2018 study conducted by Centro de Estudios de las Finanzas Públicas states that prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, about 15% of individuals in Tijuana were experiencing food insecurity (CEFP 2018). Of course, these numbers

[11] Also referred to as the 21st Century Plan de Ayala, harkening back to the document drafted by México's revolutionary leader Emiliano Zapata during the 20th-century Mexican Revolution, which, in part, demanded land reform and redistribution.

Grains, oilseeds, meat, and related products made up 77.2 percent of U.S. agricultural exports to Mexico in 2021



Notes: Data are for calendar year 2021, when U.S. agricultural exports to Mexico equaled $25.5 billion. Agricultural products are defined using the definition of the World Trade Organization (WTO). DDGS = distillers' dried grains with solubles. HFCS = high fructose corn syrup.
Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, as compiled by USDA, Foreign Agricultural Service, *Global Agricultural Trade System*.

Figure 6. 2021 U.S. agricultural exports to México (USDA 2021).

have increased dramatically since the pandemic—this is covered more thoroughly in the conclusion of this dissertation.

Tijuana is emblematic of México's current main economic sector: services in the form of manufacturing at maquiladoras owned by U.S. companies (Salzinger 2004; Zenteno Quintero 1995). Tijuana is the major maquiladora center, followed by Mexicali and Tecate—all border towns. Major manufacturers included electronics, textiles, plastics, metal products, automobile components, paper, beverages, and processed foods (Britannica 2022). Most jobs within the state

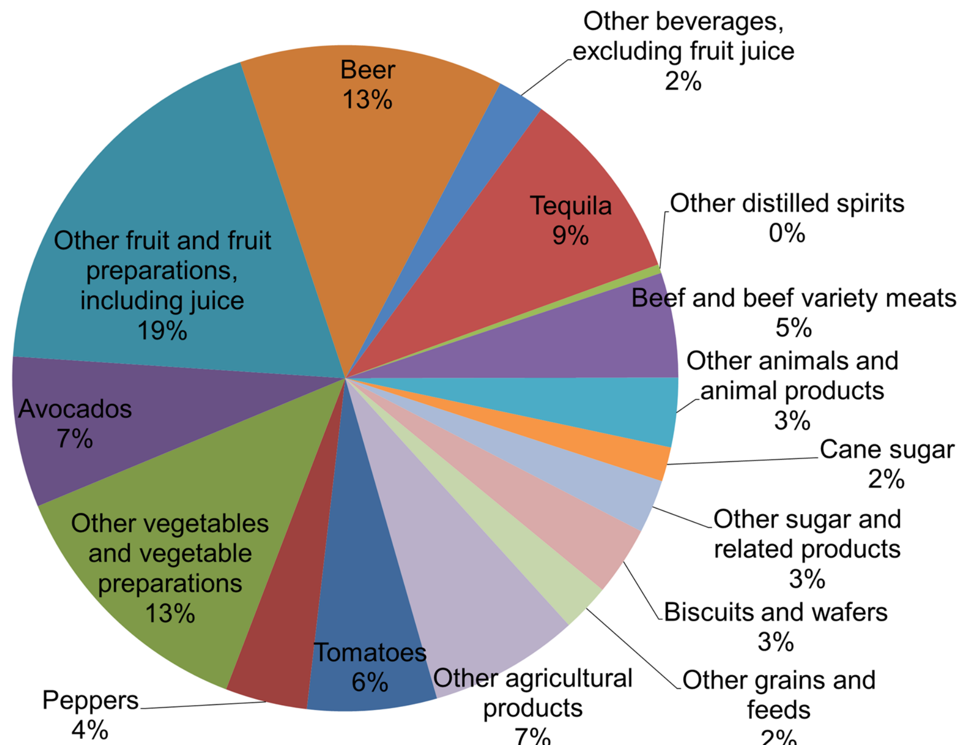


Figure 7. 2021 México agricultural exports to U.S. (USDA 2021).

of Baja California are dedicated to tourism and maquiladoras in the cities, and food processing and agriculture in the outlying regions (Rivas-Landaverde 2020; Invest in Tijuana 2019). Just as San Diego has an ideal Mediterranean climate for growing food, the same goes for Tijuana. However, the lack of consistent and reliable access to water is a major issue in the region, due to poor hydrological infrastructure, the arid nature of the region (the average yearly rainfall is only 3 inches), and the overuse of groundwater for crop irrigation. Agriculture is therefore centered around the Colorado River in Mexicali and the Valle de San Quintín. Tijuana, then, because of its

proximity to San Diego and the major border crossing infrastructure, is the site for the export of these agricultural goods into the United States.

The urban agriculture and food movements have not taken hold in Tijuana with the same enthusiasm as they have in San Diego, and this is for a variety of reasons, some of them land-based, historical, cultural, and due to bureaucratic inconsistencies (Vásquez Moreno 2010). However, the border remains porous, and various examples of urban agriculture have made their way to the other side of the border. In 2022, Ricardo Arana, the director of Cultiva Ya! in Tijuana —an organization dedicated to education around urban agriculture—and who has been a teacher of urban gardening classes at the Casa de Cultura Playas (on the Tijuana coast) since 2012, said this on World Environment Day for the Instituto Municipal de Arte y Cultura (Municipal Institute for Art and Culture) of Tijuana:

> On this World Environment Day, I have a message for you: I invite you to cultivate an urban garden. When you get involved with the production of your own food, you come to value in a more distinct way things like water, air, people's labor, the nutrition that you need, and everything that you can give back to this planet. So this is the invitation to Tijuanenses, that we transform this city into one big garden. Take the streets, take the patios, and cultivate your food… And to the Council and the Municipal President of Tijuana, today we ask you to create a legal framework so that there are no vacant lots in Tijuana—that there are only community gardens and food for everyone. This is the proposal, we hope it resonates. (Arana 2022)

Examples of this happening includes urban gardening spaces that center U.S. deportees who find themselves houseless on the Mexican side of the border. State regulations are more lax in Tijuana, and yet still the building of raised boxes to grow food on unused federal land is an act of civil disobedience, done to improve the lives of those with no access to food, shelter, or a place to earn wages for their labor (Dibble 2015). Another example is Rancho Bajamosal, where

SAT
AUG 24th
@ 2PM

SD X TJ

DSA

CONTRA
VIENTO
Y MAREA

GARDEN
WORKDAY

EL COMEDOR Y JARDIN COMMUNITY KITCHEN

IMMIGRATION WORKING GROUP X ECOSOCIALISM WORKING GROUP

JOIN US FOR A GARDEN WORK DAY AT
EL COMEDOR Y JARDIN COMMUNITY KITCHEN IN TIJUANA!
THIS IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN ABOUT OUR TWO
CHAPTER-WIDE PRIORITY CAMPAIGNS IN IMMIGRATION AND
ECOSOCIALISM, AND ENGAGE IN SOME MUTUAL AID WORK.

SANDIEGODSA@GMAIL.COM

Illustration 1. A San Diego chapter of Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) flyer advertising a work day at El Comedor in Tijuana in August 2019.

Adriana Whizar, a trained anthropologist, uses agroecological principles to grow fresh fruits and vegetables for the local markets (Holslin 2014; Martínez 2014). And smaller examples that I participated in during my fieldwork included a rooftop garden at El Comedor—a community food kitchen and sanctuary space for migrants, refugees, deportees, LGBTQIA folks, and others in need of sustenance and shelter (see Illustration 1), which is located just a few blocks from the U.S. border—and a small urban garden in the Divina Providencia neighborhood where participants not only grew food, but engaged in labor to abate the erosion of the canyon they lived in (see Illustration 2). Much of this spreading of urban agriculture is unidirectional, flowing from north to south, although time-tested examples of urban agriculture further south in México do also exist (Dieleman 2017; Losada et al 1998; Torres Lima et al 2000).

The effect of the military, the various universities, non-profit organizations, and local governments in the bioregion of San Diego-Tijuana contributes to a unique social, political, and spatial framework with multiple actors, each with varying degrees of power and influence, vying to find the most successful sustainable alternatives to global food production. This cross-border arena is a significant one for anthropological study as it can further reveal the ways in which neoliberal capitalism has transformed economies, landscapes, and values, and how it can morph and shape-shift to look like its alternatives (Polanyi 1944). Urban agriculture attempts to be one of those alternatives (Alkon and Mares 2012; McClintock 2014; Rosan 2017), making it an important site for revealing how knowledge, community, and place are produced, experienced, and shared among disadvantaged populations. Furthermore, because of this historical, geographic, social, spatial, and political economic context, it is exceedingly important to strive to develop rooted communities that can serve to combat larger structural forces.

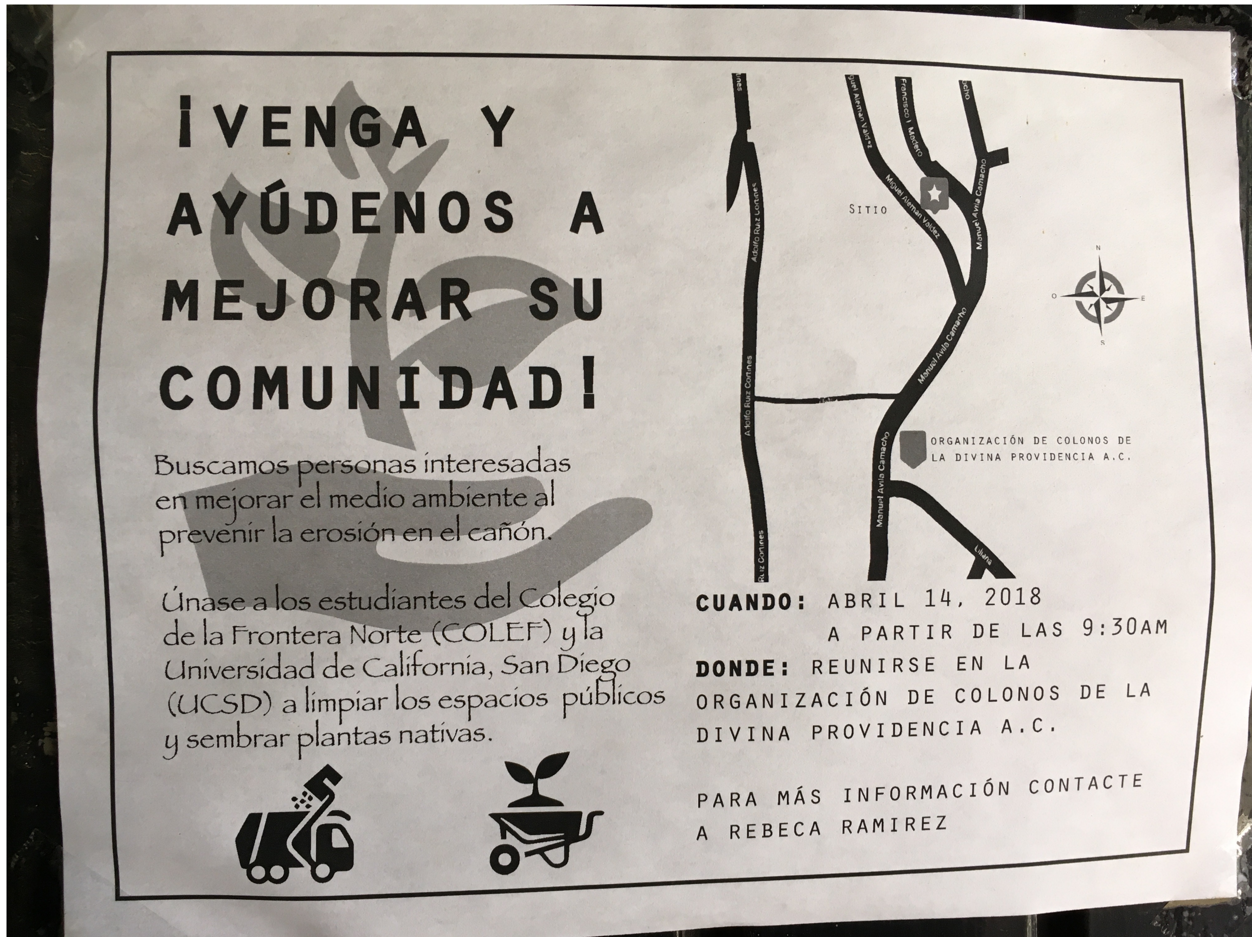


Illustration 2. A flyer asking for volunteers to help with planting native varieties, cleaning up public spaces, and helping abate canyon erosion in Divina Providencia, Tijuana.

Methods and Analysis

Over the course of my fieldwork, I participated in and observed many urban agricultural practices, events, and organizations so as to approximate a holistic and intersectional perspective on the San Diego-Tijuana urban agriculture movement. I engaged in the ethnographic methods of participant observation, taking field notes, photography and videography, and conducted many unstructured and semi-structured interviews, as well as 23 structured ethnographic interviews of

informants[12] (Bernard 2011). I also did mixed methods work, including archival methods, utilizing and archiving social media, and geospatial analysis (as seen above) to better help understand the urban agriculture movement in this area. My work focused not only on food growing spaces, but also meetings of community organizations and local governments, forums, and hearings focused on gardening, farming, land use, food, and sustainability practices.

And because it is important to describe one's positionality in these kinds of academic spaces, I include here a description of how I present: I am a light-skinned Colombian-American who was born and raised in Southern California, who is sometimes read as Latine and other times not, depending on the viewer. I also present in gender non-conforming ways and am queer, and I come from a working class background. These identities and others of course shaped the way I could do research and activism in this area, at times serving as advantageous in some communities and with some individuals and other times not. My association with the university and my role as a researcher, though, was often the weightiest identity I held within urban agriculture and food justice communities, and was challenging to navigate. In part in reaction to these challenges, I became deeply engaged in the communities where I researched by living in Southeastern San Diego and Lemon Grove, where much of my California-based work occurred, and also working for several organizations in a farming capacity.

My research highlights underrepresented food growers and communities in urban settings. Many of the field sites I worked in within San Diego reside in the San Diego Federal Promise Zone, a federally recognized high poverty area receiving attention from both federal and local leaders to streamline resources and deliver support. As such, these areas are also

[12] See Appendix I to see a more thorough description of my research methods, as well as the questions that were asked of participants for structured interviews.

characterized as food deserts.[13] Through the use of mixed methods and participatory research over a prolonged amount of time, I was able to gain a holistic and intersectional perspective on the San Diego-Tijuana urban agriculture movement. This approach to studying urban agriculturalists and the urban agriculture social movement allowed me to examine the extent to which radical politics, neoliberal-era individualization, race, class, history, and place inform community-based local food producers' values.

Some of the main sites of my research centered on Ocean View Growing Grounds in Mountain View, Dickinson Farm in National City, Mt. Hope Community Garden in Mt. Hope, Wild Willow Farm and Education Center in the Tijuana River Estuary, Ecoparque in Universidad Sur, and Cultiva Ya! in Costa Hermosa,[14] though of course it expanded beyond these locales and included other urban agricultural projects. Other sites of investigation included meetings of community organizations and local governments, forums, and hearings focused on gardening, farming, land use, food, and sustainability practices.

At least initially, I pursued three main questions in this project: (1) What values and meaning do urban farmers and gardeners attribute to their agricultural sites, practices, and pursuits? (2) How do those values serve as a motivating force for local food production? And (3) In what ways do race, ethnicity, political involvement, and class shape engagement with urban agriculture and food security experiences? Through the use of mixed methodologies as described above, I came to understand the physical and spatial aspects of community-building values and the ways in which communities are geographically situated and determined. The research

[13] For more on the differences and nuances between food deserts, food swamps, and food apartheid, see Penniman 2018 and Rose et al 2009.

[14] For a more thorough description of these listed spaces, see Appendix II.

methods and protocols I used in my research were intentionally selected to enable analysis on multiple levels, including at the levels of the person and of the society, as well as analysis of historical changes and processes. They were also selected for their ability to represent and reflect the complexity and nuance in social configurations and values surrounding the urban agriculture movement. In order to analyze the collected data, I used qualitative data analysis software (mainly NVivo) to create codes to apply to transcripts, documents, audio recordings, photographs, and videos from fieldwork. This allowed me to perform textual analyses—which aids in the interpretation and management of large amounts of textual, graphical, or audio data—and content analyses, which is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences by interpreting and coding textual material, as well as making it possible for qualitative data to be converted into quantitative forms. I also used ArcGIS to analyze collected spatial data.

Using these methods over a prolonged amount of time, I was able to gain a holistic and intersectional perspective on the urban agriculture movement in this area of the world, allowing me to examine the extent to which radical leftist politics—motivated by concerns for social justice and environmentalism, neoliberal-era individualization, race, class, history, and place—inform the values of community-based local food producers and their approaches to growing food. I use the terms "radical" and "leftist" in relation to politics to refer to far-left politics groups who tend to be estranged from mainstream U.S. society and highly critical of what is perceived as the moral degeneration of U.S. institutions. Often these groups view U.S. society as dominated by conspiratorial forces working to defeat their ideological aims (McClosky and Chong 2009). Such an emphasis contributes a more nuanced perspective of grassroots efforts organized to push against the hegemonic forces of neoliberal capitalist reforms and corporatism

by examining the porous boundaries between contestation and cooptation amidst daunting power differentials (Alkon and Mares 2012; Giraldo and Rosset 2018; McClintock 2014; Premat 2009). Ultimately, I believe that this provides a basis for the building of rooted communities that have greater power and ability to make claims against larger hegemonic and entrenched forces.

Chapter Overview

In this introduction to the dissertation, I have aimed to lay out the main theoretical lenses I use to interrogate the idea of value in the urban agriculture movement in Tijuana and San Diego. I have argued that urban agricultural practitioners strive to shift away from values associated with neoliberal capitalism—that is, individualism, profit-motives, dependency relationships, and extraction—and instead move into new relational and economic realms that highlight other social values. I have introduced those various social values, which I will explore in the following chapters: self-sufficiency, connection and access to land, community, and hope through prefigurative politics. I have also described what urban agriculture is, why it is important to study, and how I situate it within the larger food movement. Finally, I have described the location of my investigations in the San Diego-Tijuana metropolitan area, described my own positionality within the research, and have given an overview of the methods I used in my investigations.

The first chapter of this dissertation launches the investigation into a description of one of the most important social values urban agricultural practitioners strive for as a way to build new ways of relating to one another and to the natural world: self-sufficiency and autonomy. This chapter delves into common narratives within the urban agriculture and food movements that deal with this concept of autonomy: food security, food justice, and food sovereignty. I describe

how the urban agriculture movement has always pushed for greater local control of the food system, in large part because those who are moving the movement forward are those living in low-income areas where access to nutritious and healthy food is limited. I grapple with the distinctions and overlaps between ideas of justice and sovereignty, bringing in ethnographic evidence to describe how these ideas are approached by urban agriculture practitioners in Tijuana and San Diego. I end the chapter showing how economic justice, as a form of autonomy, is a social value that is vitally important to urban agriculture practitioners and essential for getting away from a profit-centered paradigm.

The second chapter delves into another incredibly important social and tangible value in the urban agriculture movement: that of connection to land. And not only connection to it, but the struggles with access to land in the first place in the urban agriculture movement. I situate my analysis within a framework of the production of space and place, which helps to see access to land as not only a tangible act or struggle, but also an attempt to build new modes of interaction and relationships between people and the natural world. I explore why cities are unique locales for such place-based struggles to occur, how they are exploitative to begin with and discourage a connection to the natural world and to each other, and therefore why they are uniquely situated as places for new forms of politics and political organizing to occur. Much of this work is derived from Henri Lefebvre's inquiries into the connections between materialism and space production (1991 [1974]) and David Harvey's concomitant analysis of the right to the city and various forms of governmentality (2013), to use Foucault's term. I show how the connection to land within the city is fraught with conflict and struggle, in large part due to the commodification of land and paradigms of private property, but also show how connection to land is associated with immense

amounts of hope and desire on the part of urban agriculturalists. Land—and human connection to it—is the basis on which new politics and visions of the world are born.

Building off of the previous chapter, the third chapter of this dissertation explores how community is an essential value for urban agricultural practitioners, and one that is also constantly contested and strived for within the movement in an effort to search for belonging. Building new forms of relating to one another and pushing against the alienation encouraged in cityscapes causes those involved in urban food-growing to seek out like-minded folks with similar political orientations and desires for new ways of relating that get outside of exploitative profit-centered models. In this, urban agriculturalists center the creation of community in their revised social valuation hierarchies. I explore how the very act of engaging in urban agriculture is a way to build that community, though of course it comes with its own set of difficulties and drawbacks due to larger political-economic constraints. This will provide an important discussion of how the concept of value can be useful for understanding motivating factors within urban agriculture, particularly in the context of competing and contradictory values derived from larger politico-economic circumstances versus grassroots, community-led initiatives. In all, the creation of a new kind of community, which can be read as a way of weaving together disparate people with similar visions of what a different way of relating to one another would look like, is integral to the urban agriculture movement. It is not just about the act of growing food in urban settings—it is also about the creation of community built on a foundation of different social and moral values. Just as the previous chapter sets this up in a more tangible form with land as the basis for new community organizing, this chapter shows us the more intangible ways that people build a new world through urban agriculture.

In the last chapter, I explore a final topic that is essential for urban agriculturalists when attempting to create new forms of relating based on social values outside of the paradigm of profit and exploitation. That is: hope. Hope is essential for those engaged in a politically-oriented form of urban food growing, as the challenges for creating new social, political, and economic relations often feel insurmountable. Hope in the urban agriculture movement often manifests through prefigurative politics—that is, those who grow their own food in underserved areas do so because they know that the only way to bring about a new world is to build it here and now, despite the near certainty of failure. I situate prefigurative politics theoretically in this chapter, and show how it is a helpful lens through which to see why urban agriculturalists continue to push against dominant paradigms, regardless of the seeming futility of it all. I end the chapter describing how this dissertation itself is my own contribution to the act of prefigurative politics within the urban agriculture movement.

I then end the dissertation describing the state of the border zone between Tijuana and San Diego through the lens of urban agriculture, and how more current happenings like the Covid-19 pandemic affected the movement in this area. I recall the arguments made in the previous chapters, building off of the social values of self-reliance and autonomy, connection to land, building of community, and hope as ways to move away from capitalistic profit-centered modes of being and relating. I look to the future, describing how I see this dissertation fitting within a larger landscape of academic work that discusses the intersection between social movements, food and agricultural studies, and valuation processes that lead to change.

Conclusion

In this introduction, I have tried to provide a critical lens through which to better comprehend the numerous social movements of sustainability and environmentalism that currently permeate international discourses and how they manifest themselves in the urban agriculture movement (Milton 1996; Shutkln 2000). Not only does my work in the Tijuana-San Diego urban agriculture movement lend itself to investigate the values of environmental and social justice, it goes further in highlighting the voices of those involved in urban agricultural efforts, which are seldom fully recorded. This work is also based on highly community-engaged ethnographic work, with myself occupying a space I have dubbed "farmer-scholar." This has given me a unique, embodied, somewhat auto-ethnographic perspective on which to understand and analyze these investigations.

In this dissertation, I aim to provide a holistic perspective on urban agricultural efforts in the San Diego-Tijuana region, looking at this one cultural node from various angles. This project contributes to anthropological theory a better understanding of how certain groupings of people cohere into communities, organizations, and movements (Durkheim 1893). It also elucidates the ways in which place becomes a central factor in the creation and maintenance of community (Brandenburg and Carroll 1995; Brehm et al 2013; Brook 2003; Kyle and Chick 2007; Head et al 2014; Lefebvre 1974). Ultimately, this work provides a critical lens through which to analyze capitalist modes of production and unequal food distribution models, furthering anthropological studies that document how the retraction of governmental social services in light of neoliberal economic policies most negatively affects the poor and marginalized (Bush 2010; Chakrabarty 2009; Escobar 1995; Ferguson 2015; Fischer and Benson 2006; Satterthwaite et al 2010).

Chapter 1

The Value of Self-Determination in Urban Agriculture and the Struggle for Autonomy

> The concept of food sovereignty can be linked to that of community self-determination—specifically, the opportunity for any community, particularly one with few resources, to free itself from outside control over how and what it eats every day.
>
> -Steve Ventura and Martin Bailkey, *Good Food, Strong Communities* (2017: 11)

> …it was not enough to feed families with food from the garden. Instead, the gardeners' wished to feed more than bodies. They aimed to feed the soul a serving of hope with a side of self-reliance.
>
> -Ashanté M. Reese, *Black Food Geographies* (2019: 130)

While volunteering at Mt. Hope Community Garden, and then seven months later when I became the food production manager for the space, it quickly became obvious who the regular garden-goers were. There was Kim, a thin Black woman who really enjoyed talking about eating well and from the garden. There was Kadumu, a tall Black man who knew a thing or two about gardening and had been a consistent volunteer for quite a while. Then there was Kwaku, who, with his gaggle of kids, frequented the garden to both educate and to work. He was often found teaching Swahili or scolding the young ones for not working. Ruth, a middle-aged white woman, was always stopping by to take care of her well-developed garden plots and other common spaces, as well. Ryan, a young white male-presenting person and another volunteer, came consistently soon after I began volunteering, and pretty soon brought his comrades in the Democratic Socialists of America chapter to organize and build at the garden. Asia, another fellow volunteer, was a young Black woman getting hours toward her undergraduate degree by being at the garden and helping out. Rodney, one of the few Black Master Gardeners (along with

Kadumu), also tended a garden bed occasionally. A Vietnamese family had really well-established beds right in the middle of the garden, and although the times they would come to tend the beds didn't often overlap with my time at the garden, we occasionally bumped into each other and said hello. And there was also Mary—before she moved to another state to be with her sister—a quiet and slow older Black woman who had been integral in keeping the garden running, green, and alive.

Another frequenter of the garden was Sartteka, a young Black woman, mother, and student finishing up her Masters degree. She was often found by her garden beds, talking to her plants, assessing any damage they had endured while she was gone, wondering about why certain plants didn't want to grow, and getting surprised at their latest developments. She told me later that when growing up, her mom had plants all over the house, both indoors and out. Sartteka swore she wouldn't have nearly that many, but now here she was, talking to her plants, growing anywhere she could, and sprouting seeds in her kitchen window. She said,

> As soon as I moved back to sunny San Diego [from Denver, CO], I bought a Tower Garden and started container growing in this little space that was next to my doorstep and sprouting seeds in my kitchen window. Not long after, there was social unrest in my city after the police murdered an unarmed Black man, which pushed me further into my focus on sustainable living and sovereignty. I got involved in a local community garden, started volunteering with garden projects around town, taking agriculture, farming, and gardening classes and workshops and even applied to be a Master Gardener. Since then I have become a Climate Ambassador for Environmental Justice and I am working on developing a CSA-type-subscription-box food forest.

She, like many others who frequented the garden, had a desire to learn to do things for herself and for her community since she was confronted, time and again, with systems of governance and social support that were not adequate or were failing entirely. Confronting the racial injustice

happening around her pushed her to try her hand at growing her own food as a practical and symbolic way to move towards greater autonomy and less reliance on outside systems, be they corporate or governmental.

People that I met while conducting fieldwork, like Sartteka, had a penchant for autonomy. They didn't want other people telling them what to do. They didn't want to have to report to a boss, and even worst was the idea of having to sit in an office all day. That said, such morals and values led many to live lives that were rather precarious—without more stable, "normal" jobs, these people were left out of the traditional systems of care that exist that would allow them to receive benefits and consistent income. The ideals and values of the people I met was the most important driving factor in their lives, despite the lived struggles this caused for them, such as living in poverty or having to scrape by to make ends meet. For some, they desired to turn their values into a potential revenue stream—this manifested in non-profits and businesses built up around the ideas of growing and eating healthy food. For others, their desire to be autonomous was their top priority, even before food and agriculture. Their desire was to run any kind of business as long as it gave them the sense of independence, so food in this case was a means to an end. The business or non-profit came first, and what it was about felt merely like a marketing tool or something to gain attention for their pet project. This is not to say that they did not at all about food, but it did seem to cause a tension between their organization and their food-based values and ideals.

In all, this seems to highlight the difficulty for ideals to settle into a lived reality. In other words, those involved with the urban agriculture movement in San Diego and Tijuana were always toying with the question of how to create something that does not already exist, within

the confines of what already exists. Ideas among these idealists came easily, to some extent—and many folks were quite opinionated and could easily outtalk others. But where the logjam continued to occur was about what practical, tangible steps could be taken to take those ideas from thoughts and aspirations to a new reality, a new way of being, even a new consciousness.

In this chapter, I will demonstrate how urban agriculturalists in Tijuana-San Diego are trying to manifest this new reality through striving for the value of autonomy and self-determination. They very physically create the world they want to live in. In these communities, there is a distinction between the people who talk about it, perhaps those that fund it, and those that *do* it. Those that get their hands and feet dirty, those that envision new structures, new webs of interaction, new modes of being in the world, of relating to the earth and to those around them. And this looked different for people of color in the movement compared to white practitioners. Their differing positionalities created different impetuses for engagement.

This desire for autonomy, self-reliance, even sovereignty, as Sartteka put it, is well-known within urban agriculture. Here, I am using the idea of autonomy to mean freedom from external control or influence. This would be synonymous with independence. Self-determination, instead, is the *process* by which a person controls their own life. Autonomy, therefore, is the basis for then achieving self-determination—without the ability to have independence and the liberty to make one's own choices, one can never truly engage in a process of controlling one's own life. Indeed, a food justice approach to self-determination within urban agriculture questions models and institutions that foster dependency (Sbicca 2018). From the perspective of those engaged with urban agriculture, then, freedom and independence from existing cultural,

economic, and political structures makes it possible to achieve self-determination and sovereignty.

Framing Autonomy in the Urban Agriculture Movement

It is well documented that the practitioners of urban agriculture and alternative food networks more broadly have as a core value the sense of autonomy, or at least the striving for it. As McClintock and Simpson (2018) mentioned in their six motivational frames of urban agriculture (discussed briefly in the introduction to this dissertation), some of the dominant motivations they identified included the ideas of self-sufficiency and food justice and sovereignty—these were "sustainable development," the "DIY Secessionist" frame, and the "Radical" frame. These motivational frames and discourses are reproduced below (Figure 8), along with others from the authors' article to demonstrate the overlap and interconnection between these motivations or, as I believe they can be called, social and moral values. As can be seen here, the concepts of self-sufficiency, food justice, food sovereignty, and reclaiming of the commons feature prominently in North American urban agriculture, particularly within three of the six frameworks the authors identify.

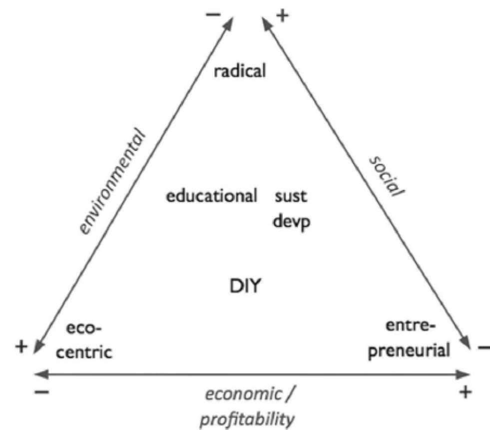
McClintock and Simpson (2018) also indicate the geographical distribution of the concepts of food justice, social justice, and food sovereignty—motivations that comprise the "Radical" motivational frame mentioned previously (see Figure 9). Social justice was a main motivator for folks practicing urban agriculture in the Northeast and mid-Atlantic states and California. Food justice, on the other hand, was a very important motivator in California. Overall, U.S. organizations cited food justice more often that those in Canada, perhaps due to the

Six motivational frames as informed by factors identified by PCA and qualitative content analysis

Factor	Motivational frame	Dominant motivations
1	"Sustainable Development"	Food quality/fresh food Public health/nutrition Food security Sustainability Self-sufficiency Food sovereignty Community-building
2	"Radical"	Social justice Food justice Food sovereignty Reclamation of the commons Alternative economy/anti-capitalist exchange*
3	"DIY Secessionist"	Reclamation of the commons Recreational hobby Therapeutic/rehabilitation Alternative economy/anti-capitalist exchange Community-building* Self-sufficiency*
4	"Educational"	Education (youth) Education (adults)
5	"Eco-centric"	Environmental/agroecological Sustainability
6	"Entrepreneurial"	Monetary (income/profitability) Job training/workforce development

*A motivation that has a factor loading <0.3 but one that nevertheless figures prominently into open-ended responses

The overlapping of motivations across multiple frames



The six motivational frames situated relationally along three axes of concern: environmental, social, and economic (profitability)

Figure 8. Visual representations of the relationship sets in urban agriculture motivational frames, as determined by McClintock and Simpson (2018: 26). Reproduced from that same article.

latter country's more expansive social safety net. Conversely, in the U.S. the frequency of the use of the term "food justice" could be "linked to the long history of community organizing against

Percentage of respondents indicating food justice, social justice, and food sovereignty as a primary motivation, by geographic location

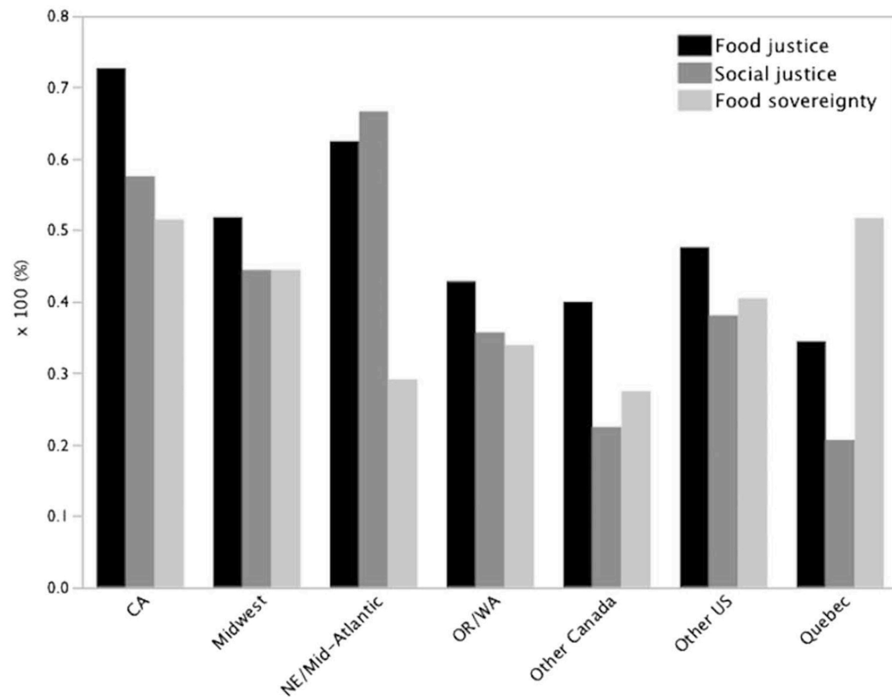


Figure 9. Frequency of food justice, social justice, and food sovereignty used to describe the motivation behind urban agriculture work, separated by geographic location. From McClintock and Simpson (2018: 34).

racial discrimination and the stripping away of the Keynesian welfare state" (34). Food sovereignty, on the other hand, was more widely used in Canada, which is likely due to the focus there on food access for Indigenous communities and concomitant decolonization. This usage of food justice largely maps on to my experience working in the urban agriculture movements in San Diego and Tijuana—the use of the term "food justice" appears much more frequently in my field notes and interviews than does the term "food sovereignty." At the same time, a great desire for autonomy exists within the frame of the food system also being "just," which complicates some of the divides between the two terms, ideologies, and movements. Here I would like to more explicitly distinguish between "food justice" and "food sovereignty," as well as a more

baseline term "food security," since they are often used interchangeably by practitioners, activists, and scholars.

Food Security vs. Food Justice vs. Food Sovereignty

In the literature it is often mentioned how food justice and food sovereignty are very distinct and refer to drastically different approaches. As was mentioned in the introduction, we find ourselves today situated within a global and corporate food regime due to world-wide economics shocks in the 1970s and 80s, resulting in the corporate control of food supply processes (Holt-Giménez and Shattuck 2011; Holt-Giménez 2011; Holt-Giménez 2017). The corporate food regime is characterized by the monopoly market power and huge profits of agrifood corporations. Additionally, systems and complexes such as globalized meat production, the emergence of agrofuels, and the expansion of palm and soy plantations are attributes of this modern food regime. Virtually all of the world's food systems are inextricably tied up with today's regime.

However, as was shown in México's Plan de Ayala 2.0 example in the introduction to this dissertation, a reaction to these increasingly oppressive circumstances is a "growing opposition from food movements worldwide" (Holt-Giménez and Shattuck 2011; see also Holt-Giménez et al 2009). Movements around issues such as food sovereignty, slow food, community supported agriculture, and agroecology are expanding their base on the grounds of democracy, ecology, and quality. Nodding toward the complexity of this food movement, McMichael writes: "Whether inspired by alternative social visions, or political (and ecological) exigencies of a food system dependent on fossil fuels, such counter-movements contribute to the exhaustion of WTO-style

agricultural liberalisation” (2009: 142). The food movement, however, is discordant and messy, and I will argue that a possible way to move forward is to combine forces under one unified set of values, as is echoed in the voices of those on the ground, as well.

During and because of the corporate food regime, in 2007 and 2008 the world experienced what is now called the Global Food Crisis, where global food prices increased by 83% compared to prices in 2005. This was not due to a lack of food, however; in fact, there were record grain harvests during these years, with more than enough produced to feed the world population (Bush 2010). Nevertheless, one-sixth of humanity during this time was going hungry. Over the course of the transition from the second to the third food regime and after three decades of liberal trade policies, many developing countries became dependent on the global market for basic food and grain. The valuation of food products (considered commodities) under neoliberal capitalism focuses only on its monetary value. But, as Bush (2010) points out, food also provides for the maintenance and reproduction of life itself. A dichotomy therefore arose, with huge hunger among the world’s poorest juxtaposed with huge production and profits for agribusinesses (Holt-Giménez and Shattuck 2011; Holt-Giménez 2017; McMichael 2009). The corporate food regime produced a systemic vulnerability that was a result of overproduction and Northern food aid, international finance institutions, structural adjustment, free trade agreements, green revolution farming models, and broader divestments of the state from agricultural development (Bello 2009; Gonzalez 2010; Holt-Giménez et al 2009). This situation precipitated the rise in food riots, which were largely urban-based and were accompanied by critiques of globalization, of international food regimes that transformed local systems of production and distribution, and of how elites benefited from these systems. Bush (2010) characterizes these

food riots as “part of the resistance to globalization and the uneven spread of capitalist relations of production. They are a pragmatic and usually unorganized but extremely effective declaration by a hybrid of urban and rural social classes that protest the ways in which their livelihoods have been transformed” (121). This period marked the transition into an era of food movements.

In the past thirty years, a variety of food movements have crafted strong and coherent opposition to industrial monoculture. Such monoculture is seen as requiring energy-intensive chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and machinery—all of which necessitate up-front investments that favor large farms with available capital. This has led to the increased consolidation and corporate ownership of agriculture (Alkon and Agyeman 2011a; Bell 2004; Buttel et al 1990; Magdoff et al 2000). Today’s food movements display a wealth of political, technical, organizational, and entrepreneurial skills and advance a wide range of demands that include: land reform and food sovereignty (Desmarais 2007; Edelman et al 2014; Windfuhr and Jonsen 2005; Wittman 2011), sustainable and agroecological agriculture (Altieri 1995; Holt-Giménez 2006; Gliessman 2007; Rosset and Martínez-Torres 2012), fair trade (Bacon et al 2008), local food (Halweil 2004; Weiss 2011, 2012, 2016), and community food security (Carney 2011; Gottlieb and Fisher 2000; Winne 2008). These works and themes reflect the alternative agriculture-agrifoods wing of New Social Movements (Alvarez et al 1998; Sevilla Guzmán and Martínez-Alier 2006), the World Social Forums’ “movement of movements” (Klein 2001; Wallerstein 2004), and parts of labor and class-based social movements such as those described in previous sections (Cohen 1985; Foweraker 1995; Holt-Giménez and Shattuck 2011; Klandermans 1991). Although there are overlaps in approaches, goals, and ideals among various actors of today’s food movement, there tends to be an ideological divide between those that want to stabilize the

corporate food regime and those who want to change it. Different tendencies further distinguish these two major groups, since each has its own set of discourses, institutions, models, and approaches.

According to Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011), the approaches of these two groups lie on a spectrum of political economic engagement, from neoliberal to radical. Those who seek to stabilize the corporate food regime can be categorized as "neoliberal" and "reformist" (Mares and Alkon [2011] write about these as "Local Food" and "Community Food Security"). These are further explained below. On the other hand, those who want to change the food regime—i.e. those involved with the food movement—are labeled as "progressive" and "radical." The radical perspective emphasizes rights—as does the progressive trend—but it also focuses on entitlements, structural reforms to markets and property regimes, and class-based, redistributive demands for land, water, and resources. "While the Progressive trend is rich in local/alternative food system practices," Holt-Giménez and Shattuck write, "the Radical trend excels in more militant, national and international political advocacy" (2011: 116; see also Holt-Giménez et al 2009). This demonstrates that the radical orientation to food movements seeks deep structural changes to food and agriculture and challenges the corporate food regime's rules of legitimacy. The radical trend of the food movement has the potential to move us toward a kind of social movement theorization and organizing that incorporates multi-scalar perspectives.

The radical approach is captured in the discourse of "food sovereignty," a concept advanced at the 1996 World Food Summit by La Vía Campesina, the global peasant, fisher, and pastoralist federation (Patel 2009; Wittman 2011). Food sovereignty stresses a collective and conjoined right to produce food on one's own land, or "the right of peoples to define their own

food and agriculture" (Windfuhr and Jonsen 2005). Others take this definition further, highlighting the importance of producing and the right to produce culturally appropriate food, as well (Beuchelt and Virchow 2012; Carney 2011). This discourse pushes for the democratization of the food system in favor of the poor and underserved (ECVC 2018; Garth 2021; Patel 2009; Windfuhr and Jonsen 2005). More than the other trends and discourses within the corporate food regime and food movement, however, food sovereignty organizations invoke the sovereign power of the state for the dismantling of corporate agrifood monopolies. This simultaneously challenges and transcends the state since the state is viewed as having been itself captured by capital, thereby not allowing small farmers to influence state policy (Holt-Giménez and Shattuck 2011; Patel and McMichael 2004). The literature on food sovereignty is rooted in Marxist political economy and agrarian studies, such as demands for land (Borras, Jr. 2007; Rosset 2006), socioecological crises with agroecology and food systems studies (Altieri 1989), the global resurgence of peasant identities with New Social Movements and transnational social movements (Borras, Jr. et al 2008; McMichael 2007), and opposition to monopoly capital in studies of late capitalism (Harvey 2005). This reflects the complexity and multiplicity of actors, values, and motivations involved in the current food and urban agriculture movements.

Food sovereignty builds off of the concept of "food security"—a discourse propagated, according to Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011) and Mares and Alkon (2011), by reformist politics of the corporate food regime. Food security is defined as when a person or community has physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Food security therefore refers to a condition related to the supply of food and individuals' access to it. The term gained

popularity at the 1974 World Food Conference. Since then, large national and international organizations such as the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations have adopted it. The FAO has identified four pillars to food security: access, availability, utilization, and stability. Therefore, when any of these are lacking or inadequate for individuals and communities, those individuals and communities can be labeled as "food insecure" (Carney 2011, 2015; Gottlieb and Fisher 2000). Applying this to my field site, a local food-based magazine published an article about hunger and food security in San Diego. The author wrote:

> Unlike many pressing social issues—homelessness, poverty, and addiction, to name a few—hunger is an invisible ailment. It may come as a surprise, then, to learn that one in six San Diegans lacks access to healthy food. As San Diego County's economy pursues globally competitive companies, contracts, and jobs, income inequality grows. One local result is food insecurity. 'The biggest barrier to healthy, nutritious food is affordability,' says Anahid Brakke, executive director of the San Diego Hunger Coalition. 'San Diego County is an expensive place to live, and wages in local service and blue collar industries aren't keeping pace with rising rents.' (Jolley and Stokes 2018)

Like most other major urban areas around the world, San Diego and Tijuana both experience high levels of food insecurity. In México overall, a huge 42.2% of the population (meaning around 53.5 million people) experience food insecurity (Martínez-Martínez et al 2023). Tijuana nearly matches that statistic, with more than 40% of residents in the area living under food insecurity conditions, with of course the most affected community members being single mothers, children, Indigenous groups, refugees, and migrants (ICF 2020). These numbers are lower in San Diego, as might be expected from differing poverty levels and political infrastructure in each space, but the stats are still alarming. An estimated one in four people (24%) in San Diego County is nutrition insecure (SDHC 2022), and about one in five people in

the state of California struggle with food insecurity, meaning about 8.8 million people (CAFB 2023).

Although hunger and inequality within food systems have existed in most, if not all, human civilizations, this recent adoption of the concept of food security by large, powerful institutions shows the world's most developed and influential nations' increasing acknowledgement of the gap between corporate profits and world hunger. That said, as is apparent from my reading of the different trends (neoliberal, reformist, progressive, and radical) within the corporate food regime and global food movement, it is unlikely that such acknowledgement in fact contributes to an improved food system or merely reinforces its inequalities and social gaps.

In an era characterized by neoliberal capitalism, non-profit organizations and NGOs often fill in the space left empty by the retreat of governmental social services. Many options that try to combat food insecurity—such as food banks and charitable organizations—have attempted to provide food to those who need it. Although commendable and certainly helpful to those who have taken advantage of such solutions, these options are manifestations of dependence-based policies that encourage developing countries and marginalized communities to rely on the global market and other hegemonic outside sources for their food, as described above. Indeed, Holt-Giménez and Shattuck explain that, "For these organizations, ending hunger depends primarily not on eliminating the causes of hunger, but in employing the industry's surplus and the powers of the state to feed those who cannot afford to eat well" (2011: 122). As opposed to the food enterprise discourse propagated by the neoliberal trend—which "is designed to reproduce the neoliberal institutions that presently control the regime itself" (Holt-Giménez and Shattuck 2011:

116)—the food security discourse seeks to incorporate less socially and environmentally damaging alternatives into existing market structures. This aim to modify industrial behavior through the power of persuasion and consumer choice (Conroy 2007) calls for increased trade liberalization, emergency aid, and long-term investment in agricultural development, which is not very different from neoliberal approaches. Indeed, this trend acts merely as one direction of capitalism's "double movement", which results in a fine-tuning of the neoliberal project rather than substantively changing it or its direction (Polanyi 1944).

Food sovereignty, as the discourse of the radical trend within food movements, is a counter-movement in reaction to these neoliberal circumstances. It pushes for a move toward collectives that demand rights for themselves. Dunford (2014) writes that:

> In instances where victims are not entirely silenced and powerless, [food sovereignty's] combination of a demand for human rights and the development of practices of citizenship that enable people to demand and secure rights for themselves provides…a contextually grounded emancipatory alternative to interventionist politics that, however well intentioned, risk reinforcing the dependence of purportedly powerless victims. (240)

To avoid such a dynamic and the production of dependent, powerless victims, Dunford states that a community collective that demands rights for itself is the better solution to issues like food insecurity. Adding to this point, the author says, "While food security agendas emphasize the role of international governance agencies in providing food on behalf of others, food sovereignty is secured by peasant social movements themselves" (2014: 240). Food sovereignty therefore has various advantages, such as putting small-scale producers at the heart of the food system (rather than extremely large and powerful agro-industrial mega corporations), more environmentally friendly food production systems, and giving rights to individual people and communities to define their own food and agricultural systems. Control of the means of production and having a

voice in all decision-making spaces are essential for community food sovereignty (Sbicca 2018). Again, this echoes the theoretical emphases of the political process and institutional organization perspectives within the study of social movements.

The other trend within food movements according to Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011) and Mares and Alkon (2011) is the progressive approach, which emphasizes practical alternatives to industrial agrifoods—such as sustainable and organic agriculture—largely within the economic and political frameworks of existing capitalist food systems. This is the largest and fastest growing expression of the food movement and is popular among the middle and working classes in the Global North (Holt-Giménez et al 2010). Calls for the right to food and food justice for marginalized groups, as well as a desire for pleasure, quality, and authenticity in the food system, also accompany this discourse. Food justice focuses on ethnic and racial formations and racialized exclusions in food production and consumption, whether those networks are deemed conventional and globalized or alternative and localized (Alkon and Agyeman 2011b; Gottlieb and Joshi 2010). Originating from the concept of environmental justice, which highlights the social issues normally obscured within environmental concerns (Allen 2008; Bullard 1994; Gottlieb and Fisher 2000; Gottlieb and Joshi 2010), and drawing from the history of racial justice movements in the 1960s and 70s (Ahmadi 2009: 160-161), food justice often emphasizes the importance of looking at white privilege and class privilege in U.S. and global societies (Sbicca 2018). It speaks to the multiple ways that racial and economic inequalities are embedded within the production, distribution, and consumption of food (Lang and Heasman 2004). In other words, food justice tries to ensure that the benefits and risks for where, what, and how food is grown and produced, transported and distributed, and accessed and eaten are shared fairly (Gottlieb and

Joshi 2010).

Proponents of food justice tend to strongly emphasize the need for the creation of local food system alternatives that are not only for, but also *by* members of the communities in which they reside (Mares and Alkon 2011). Within the modern food movement, it is generally perceived that local and state governments have traditionally ignored food in their policy and planning goals, and that the federal government is a staunch supporter of corporate, industrial agriculture (Alkon and Agyeman 2011a; Buttel et al 1990; Pothukuchi and Kaufman 2000). Food justice projects therefore tend to operate through grassroots, community-based organizations and projects, such as those under the umbrella term of urban agriculture (Alkon and Agyeman 2011a). Contrary to Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011), Mares and Alkon (2011) write that the discourse of food justice can still be considered neoliberal and therefore part of, instead of outside of, the corporate food regime. In this estimation, food justice can be both "progressive" and "radical" at the same time. It is neoliberal, Mares and Alkon (2011) assert, because the food justice perspective seeks transformation through changes in individualized consumption practices, rather than through broad and more collective efforts. A similar case is made against urban agriculture, which is outlined below. Following my argument that highlights the complexity and variation within the food and urban agriculture movements, this kind of uncertainty makes perfect sense and is, in fact, reflective of social movements in general. The positionality of those involved in food justice influences the specific iterations of the movement that theorists then analyze. In other words, although the neat categories used to describe movements as resource-based, identity-driven, or radical versus neoliberal are quite helpful for seeing larger social patterns, they do a disservice in erasing the nuance, uncertainty, and

complexity of everyday life. In this way, the anthropological and ethnographic perspective on such social movements, while still holding an awareness of structural motivations and constraints on individuals and collectives, is a very advantageous position for gaining a holistic and realistic understanding of those movements.

The progressive trend and its accompanying food justice discourse focuses on empowerment, in which the poor, oppressed, and underserved assert their rights through the power of self-respect and community organization (Alkon and Norgaard 2009; Levkoe 2006). It is primarily practice-oriented, and groups in the progressive trend tend to work on local production and food processing, focusing on creating new business models for underserved communities. Many of the adherents within this trend come from urban settings or are university youth. The urban side of this trend comprises a host of locally based initiatives linking access to healthy food to sustainable production. This includes farm-to-school programs, urban gardens, corner store conversions, community or farmers markets, and community-supported agriculture (Holt-Giménez and Shattuck 2011). As can be seen, this trend or approach within the food system is eclectic and ideologically amorphous, and it falls squarely in line with movements that stress diversity and focus on identity. An important aspect of the progressive trend of the food movement is therefore the "foodie" identity and its associated culture. This is another iteration of the movement that contributes to a messy and disjointed whole.

Allowing for Overlap between Justice and Sovereignty

In my fieldwork, I indeed saw people using the term food sovereignty when truly meaning food justice, often innocently but also as often to exaggerate their involvement with

achieving food access, security, and autonomy. This felt disingenuous, although it was not apparent that those using this term were aware of their hubris. Frequently, the use of the idea of food sovereignty was aspirational, meaning that practitioners of urban agriculture often wanted to achieve food access, security, and autonomy, but knew it was far off from current reality.

At the same time, based on my fieldwork and research, although food justice and food sovereignty seem rather distinct in their political underpinnings and visions for the future, I argue that there *does* exist some overlap between these terms, in that achieving sovereignty first requires justice. When people I worked with mentioned achieving food access for low-income neighborhoods, for instance, they were often talking about it in the sense of having the ability to grow their own food, at least in part. Without the ability to care for themselves by growing their own food, these practitioners and organizations felt that an injustice was occurring within their communities.

Janice Reynoso, for instance, led one of the only Latine-run community gardens in San Diego, called Joe's Pocket Farm. Soon after I started fieldwork, in 2018 the community garden was shut down due to city politics in National City (adjacent to San Diego) and the nominal issue of toxins in the soil where food was being grown. At the time of writing, four years later, the community garden is still behind a city-imposed fence restricting community use of the space. Janice told me that she comes from a long line of farmworkers, her mother's father and mother both coming to the U.S. through the Bracero Program and her mother also working in agriculture in the Imperial Valley, and even more agricultural family legacy before these. She said, "I guess you can say it's in my blood. I later understood the disparities that challenge our communities and environmental racism, how it is all connected. So I, we, my community, decided to connect

the dots and grow what we want and envision, actively participating in improving conditions and access to healthy food" through helping establish and run Joe's Pocket Farm for ten years before it was shut down. She continued, saying that "if we start to prioritize the farmworker and the Indigenous farmer, they can work to heal the land as it produces in a sustainable way. We also need to emphasize how food is our medicine and preventative practices in prioritizing and really giving value to the whole process of growing the food, from seed to the holistic appreciation of the migrant farmworkers, to promoting local as much as possible." In Janice's words it is made obvious that the topics of justice are front-and-center, mentioning disparities, access to healthy food, appreciating farmworkers (largely people of color and Indigenous farmers), and promoting eating and growing locally. And yet, embedded in all of this is also the assumption that these topics can be achieved through a change in values, a change toward having the community be able to make their own decisions and be self-governing.

To combine some of these approaches, I draw on Indigenous scholar Kyle Powys White, who emphasizes the role of self-determination and autonomy in food movement organizing. In discussing food justice advocacy, rather than drawing from a static definition of it, Whyte instead understands this concept as a living one that takes on meaning as it is used within movement, advocate, practitioner, and organizing circles. So, one norm within the concept of food justice he brings to the forefront is "that [it] is based on the value of food in relation to the self-determination of human groups." (2016: 1). Whyte's work is particularly helpful for the aims of this dissertation because he, like McClintock and Simpson, understands food justice "in terms of moral norms that should govern some of the key social institutions that make up our food systems" (2016: 2). Describing the orientations of the food justice movement in terms of

morality and ethics is supportive of my claim that engagement in the urban agriculture movement—which largely overlaps with the concepts of food justice—means also engaging in a set of moral positioning that aims to create an ethical community of practice. In particular, it is one that is considered "ethical" if is does not rely solely on neoliberal logics of exploitation, commodification, and individuation.

Beyond the distributive and democratic norms that are embedded in the concept of food justice, Whyte highlights how the self-determination of human groups is a core moral norm that imbues food with a sense of value. Beyond individual self-determination, the value of food is seen as contributing to *collective* self-determination, which "refers to a group's ability to provide the cultural, social, economic and political relations needed for its members to pursue good lives" (2016: 5). Rather than food taking on value merely in terms of its caloric potential, cultural meaning, or financial capacity—all of which are also important but insufficient in and of themselves—Whyte describes the relationship between food and collective self-determination as *collective food relations*. "Food justice, then," he writes, "refers to a norm that human groups have a right to exercise and adapt their collective food relations free from external compulsion or interference from other human groups, unless there is a morally weighty reason for this compulsion or interference" (2016: 5). In this understanding of autonomy and relationships to food, Whyte helps us see that food can serve as a hub "whose value lies in how it can bring together many of the collective relations required for people to live good lives." This allows food "to convene biological, ecological, cultural, social, economic, political and spiritual aspects of a way of life" (2016: 10). This way of framing food justice—as uplifting the importance of group control over collective food relations—also indicates the interdependence of various groups

within shared food webs. So, in considering one group's food relations, we also have to consider other group's food relations. This is a helpful framing for how the concept of "justice" is always connected to previous iterations of injustice, unfairness, or otherwise strained relationships, and also makes apparent food's incredible importance in doing the work of reflecting the moral values of a group or society. In this case, those values are self-determination, collectivity (more on this in chapter three), and interconnectedness (to be discussed more in chapter four).

Overall, I saw the concept of "justice" being applied to four moral values: (1) respect for culture, (2) respect for sovereignty, (3) respect for land, and (4) economic dignity.[15] Respect for culture is often cited as a tenant for both food justice and sovereignty. Without a basis of respect for the distinct cultural values, traditions, and customs of a particular people, true justice and sovereignty cannot be obtained. Likewise, respecting the sovereignty—the ability for a group to make their own rules and be governed by them—of particular groups gives them the ability to make their own food decisions, which would include being able to grow their own food. Respect for land is foundational to food justice, as well, since as we'll see in the following chapter, without access to land there is very little possibility to grow one's own food or cohere into a community, much less achieve food sovereignty. And finally, economic dignity is a crucial element of food justice. On the ground, food justice is often talked about in the sense of food access or distribution being "fair," "economical," and widely "accessible." This moral value provides a major source of struggle and tension for urban agricultural practitioners, since achieving fairness of price, accessibility, health, and cultural-relevance of food is nearly

[15] These moral values groupings are inspired by a talk given by Shasta Gaughen, a cultural anthropologist at CSU San Marcos.

impossible within the current confines of the global industrial food system and within capitalist economies. More on this in the next section.

The Struggles for Economic Justice and Food Sovereignty

Again, a very common theme in the urban agriculture movement is that of autonomy or self-determination. The people in the movement that I met during fieldwork were involved in growing their own food largely because they wanted a sense of control over how and what they ate. This often came with a sense of awareness about how the food system is not set up for healthy eating, fair and equal access, or to reflect the true economic cost of food. Black, Indigenous, and other people of color tended to have a heightened awareness of this, in large part because they came from areas of the bioregion that were largely overlooked when it came to access to healthy, fair, and equitable food. Overall, urban farmers and gardeners wanted to regain control over a large part of their human lives—eating and sustenance—without which left them feeling powerless and dependent on a system that does not have their best interests in mind.

Urban agriculture efforts, then, are not only a leisurely activity for the affluent, but can also serve more politically radical and racially resilient endeavors with visions of autonomy and self-reliance. This helps us to focus on how community practices of urban agriculture operate as a political reaction to economic inequality. More specifically, urban agriculture's resistance politics affect the social and collective values of food producers in urban neighborhoods and their interaction and engagement with urban agriculture. This highlights a system of competing values and valuations, particularly between achieving autonomy and sovereignty through

growing one's own food while also using it as a means by which one can achieve economic dignity.

For example, a proponent of food sovereignty from my fieldwork is Nathan, a long-time urban farmer and director of a small non-profit that centers agricultural education. A young Asian-American man, Nathan always has a lot to say when it comes to food and farming. He told me: "Creating mechanisms for urban agriculture programs to thrive will require government support and policy changes that encourages the cultivation of food. I am elated that communities are recognizing the need for food sovereignty and am hopeful that policy changes are on the way that will reduce the barriers to entry, especially for people of color and marginalized communities." For years Nathan has struggled to make ends meet, jumping from one agricultural job to the next and always seeking to build his own business. His heart is in the soil, but trying to raise two children without a proper income often caused strife between him and his partner, as well as with people he worked with as a gardener and farmer. Over the years that I knew Nathan, I heard dozens of new ideas about how he was going to make his "six figures." From establishing seed libraries throughout the county, to working at a nearby vineyard and capitalizing off of partnerships, to earning an arborist certificate and adding that to his business' repertoire of skills on offer, Nathan felt the ever-present pressure to turn his desires to work with the earth into something that could pay for him and his family. Largely, the issue in his mind was that the kind of work he had to offer was wholly under-valued and could not pay enough to support him. He also felt the burden of having to convince others of his worth, and relied—not always successfully—on his charismatic charm to get funders and city councils to join in his vision.

Like many others, Nathan was stuck between competing systems of valuation. On the one hand, the urban agriculture movement lauded food justice and sovereignty as the highest forms of value. He was clearly succeeding in homeschooling his children, working independently and not for a company, and having the vast know-how to grow a prolific amount of homegrown fruits and vegetables. However, on the other hand, from the capitalist political economy we were firmly situated in, he felt the constant pressure to earn an income to be able to support himself and his family. He found he was always chasing the next thing to try to earn a buck. This, again, created quite a lot of friction in his personal life.

Economic justice was an especially important topic for Sarah Boltwala, a middle-aged South Asian woman and the founder of a for-profit neighborhood composting initiative called Food2Soil. Sarah had been successful in the corporate and financial sectors, but saw many holes in our collective ability to truly achieve sovereignty in the food system and decided to try to create her own, localized model through her company, Inika Small Earth, the parent corporation of Food2Soil. She made the connection between economic justice and autonomy clear when she told me that "At the core of urban agriculture lies the concept of self reliance and resilience." She brought an important political economic and behavioral perspective to this work, saying:

> …a circular economy is impossible if consumers don't take responsibility for their purchasing habits and producers do not take ownership of their products. However, the systems we are designing today to promote urban agriculture and zero waste are focused on linear, large scale, one size fits all, capital intensive solutions. Most importantly we are fooling ourselves and society to believe that somehow this paradigm shift will come at no cost or will be a free lunch paid by government and corporate responsibility dollars. In reality, we'll need to create new economic equations, efficient market channels and conscious financing mechanisms to realize this dream…

> I want to take a shot at building this different economic model to sustain our farms, farmers and resource recovery industries. An economic model that is resilient, economically sound and socially equitable, where those who work to build a solution also reap the profits when those solutions takes off. That is the challenge that keeps me going.

Sarah, always the entrepreneur and an avid believer in the power of the market to shift behaviors for the better if it is harnessed correctly, emphasized the importance of economic reform and support in order to realize the proper way of being that is required to live sustainably and perpetually on Earth. But like Nathan, Sarah finds this challenge of achieving economic autonomy and dignity particularly daunting. Urban agriculture policy, she argued, "is written to enable individuals to grow their own food, but the minute that individual starts thinking of scaling up to feed their neighbors the policy becomes a barrier." For Sarah, these political and economic barriers provide limits to the extent to which urban agricultural efforts can be used to achieve a sense of sovereignty and autonomy, much less economic success.

Work is at the center of these models of food sovereignty and economic justice. Similar to Sarah's model of work transforming food waste into a value-laden product that can be used to create useful soil, Daniel Witman—who helps run the Jardín Binacional de Amistad (Binational Friendship Garden) in Tijuana—sees urban agriculture as an opportunity to provide work and therefore economic opportunities to people in the area. During the día mundial del medio ambiente (International Day of the Environment) in 2018, Daniel gave an overview of the vision on the Jardín Binacional:

> In 2007, two schools—one from San Diego and the other from here in Tijuana—of kids from high school, they got together and began the Jardín Binacional (Binational Garden). They made a really interesting design for it. It's expanded to the point that today we are gathering food from the garden, and in the future we would love to have these garden beds were seen not only as suppliers of food, but

> also as suppliers of work for the people. It can be like a source of employment for people from the region, with a farmers' market and everything.

Urban agriculture is seen therefore not only as an opportunity to create new kinds of values, but simultaneously to also provide economic support that reside within neoliberal capitalist models of wealth production. This again often traps food growers and food justice advocates within the dialectical pull between profit-centered modes of valuation and creating new forms of valuing each other, the environment, and food. In this work, practitioners of urban agriculture are attempting to build new modes of relations in all realms, including the economic, political, and social. In so doing, they are constructing—however haltingly—a new form of ethics in which to create communities and in which to grow food for those communities. This is, of course, no small task.

Conclusion

In this chapter, urban agriculture emerges as a cultural fact positioned at the nexus of the relationships between the concepts of value and self-determination, with grassroots efforts to cultivate food sovereignty through a social movement poised to challenge the taken-for-granted hegemonic values and valuations within neoliberal capitalism. This is made apparent in the voices of those who are on-the-ground practicing growing their own food. Urban agriculture pushes for alternative ways of valuing and of socially organizing. In this way, urban agriculture projects can serve as everyday sites of resistance for those who are most underserved by the larger industrialized and commercialized food system.

But how can such resistance work when the power differential is so unbalanced? Sidney Mintz, considered one of the fathers of the anthropological study of food, has written on the forms of power that institutions hold, which shape the culture of food around us and what we believe to be normal. Because we imbue food and food growing with values and meaning, whoever controls meaning-making controls the material goods that go into the food enterprise, as well as what choices around and about food seem available to us. Mintz wrote that "structural and tactical (or organizational) power undergird[s] the institutional frameworks that set the terms by which people get food, maintain or change their eating habits, and either perpetuate their eating arrangements and the associated meaning or build new systems, with new meanings, into those arrangements" (1995: 11). As was discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, this "outside meaning," as Mintz coins it, is a classic instantiation of Antonio Gramsci's idea of cultural hegemony, where a ruling class exerts dominance on a culturally diverse society by shaping the beliefs, explanations, norms, values, perceptions, and mores so that the worldview of the ruling class comes to be the accepted cultural norm and dominant ideology (Gramsci 2011 [1929]). Those who control the values, then, control the culture. Writer Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò writes about this in terms of "value capture," emphasizing the role of the ruling class and making the case that power differentials do in fact shape outcomes. "Value capture is managed by elites," Táíwò explains, "on purpose or not. In other words, elites don't simply participate in our community; their decisions help to structure it" (2020). In the absence of effective checks or constraints on elite power, the ruling class will "capture" the larger group's values, which then pushes those in the group to coordinate on a narrower social project than the group would if power were distributed more horizontally.

Eric Wolf wrote about the connection between power and meaning, as well, saying that "Meanings are not imprinted into things by nature; they are developed and imposed by human beings—to 'name' things, acts and ideas—is a source of power" (1982: 388). So, Mintz argues, the "ability to 'supply' things, in the broadest sense, is also a vital source of power, not only because it may include some ability to bestow meaning, but also because meaning coalesces around certain relationships" (1995: 12). Applying this to the food system, the hegemonic nature of how food is grown, distributed, and made available to those living in underserved, minoritized urban spaces would make it seem as if something like urban agriculture would never have a chance in the face of fast food, corner stores, and food apartheid.

Foucault helps us gain some autonomy and shift the discourse here in his understanding of power and where it originates. He theorizes power as more of a network, a constant interplay between acts of dominance, resistance, and submission that shape our actions in various ways—not only by constraining us but also by producing new realities. As he puts it:

> Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the forms of a chain. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or a piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power... In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application. (1980: 93-98)

In this understanding of power, Foucault does not present the picture of a ruling class that controls those beneath them. Rather, power is something that circulates among individuals through different practices and beliefs. That is not to say that the more overt, violent forms of power do not exist—they certainly do. But he extends the definition of power to include things that are often left out of the conversation. And importantly, because this power is located within

many nodes, it cannot be assumed to be all disadvantageous or deriving from immoral positions. He says:

> We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production… If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression. (1977: 194-220)

Power, according to this conception, is not good or bad. It simply is. When seen in this way, we can begin to ask questions like what *forms* of power are circulating in a given institution or context, and how can we intervene in their formation and transmission? According to Foucault, each of us is always both subjected to power *and* exercising it at the same time. This means that we can be aware of the ways that power may be misused against us, but also recognize the fact that we are also all actively shaping the discourses that produce it. In other words, we are not simply passive agents who are subjected to the whims of the powerful; instead, we are all actively shaping the discourses upon which power is founded. This means that the "powerful" do not have a monopoly on power—it is dispersed among all of us. Again, this is not to say that oppressive power does not exist, or that power is *evenly* distributed among everyone. What this framing does is take into account, however, is that many forms of power exist and they are all constantly interacting, rather than presenting power as a one-directional and inherently negative force.

Mariana Mazzucato speaks to this point in her book *The Value of Everything:* "As Karl Polanyi wrote, markets are deeply embedded in social and political institutions. They are outcomes of complex processes, of interactions between different actors in the economy, including government. This is not a normative point but a structural one: how new socio-economic arrangements come about. The very fact that the market is co-shaped by different actors—including, crucially, policy-makers—offers hope that a better future *can* be constructed." (2018: 275) Thinking democratically about the role of power can therefore offer a glimmer of hope that there is agency to be found within hegemonic structures. Patel adds to this, saying that we "need to take a long hard look not only at the free market but at the political system that supports it. It's in reclaiming the idea that we're able to think for ourselves and that we're ready for politics, rather than outsourcing it like so much else, that we will be able to reclaim both democracy and our economy." (2009: 119) And the urban agriculture movement is one of those alternative stories, one of those attempts at reclaiming sovereignty and autonomy, in however small a way.

The dominant discourse within food systems is predominantly market-driven. This discourse is centered around the idea that farmers must increase their production in order to feed a growing population and that employing industrialized technologies is the best way to do that. This view also categorizes food as a purely market-driven commodity, so any solutions are filtered through this lens. But there are many other discourses: there is the conversation about soil health and regeneration, on agroecology, on food sovereignty and the imperative of discussing food systems through a lens of power. There are conversations about de-commodifying food, of beginning to treat it as a human right. All of these discourses are

overlapping and resisting the dominant discourse, even if they manifest in different ways. The urban agriculture movement subsumes many of these narratives, attempting to create a new alternative to hegemonic ones. As writers from *A Growing Culture*, an organization that advocates for food sovereignty, have stated:

> This is why we invest so much in growing the discourse about food sovereignty; because we believe it's imperative that we envision a world where farmers have autonomy over how they grow food, that food and politics are inseparable, that a focus on agricultural practices alone is not enough. Our asserting these things is both a form of resistance to the more dominant discourse—and a form of power in and of itself—because if it influences someone else's thinking, that is in itself a manifestation of power. And when others resist our messaging or question it, that is, in turn, a resistance. These are constantly ebbing and flowing processes, and they matter for shaping the kind of future we want to see. One day, perhaps it will seem unacceptable that food was left to the free market for so long. But we must work to get to that place. (2022)

Those involved with the urban agriculture movement deeply believe in these kinds of statements, and they enact these kinds of resistances. Utilizing critical discourses around power, food sovereignty and justice, and economic dignity, they are pushing against powerful models of economic development and political entrenchment. As Sbicca explains, there are "prefigurative forms of power that require increasing grassroots leadership and control. This is where practices such as farming, gardening, cooking, eating…and environmental sustainability and social justice consciousness raising can be means for greater self-determination." To have these practices be sustained over time, though, requires a "commitment to mobilization strategies that draw on and build new social networks, organizational structures to coordinate collective action, and shared cultural frameworks and identities" (2018: 151). Embodied in each practitioner—Sartekka, Kadumu, Nathan, Daniel, Sarah—then is a part of the larger movement toward a more just, healthy, and community-driven food system, especially in the context of shared cultural

frameworks and identities. The next chapter will highlight how this power and collective action is also derived from the very spaces where urban agriculture occurs.

Chapter 2

Place, Land, and Urban Spaces: Farmers and Gardeners Fighting for Connection

> We abuse land because we see it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect… That land is a community is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics.
>
> -Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (1966 [1949]: xviii-xix)

> ¡La Tierra es para amar!
> ¡La Tierra es para cosechar!
> ¡La Tierra es para vivir!
> -*Semillas en la Frontera* documentary, 2016

On July 3, 2018 the City Council of National City held a meeting that was sure to draw a big crowd for two reasons. The first: dozens of residents from National City and the surrounding area flocked to the biweekly meeting to protest the alleged murder of Earl McNeil by city police while in police custody just over a month prior. Earl, a Black man, was counted among the long list of other Black women and especially men unjustly killed at the hands of city law enforcement. Individuals from a multitude of backgrounds came to demand that the city officials release footage of Earl's stay while in custody, which 40 days after his death had still not been released. Protestors with signs sat in the City Council Chambers, their voices rising from the back seats with chants of "If we don't get it—shut it down!" and "Say his name! Earl McNeil!" The room had been filled to capacity with another 50-60 waiting in the atrium and hall outside. After one hour and forty minutes of scathing public comments, these chants and other heckles kept the Council meeting from functioning as planned, and the Councilmembers took several recesses because order could not be restored. The agenda did not move forward until police

escorted out a Black woman in the back row due to her severe words to the Mayor. The majority of those there to demand justice for Earl McNeil and his family left at that time, as well.

Then, the second reason for a big crowd and nearly four hours after the beginning of the City Council meeting, the issue I was ultimately at this meeting for was brought to the Councilmembers. Mundo Gardens, a Latine-led non-profit based in National City and led by the Reynoso family, was to become the legitimate manager of Joe's Pocket Farm, which they had been de facto managing for nearly ten years on city property. The urban agriculture site was named after José Núñez, who had used the space to grow crops nearly 30 years ago. After he became ill and moved, the site became derelict until Janice and others decided to revitalize it into what was now called "Joe's Pocket Farm." Janice took these efforts to City Hall, gaining support for the project from city officials, some of whom even helped clean up the site.

Over the years the farm had become a community hub, with Mundo Gardens[16] holding regular events, volunteer work days, and agricultural education opportunities on the site. Back in March 2017, Mundo Gardens had sent out advertisements and invitations to a César Chávez legacy celebration at the farm. City staff came across the event on Facebook and began investigating whether the space was on city property or not, which was previously unknown and apparently undocumented. Finding that the farm was on city property, they sent a notice to Janice informing her that a temporary use permit for the Chávez legacy event could not be granted. This effectively put Joe's Pocket Farm on National City's radar, more than 30 years after it was established as a space for food cultivation (Hernández 2018a & 2018b).

[16] The nonprofit is comprised mostly of members of the Reynoso family, who are local National City residents (they lived on the same street as Joe's Pocket Farm) and Latine activists that seek to empower youth and families to cultivate wellness and creativity by combining nature, music, and the arts.

National City has a population of around 63,000 with 63% of that population identifying as Hispanic and 20% as Asian and Pacific Islander, mostly Filipino. It is the second oldest jurisdiction in San Diego County and only 9.2 square miles. National City has been challenged with high rates of childhood obesity and the prevalence of chronic disease among its residents. In fact, the rates of diabetes hospitalization and mortality are 2.3 times higher in National City than other areas of San Diego. In fact, a resident of National City who worked with Mundo Gardens said this about the space:

> There are more liquor stores than there are grocery stores. Access to food is in National City is very limited. And that's a huge concern for community members, is what they call National City being a 'food desert.' National City tends to get overlooked because we are sandwiched between two barrios, or two communities, that are focused on the majority of the time: Chula Vista, which is huge, and Barrio Logan, which is very hip and happening right now.

Joe's Pocket Farm was therefore a reaction to a lack of access to fresh and healthy food in the area, and a manifestation of working class people of color attempting to take matters into their own hands through creating an urban agricultural space.

A National City City Council meeting in December 2017 had also determined that Mundo Gardens was to maintain and operate the new, planned Paradise Creek Park Community Garden (PCPCG) as well the pre-existing El Toyon Farm. Since December, however, Mundo Gardens' city staff-recommended fiscal agent, YALLA San Diego, Inc., had folded, making it uncertain whether the initial approval would still be honored. City staff working on the topic recommended to the City Council that Mundo Gardens be granted manager status over Joe's Pocket Farm, PCPCG, and El Toyon Farm.

Even though the City Council Chambers were not as full as they had been when Earl McNeil was the topic of discussion, the Chambers still held around 30 supporters, nearly all Latinx/Latine, for Mundo Gardens, nearly all holding small signs showing their support for the non-profit. Nearly everyone supporting gave public comments, sharing their belief that Mundo Gardens had helped provide fresh and healthy food to their children and had bolstered and created community. A white woman I recognized as Stepheni Norton, the owner of Dickinson Farm—a for-profit farm in National City—and her husband Mike, also white, were in the crowd, too. Norton went up to the podium to share her thoughts. After an introduction that stated she was in support of Mundo Gardens, Olivewood Gardens, and Brightside (another urban garden and fresh food distribution effort in National City, respectively), Norton's three-minute comments took a turn I did not expect: she declared her opposition to the recommendations made by the city staff, urging Mundo Gardens, OliveWood, and Brightside to instead "get the appropriate licenses." Her remarks shifted toward emphasizing "rules," with her saying that word repeatedly throughout the talk. She mentioned that, "some follow the rules and some talk to staff and get what they want," obviously alluding to herself, with Dickinson Farm, as a rule-follower and the Reynoso family, with Mundo Gardens, as those who circumvent rules and do as they please. In a later NBC 7 news segment that covered this controversy, Norton was highlighted as saying, "They are the rules and all of us have to follow them. And when people aren't following them, it's not only discriminatory by the agency that's allowing it, it's also potentially not safe" (Little 2018). Very oddly and seemingly contradictorily, in a January 2018 article in the *San Diego Reader* praising Mundo Gardens for taking the lead on the Paradise Creek Park Community Garden, Norton wrote a comment for the online article saying, "We are so excited

about the new community garden! With Joe's pocket garden, Olivewood Gardens donation based farm stand and our CSa and weekly farm stand, the fresh and healthy National City grown options are available for community members regardless of what part of National City they live in. #bethechange" (Gavidor 2018). What had shifted Norton's opinion in six months is uncertain.

I was very surprised by this lack of support from a fellow urban agriculturalist. Simultaneously, another thing began to make sense: over the past year that I had been acquainted with Norton, she consistently emphasized how it took her eighteen months to get legal permission to operate her farm. It felt odd for her to keep bringing it up, but this behavior at the City Council meeting and the underling values behind it got clearer for me. Her husband, Mike, was the last to speak during public comments, reiterating Norton's points and introducing his own brand of concerns and mysteries, including having the soil at Joe's Pocket Farm tested in case it contained toxic elements. Mike and Stepheni's comments seemed to make a big impact on three of the five councilmembers, with subsequent deliberation moving into issues of liability, possible soil contamination, rules and regulations, and allusions to lack of competency on the part of Mundo Gardens. The once humble and sensitive crowd that had come to support Mundo Gardens was now up in arms, shouting antagonisms at the councilmembers and back-talking with humor and derisive laughter. Ultimately, the staff recommendations were bifurcated and although Mundo Gardens was granted manager status of Joe's Pocket Farm, they were not given the same status for El Toyon Farm or Paradise Creek. Instead, a purportedly more democratic process of a Request for Proposals (RFP) and Request for Quotations (RFQ) would be issued so that other organizations could apply for management of these urban agriculture sites, although according to the Mundo Gardens supporters such a process had already occurred with no takers

besides Mundo Gardens.[17] With the agenda moving forward after the votes had been cast about half an hour after midnight, the Mundo Garden allies left the Chambers, shouting humor-ridden jabs at the Mayor and mumbling begrudgingly. Stepheni and Mike remained in their seats in the Chambers.

Seven months after this night at City Hall, I drove by Joe's Pocket Farm to see what was happening with the space. Since August the previous year, just a month after the event described above, I had been taking a class taught by Stepheni Norton called "The Business of Farming" through the South San Diego Small Business Development Center. Mundo Gardens had come up in conversation during the class, and I learned that the soil tests the city had demanded be administered at Joe's Pocket Farm came back indicating high levels of chlordane and dieldrin, both of which are human-made insecticides found commonly in residential and agricultural spaces due to their prolific use as pesticides between the 1940s and 70s. In visiting the farm, I saw that in reaction to this news, the city soon after restricted use of the garden by erecting a tall chainlink fence around the space and posting signs indicating that the soil was contaminated and food from the space should not be consumed (See Illustrations 3 and 4). Newspaper articles quoted Norton as saying she would never eat anything that came from that garden, and the mayor at the time even referred to the garden as an "outlaw-type situation," very clearly linking this people of color-led initiative with lawlessness and rule-breaking. As Joshua Sbicca writes, "As a result of the underlying neoliberal ideologies and libertarian proclivities that run through these

[17] Nearly two years after the incident described, Mundo Gardens—in partnership with Olivewood Gardens and the Community Housing Network—was finally granted managing control over Paradise Creek Park Community Garden after building coalitions with partners and fulfilling the RFP and RFQ city requirements.

Illustration 3. The sign that was put up at Joe's Pocket Farm, indicating that the soil was contaminated.

food politics, developing alliances is inconvenient" or, in the case of Dickinson Farm, perhaps even threatening (2018: 83-84). Joe's Pocket Farm was effectively dead.[18]

Mundo Gardens made explicit in a Facebook post the contradictions of working to provide healthy food to poor, underserved communities:

> Studies and data point to our environment impacting our health, 55% environment, 5% genetics. The other factors include socioeconomic status, education, etc. Over half of our people are dying before their time due to lack of access to healthy food, lack of access to exercise in green spaces, smoking or as I like to say, smoking the freeway. Our communities have been designed in a way that is beneficial to those who profit from our poor health and our poor decisions.

[18] Nearly five years later, the farm is still not operational. Mundo Gardens continues to advocate for the space while also pursuing other urban agriculture and community projects.

Illustration 4. Showing the tall fence and signs around Joe's Pocket Farm.

> Many of our communities were redlined to corral us next door to factories, toxins, and little access to green space or fresh, affordable, easily accessible food… There is significant community trauma and chronic stress that affects many of the underserved, low income, immigrant, refugee, communities of color. It is all a system and when we begin to learn about systems and how to create a better system, we can do just that. These conversations are important, the work to bring food justice, environmental justice, and housing justice is crucial to our survival and we can surely thrive. Support more healthy choices, let's encourage one another when we are working toward health for all. When the quality of life is improved for our most vulnerable communities, it also improves the quality of life for the affluent. Positive choices begin with awareness. Let's get woke. Salud!

Essentially, the community Joe's Pocket Farm was serving—largely working-class Latine folks in National City—was being punished for living in urban spaces with high levels of contaminants due to their proximity to freeways and decades-old practices of using carcinogenic

Mundo Gardens

Sunday at 8:42 PM ·

Bring Back Joe's! Joe's Pocket Farm was the first and only community garden in National City. It was started by the Luna Reynoso Family , los Lunas, the Sepulveda's , and Southeast San Diego Community and National City Residents. We need all the soil healers on deck to remediate the soil and show the city we can do this, together!

Illustration 5. An Instagram post from October 2019 that called for the importance of bringing back Joe's Pocket Farm, posted by Mundo Gardens.

substances as insecticides. And the punishment? No fresh food. No ability to grow fresh food in community with other like-minded people. In reality, this narrative about needing Mundo Gardens to be more rule-following was truly about the dismantling of people of color organizing and community, and about gatekeeping who is and is not allowed to distribute food in National City. This was a classic and local example of environmental racism and injustice.

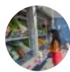
Over the next year and a half, Mundo Gardens held fundraisers to help cover increased insurance costs, water, and the installing of city-mandated raised beds at Joe's (see Illustrations 5

Search How it works Start a GoFundMe Sign in

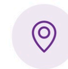
Save Mundo Gardens

$524 raised

This fundraiser is no longer accepting donations. If you are the organizer, beneficiary, team member, or donor, sign in to see additional information.



Janice Luna Reynoso is organizing this fundraiser.



This fundraiser is located near you

Hello community. We are still raising money for insurance costs which have now doubled to over $300 a month which will be due again before the end of the month. Also an expense to us is the water and the raised beds the city is now requiring us to build. Please give your time, talent, or your trea$ure. This is your garden and we hope to keep it growing for the youth and generations to come. We currently have no funding and this has been done on an all volunteer basis con mucho amor. Your support is very much appreciated. Bendiciones to you

Illustration 6. A screenshot from December 2018 showing a crowd-sourcing fundraiser to help raise money to cover insurance costs at Joe's Pocket Farm.

and 6). In 2019, after working with a new Latinx mayor (previously one of two councilmembers in support of Mundo Gardens in the 2018 event described above) as well as creating partnerships with well-respected urban agriculture organizations in National City to fulfill the RFP and RFQ requests, Mundo Gardens was approved as the sole operator of the Paradise Creek Community Garden. However, in the summer of 2020 the City of National City made it known they wanted to sell the land the garden is located on without having consulted Mundo Gardens (see Illustration 7).

Protests for Joe's Pocket Farm—in the wake of the Black Lives Matter protests happening simultaneously—emerged, bringing in dozens of people from all across San Diego to demonstrate that Joe's Pocket Farm was worth saving and worth restoring to community use. As of the time of this writing, no further action has been taken by the city to sell the land, but the site remains contested.

No Justice without Land

The story of Joe's Pocket Farm could be interpreted and analyzed in many ways, sending us in different directions. But for the purposes of this chapter I want to hone in on just one of them—namely, access to space and place, often in the form of land, which is one of the most difficult challenges faced by urban agriculture practitioners, and tremendously harder for practitioners of color and with little financial resources. Conflicts and tensions that I saw and even experienced myself during fieldwork were often akin to the Mundo Gardens scenario—they were not only about urban agriculture and competing values per se, but were also derived from an environment where racism, classism, sexism, and other forms of power differentials and

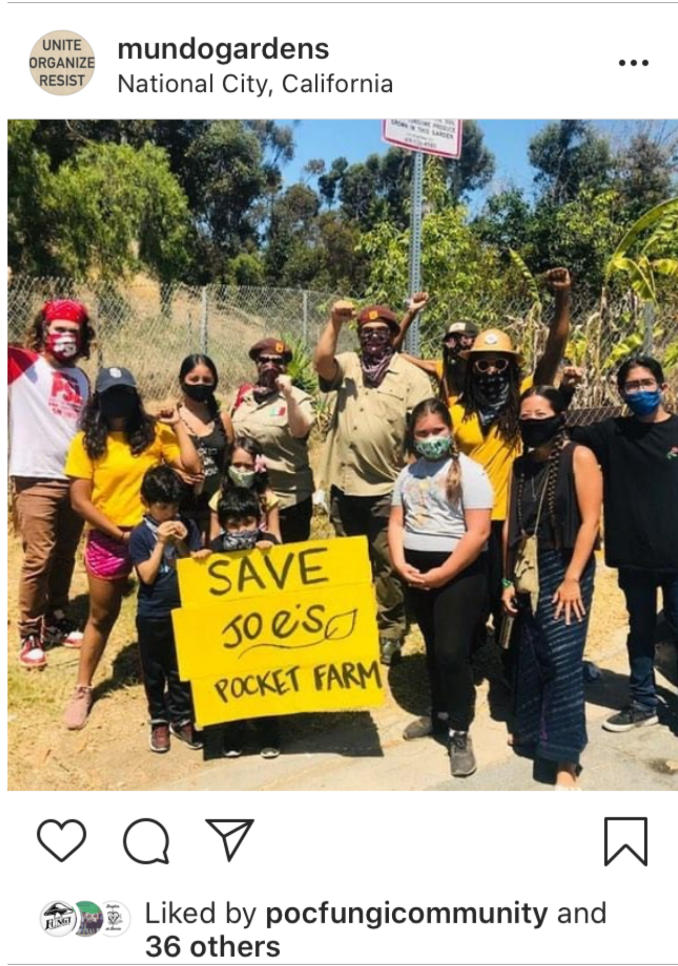


Illustration 7. An Instagram post from July 2020 showing a small gathering of supporters for Joe's Pocket Farm, including members of the local Brown Berets. This showing was in reaction to the City of National City stating their intention to sell the land on which Joe's Pocket Farm is located, but this was not communicated to Mundo Gardens or the community, and came during ongoing negotiations between the nonprofit and the City to remediate the soil and restore the farm.

prejudices abound. Some of these conflicts were found in situations like the one I described above: at City Hall when legislation is at stake. But they also occurred at the urban agriculture sites themselves, at board meetings, business meetings, and urban agriculture activities. It was in these spaces where the important underlying cultural factors, attitudes, meanings, and values of the urban agriculture movement were revealed.

Within cityscapes, land, space, and property are highly sought after and charged with meaning in a multiplicity of ways: space and land as capital, as private property, as solace and home, as community and identity. In this chapter I will explore some of these meanings and values with which space is imbued and how that imbuing happens in the first place. In this I will outline how the formation of place-based community in the San Diego-Tijuana metropolitan area takes place. There is also a precedent for such place-based community building in the urban agriculture movement in other areas of the United States, such as Detroit and Los Angeles. In such examples, we can use a process-based concept of place, building from work by theorists like Lefebvre, to understand the localization and emplacement of community food production as important to those engaged in urban agriculture projects and as intimately intertwined with the concepts of community food production. In the Detroit examples, urban farming and gardening has been an effective and powerful way for a dilapidated community reeling from the retreat of social and commercial services to come together and recreate a sense of social belonging and community cohesion (White 2010, 2011a, 2011b). This often lies in the values of locality and neighborhood togetherness, based in the American value of community building (Halperin 1998).

In this chapter, I will first interrogate the concept of place as a social construct, especially as applied to both urban settings and "nature." Throughout I will connect this analysis to ethnographic material from my fieldwork. Much of this work is derived from Henri Lefebvre's inquiries into the connections between materialism and space production (1976, 1996, 1991 [1974], 2003, 2009) and David Harvey's concomitant analysis of the right to the city and various forms of governmentality (1996, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2009 [1973], 2013), to use Foucault's term

(1991). I will also emphasize how connection to place is created, both through nostalgia and through political engagement.

Place: The Production of Space and Place

My analysis of place takes inspiration from Adriana Premat's statement that "only through [the] decentering of the state can one begin to understand the actual power dynamics at play [and] appreciate the workings of governmentality" (2009: 29). In order to understand the power dynamics at play in the urban agriculture movement in the San Diego-Tijuana metropolitan area, I juxtapose Lefebvrian and Foucauldian frameworks for understanding place and power. This conceptual framework allows for the possibility of societal change driven not just from above (the state), but also from below (the community) (Foucault 1979; Lefebvre 1991 [1974]; Premat 2009, 2012). As Lefebvre wrote, "As the twentieth century agrarian reform gradually disappears from the horizon, urban reform becomes a revolutionary reform. It gives rise to a strategy which opposes itself to the class strategy dominant today" (1996: 180). It is therefore in cities and urban spaces that revolutionary reform, under the auspices of urban reform, can be accomplished, with whatever success. Urban agriculture, however effective, is part of that move toward urban and revolutionary reform; it has the potential to be a grassroots-led part of an overarching social movement that works toward justice conceived as equity, interconnectedness, sustainability, and healthier places.

Meaning making and the establishment of values are integral parts of the making of place, space, and therefore land. Many scholars interrogating place as a theoretical concept focus on what it means to live and create meaning in cities, which are construed as unique spaces of

biopolitical governance (Benson 2012; Cronon 2009; Foucault 1979; Harvey 2008; Williams 1973). Creating meaning in cities includes inquiries of being or belonging in community (Benson 2005; Chakrabarty 2000; Firth et al 2011; Galt et al 2014; Glover 2004; Kingsley and Townsend 2006; Lyson 2005, 2012; Poe 2014) and being or belonging in place (Arefi 1999; Blake 2017; Brandenburg and Carroll 1995; Brehm et al 2013; Brook 2003; Head et al 2014; Kyle and Chick 2007). My analysis in this chapter draws heavily from theories of the social production of place, inspired by Lefebvre's work. More specifically, I start with understanding the city as the foundation of the philosophical study of space, but that it is not sufficient to only center the city as a site of place-making.

The City as Place with a Foundation in Industrialization and Capitalism

It is with a fine-grained perspective on the everyday and everyday life that the import of place becomes apparent. Lefebvre's seminal works on everyday life and the social construction of space demonstrate this intimate relationship. In these works, Lefebvre develops Marxian concerns with the relationship between production and consciousness. For him, space is a social construct and not merely a conceptual schema to be read or decoded. Nor is it merely a physical container for social action (Weiss 2011: 443). In his work, Lefebvre outlines three moments of social space characterized by everyday life and Marxian concerns with the dialectical relationship between production and consciousness: (1) spatial practice, (2) representations of space, and (3) representational space. (1) "Spatial practice" refers to the various modes of activity through which subjects interact in and with spatial relations, assuring their production and reproduction. These are the material aspects of space, the actual space under question and its

forms and objects. In other words, it is the physical environment that structures perception and the formation of reality. (2) "Representations of space," on the other hand, are ways of concerning and codifying space in objectified models, plans, or schema. Said differently, it is the knowledge about space and its production—a semiotic abstraction that informs common and scientific knowledge. These are associated with the totalizing and idealized visions that decision makers and people in positions of authority attempt to inscribe. (3) And finally, "representational space" embodies "complex symbolism, sometimes coded, sometimes not, linked to the underground side of social life" (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]: 33). This is lived space, the *emotional* experience of space and the subjective practices that are attached to space, which are linked to the inhabitants and users of space who can use their imagination to appropriate and change dominant space. Representational space is a medium through which the body lives out its life in interaction with other bodies. Lefebvre condenses this spatial, conceptual triad as "perceived-conceived-lived" (40), and it serves as the foundation of his discussion of the structure of everyday life, incorporating conceptual schemata, material landscapes, and sensory qualities enacted by the "spatial body" (194; see also Weiss 2011; Eizenberg 2012; Premat 2009). In other words, the social production of space is a complex phenomenon that, in order to be understood, requires that we pay attention to the physical, the conceived, and the lived dimensions of space.

Central to Lefebvre's analysis of social space is the concept of the urban, or the city. In particular, Lefebvre writes about the "right to the city", echoed later in David Harvey's work, as well. In this Marxian analysis, the city is a privileged space for the consumption of commodities, and the city itself is consumed as if it were one, large commodity. The city was borne of industrialization, which produces urbanization. In fact, the epitome of capitalist production is

lived in the lives of "the urban"—or those that dwell in urban spaces (Lefebvre 1996). In my fieldwork, Mel Lions, the main founder and previous director of Wild Willow Farm and Education Center, had a fascinating perspective on this as it relates to San Diego as a budding urban center. Mel was entering his early- to mid- sixties as I did my fieldwork and had grown up in the San Diego region. This longevity in the space gave him a unique lens on which to see the transformation of San Diego:

> I've lived during the time when the food system has undergone drastic changes… A favorite family adventure [growing up] was taking long drives on the backroads of San Diego County, into a landscape that was much different 60 years ago, before freeways, before urban sprawl. The 'country' was much closer then—you didn't need to drive very far until you were among the farms. Much of South Bay, Chula Vista, and Mission Valley were under cultivation, with farmstands everywhere. The North County coast was mostly farms interrupted by villages with funny names like Leucadia. Farms dominated the county's landscape. Most produce eaten in San Diego County was grown in San Diego County; dairy too…I was 21 in 1977 when I opened my first restaurant. The first few years I still drove downtown to buy veggies from the produce docks and get dairy from the Carnation creamery that still sourced locally. At about that time downtown started transforming itself and the produce distributors got squeezed out.

As Eizenberg writes, the urban environment is the primary tool of expansion for the neoliberal political project (2012)—this will become more apparent as I describe San Diego's particular neoliberal political project below. As Harvey (2008) explains, the right to the city is a collective rather than an individual right due to the collective power needed to transform and reshape the processes of urbanization.

Again, urbanization, in large part, is a result of industrialization. In the West, this process took place largely in the late eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century. This time was characterized by significant technological advances and new manufacturing processes that made it possible to produce large quantities of goods in a relatively short amount of time. The

consequences of this included the restructuring of the economy around manufacturing and the transition of Western society from an agrarian society to an industrialized one. In order to create the goods produced by the advances of industrialization, however, there were certain requirements: (1) access to resources with which to create the goods in the first place, (2) a public with sufficient leisure time to consume the goods, and (3) a way to invest the wealth created in the production of those goods. Urbanization and the increase of cities was an answer to many of these needs, including goods consumption and wealth investment (Korotayev and Grinin 2006).

Both Lefebvre and Harvey lay out the intimate connection between capitalism and urbanization, writing that cities—as urban centers—arose through geographical and social concentrations of surplus product created by capitalist forms of production. Capitalism must produce a surplus product in order to produce a surplus value, which in turn must be reinvested in order to generate more surplus value. Therefore, Harvey writes, "[u]rbanization has always been…a class phenomenon, since surpluses are extracted from somewhere and from somebody, while the control over their disbursement typically lies in a few hands" (2008: 24). The growth path of urbanization has followed the growth path of capitalism in ways following capital and surplus value, leading to Lefebvre's and Harvey's arguments that urbanization has played an active role in absorbing the surplus product that capitalism perpetually produces in search for profits (Harvey 2008: 25). What this means is that capitalism is contingent on and in fact requires urbanization in order for that surplus product to be absorbed. In other words, urbanization, through industrialization, and capitalism go hand in hand.

The City as Place: Capitalism and Surplus Value

But how exactly does the city "absorb" capitalism's surplus value? One way is through development. Harvey explains that the property market directly absorbs a great deal of surplus capital through the construction of city centers and suburban homes and office spaces (2008: 29). As Eizenberg tells us, neoliberal practices of commercialization destroy the commons (Hardt and Negri 2005) and practices of enclosure continue to serve as a generative force for capital expansion (De Angelis 2007). In defining a commons, Raj Patel writes that it "is a resource, most often land, and refers both to the territory and to the ways people allocate the goods that come from that land" (2009: 92). Patel continues, saying:

> Generally, commons systems aren't being supported in the twenty-first century—they're being dismantled. As they disappear, we lose millennia of accumulated knowledge about how to manage scarce resources sustainably, both in terms of the harvesting technology to keep the resources abundant and also the social systems necessary to ensure that no one takes more than his or her fair share. These systems of knowledge are displaced by the guiding motives of profit-driven markets. This isn't to say that the existing systems are perfect—they're not—but they do seem to have offered ways in which societies have survived, and thrived, with a mechanism for setting the value of resources different from that exercised by the profit-driven market. (2009: 107)

The destruction of the commons through practices of commercialization, enclosure, and the logics of profit-driven markets is a topic of much discussion in academic literature. Public spaces such as libraries and parks are increasingly hard to come by, particularly without them having been privatized in one way or another. Urban agriculture is often, though not always, an attempt to create a new commons—one that can be used, built, and appreciated in particular by those trying to create new ways of being in the world. People of color and other marginalized groups

use these spaces as much-needed sites of communion, care, and re-valuation (see Penniman 2018, Reese 2019, and White 2018).

David Karjanen, in his book *The Servant Class City: Urban Revitalization versus the Working Poor in San Diego* (2016) writes about this process as it applies to San Diego specifically. He lays the scene for San Diego quite succinctly, writing:

> San Diego enjoys a public image of a sunny paradise: golden beaches, surf, and SeaWorld. San Diego is also, in many ways, at the crossroads of many critically important and intersecting global processes. It is part of the most heavily crossed land border in the world (San Diego-Tijuana), it is a central node in the transborder shipping and logistics boom in crossborder commerce with Mexico, and, like many California and Sunbelt cities, it has a very diverse, growing population, particularly with the ongoing influx of immigrants from Latin America. These factors make San Diego somewhat of a unique urban area to view how different economic and social forces are playing out for the poor and working poor in San Diego's inner city. San Diego is also a unique place to examine the issues of inner-city poverty and growing concern for greater numbers of working poor because it undertook one of the largest inner-city urban revitalization programs in the country. The entire downtown, contiguous with an entire zip code, and increasingly adjacent neighborhoods, experienced a more-than-thirty-year extended effort at redevelopment and economic development, using a range of federal, state, and local programs as well as attracting billions of dollars in private investment. (2016: 7-8)

San Diego's urban revitalization efforts are generally considered to have been a resounding success. However, Karjanen critiques these efforts at urban revitalization for being driven by a set of ideological priorities, rather than demonstrable outcomes that in fact improve the lives of those living in the inner city. In this critique, the author challenges the assumption that "declining crime rates, booming downtowns and 'creative class' enclaves of offices and espresso bars, and new sources of tax revenues represent progress" (4). This "progress," he explains, is only for certain economic interests in the urban economy—it is not widely shared and in fact produces new types of problems and inequalities.

After billions of dollars in public and private investment and thousands of new jobs were created beginning in the 1970s and into the 90s, the portion of those in poverty in San Diego actually increased in the downtown area and remained relatively constant in neighboring inner-city communities. The portion of working poor—those in a growing class of people for whom the formal economy is not working, but the informal economy is not a solution, either (20)—also remained very high. San Diego's urban revitalization efforts transformed the inner city dramatically and reshaped the downtown through thousands of new jobs, development, and housing, but the effects of this were to flood the local labor market with thousands of new, low-wage, service sector jobs (23).

As the eighth largest city in the U.S. by population, San Diego fits with Karjanen's categorization of "Sunbelt Cities." These are rapidly growing urban areas of the South and Southwest, such as Houston, Dallas, Austin, and Phoenix, that are now large, globally-connected, and significant metropolises. With this growth have also come newly emergent forms of urban inequality and stratification. San Diego's growth and urban revitalization did not target inner-city poverty or the growing ranks of working poor directly. Rather, like other instances of urban revitalization (Hackworth 2006), the city embraced a neoliberal approach, which encouraged economic growth and development in the hopes that it would improve conditions more generally. This "trickle down" presumption—that general economic growth would help the poorest and most economically disenfranchised as well as others—turned out to be incorrect. Instead, what occurred was again the creation of thousands of low-wage, service-sector jobs concentrated primarily in the hotel, tourism, and retail industries, resulting in what Karjanen refers to as the "servant class," or "those who work in occupations that provide a service to others, but for whom

the wages are below what is a self-sufficiency wage for the city" (2016: 9). Of course, many occupying this "servant class" are low-income folks and people of color.

Although not explicitly neoliberal in its approach at first, San Diego's preliminary revitalization effort in the 1970s was aimed at bringing new retail and commercial enterprises to the downtown area and to redevelop vacant, blighted spaces. However, as this effort grew during the 1980s and 1990s, it more explicitly focused on using redevelopment authority and financing to attract and leverage commercial development. This massive investment in the areas of tourism, convention business, and visitor services led San Diego, especially at the county level, to approach economic development and planning from an industry-clusters approach. This meant that the county pursued and planned for specific industries like high-tech and light industrial manufacturing, tourism and visitor services, biotechnology, etc. (14-15). Two kinds of cities within San Diego have therefore emerged from this process: the first touts the high-wage, high-tech enclaves like the information technology, finance, and biotech sectors around the University of California, San Diego campus in La Jolla. The other kind of city in San Diego is interwoven with the first and includes areas such as southeastern San Diego, whose low-income residents and workers support the first kind of city. When it comes to my dissertation fieldwork, I focused my efforts on how those residing in the second kind of city Karjanen refers to understood, coped, and adapted to the high levels of inequality in the San Diego-Tijuana metropolitan area through place- and community-building via urban agriculture.

An interesting and helpful comparison emerges here between San Diego and Detroit, a city not in the sunbelt but instead in the rustbelt. Although Detroit is infamous for its lack of development—indeed, instead it is known for the *receding* of social services and corporate

infrastructure—urban agriculture has become a very well known community reaction to such lack of development (Jung and Newman 2014; White 2010, 2011a, 2011b). Alternatively, in San Diego, as Karjanen informs us, redevelopment has been a priority for city officials for decades. Although the urban agriculture movement is not as well established in San Diego as it is in Detroit, it is still a movement with a fairly large following. In such different circumstances, why is urban agriculture a shared cultural and political reaction?

One way of looking at the similar manifestation of urban agriculture in Detroit and San Diego—and many other urban centers in the United States and across the world—is to view it from the perspective of political economy. In San Diego, there is an abundant presence of corporate and municipal influence through the processes of redevelopment, but these processes have left the poor and working class in more dire circumstances than before redevelopment. Similarly, after the boom of the auto industry in Detroit, even greater devastation to marginalized communities occurred with the receding of any authoritarian support. In both cases, a neoliberal approach to short-term resource and labor extraction (Detroit) and to a reliance on the efficacy of a trickle-down effect (San Diego) left communities in a "stuck" position—to use Karjanen's term —without mobility, opportunity for advancement, or, in Detroit's more severe case, without any employment whatsoever. When these forces coalesce and manifest in the lack of economic and social support for the city's most vulnerable, alternative markets arise, often in the form of political opposition to the status quo.

Moving away from the City and Towards the Intersection of Place and Nature

When discussing the process of urbanization, Lefebvre writes that the reordering of space

and economy also resulted in a deep separation between "nature" and "culture." Lefebvre writes that the city is devoid of "nature," only existing in commoditized and counterfeited forms that can be traded, bought, and sold. Nature is "destroyed by commercialized, industrialized, and institutionally organized leisure pursuits" (1996: 158). It is quite easy to see how this applies to situations like I described earlier with Mundo Gardens—nature, in the form of land and food-growing, is devalued to such an extent that the city would rather it be an empty lot than work with local groups to bring that nature back. Mario Blaser echoes this idea in his writing on modernity and globalization (2010). These oppressive conditions and systems, he argues, require the dualistic distinction between nature and culture or society, which comes to be synonymous as "knowledge". Knowledge, according to the author, is significant because one governs according to what one takes to be true knowledge about the world. Although a simple statement, Blaser points out its importance. In his book, he focuses "on how the modern regime of truth has produced, or has tried to produce, objects of government and the institutions and values through which these are governed; and, in turn, how these objects of government have responded and in the process transformed those institutions and values meant to govern them" (6). Therefore, in order to adequately contest the regime of truth, we must first understand the knowledge, "truths," and stories that support that regime—including the nature/culture dichotomy—because knowledge is the careful shaping of a world through storytelling (28). Blaser's is fundamentally a decolonial critique of the distortion of modernity/coloniality—a critique that calls for a rethinking of the binaries between nature and culture that underlie capitalism and development (see Escobar 2007; Blaser 2010; and de la Cadena 2010, 2015).

This discussion highlights the role of place-making within the urban agriculture

movement. Isis Brook (2003) discusses the phenomenon of place-making via working the land by connecting place and space to gardening. Her emphasis is on making an unknown place feel like a more familiar one by introducing plants or forms of gardening. “By making the environment of the garden more like home,” Brook writes, “we maintain a living connection through an active engagement with elements of the attachment environment and begin a relationship with the new place” (228). Central to this understanding of placedness—or non-placedness—are the concepts of nostalgia and authenticity, which emphasize the existence of a “precognitive place-human relationship” (231). These concepts reveal themselves with gardeners who feel “connected to nature,” or feel “at home” somewhere, but that place or “nature” is imported and therefore could be considered inauthentic. How can nostalgia exist for something that never existed in the first place? In order to attempt to answer this, Brook highlights “the affective dimension of flora in human well-being” (232). This well-being includes a community consciousness that can come with a human-flora relationship (Lewis 1996). These relationships need not be deep or even closely-felt—Rachel Kaplan’s term “nearby nature,” for instance, points to the way that people will often refer to street trees or even indoor planting as “nature” and derive great satisfaction from it (Kaplan 1992: 127).

All of this points to a tripartite person-plant-place relationship that helps to bridge the gap between how people can create and connect to space and place. According to Brook, “People connect to place through plants, and these emotional connections are often forged in childhood or through long association” (Brook 2003: 232). This is certainly often the case in urban agriculture, with gardeners and farmers commonly identifying early childhood experiences as sparking their interest in the first place. For instance, Sartteka, one of the gardeners I worked

with at Mount Hope Community Garden, said, “Growing up I watched my mother and grandfather grow things, my mom had plants all over our house, both indoors and outdoors. Back then, I swore I wouldn't have half as many as she did. I had a few plants during our time living [in Denver, CO], but because of the freezing cold temperatures I didn't have anything outside. As soon as we moved back to sunny San Diego, I bought a Tower Garden and started container growing in this little space that was next to my doorstep and sprouting seeds in my kitchen window.” Sartteka’s experience with her observing her mother’s connection to plants was a big part of her connection to gardening and growing her own food. Similarly, Samuel, the director of Ecoparque in Tijuana, said, “…a long time ago, well, since my infancy, I was really close to nature. Even though I was born in Mexico City, my dad has always been…he was born in a place outside of Mexico City. My grandfather was a farmer, so they would come and my interest was piqued. When I was young I didn’t have access or even have contact with agriculture [in the city]. It was more like we would go to really beautiful places, almost all virgin places, so that was one of the first ways I was in contact with nature and it made a huge impact on me forever.” For Samuel, as he mentions, he was fairly nature-deprived while living in the urban setting of the city, but his family’s connection to farming gained him exposure to the jarring nature-based alternate reality that existed outside of the city’s boundaries.

Mel Lions, who was mentioned earlier, told a related story:

> I have vivid food/farming memories from my youth in the ’60s, falling in love with the taste of vegetables at an early age. My mom wasn’t a great cook but she had great sources for what she served, much of it from small farms and dairies in the Tijuana River Valley—maybe 15 miles away from my hometown of Coronado (before the Coronado Bridge was built)—probably not far from where Wild Willow Farm is today. This was possible not because we were hip or rich (anything but), but because that was the structure of the food system at the time. I

> was lucky enough to have noticed this, because it has informed my journey since. She bought produce from an enterprising farmer who converted a school bus to a mobile farm stand. He'd park in the middle of the block and ring a bell, inviting mom and the other housewives (what stay-at-home moms were called in the early '60s) to check out the day's harvest. Milk, eggs, cheese and bread were delivered by a white-uniformed milkman in a white truck from a local dairy. Meat came from a local butcher who'd cut and weigh exactly what you needed; nothing except salami was pre-packaged. Even when Safeway came to town in the early '60s, it had a butcher in the meat department, though that was the first time I saw pre-packaged meat.

Mel mentioned later that that first view of pre-packaged meat was, looking back now, an ominous foreshadowing of what was to come with the food system. All fruits and vegetables would slowly come from further and further away (still mostly within California, however), and would taste worse or blander as the years went on because of the way and timing in which it was grown, harvested, and distributed. Mai Nguyễn, a powerhouse within the San Diego farming scene as a wheat farmer and organizer (who, when I started fieldwork, was also working with The National Young Farmers Coalition), also mentioned, "I grew up in an urban area and learned from elders and community to grow food and medicine at home for freshness and secure availability, for self and others." For Mai, connection to family as well as the larger community was an essential part of their origin story with food, agriculture, and connection to nature. Additionally, Elle Mari, a local food system advocate working for the University of California of San Diego Center for Community Health, told me about the importance of her family and childhood experiences in turning her attention to urban agriculture:

> From the very beginning I was inspired by my mother, but funny enough it took me awhile to recognize that's where my interest in urban ag came from. My ma grew up sustenance farming and tending to vineyards (the latter, growing table grapes, no fancy winery vibes in the '60s in the former Yugoslavia) and brought those skills and ways of knowing and doing with her to Chicago where I grew up. We always had jars of pickled veggies on the shelf in the winter. In the summer I

> remember both laughing (eating every cherry tomato off the vine instead of picking them) and loathing (pulling prickly weeds and constantly unkinking the hose) during my time in the garden with her.

For Elle, her mother's connection to food production and farming was something that shaped Elle's childhood, and became an important part of the work she would do in her adult life. All of these examples exemplify Brook's claim that gardeners connect to place through their connection to plants, which connection is often forged in childhood and long exposure.

But is this the only way that people can make connections to place? Can relationships with other human beings, and not just those with plants or other non-human others, be a way to connect people to place? In other words, can community and politics—as well as plants—be ways to connect people to place? And if so, how do people, place, politics, plants or food, and community tie together in the act of place-making? I claim that, in the case of urban agriculture, it is, in fact, the connection between people and other people, along with a sense of connection to "nature" (in the form of plants or produce), that allows for a connection to place and for the act of place-making. Patel says that "To value something involves both identifying it and setting up rules through which it can be used by society" (2009: 92). In this way, the urban agriculture community values the concepts of food-producing and community-building as important in themselves, and creates a system of ethics that determine how such practices should happen. This foundation of values then creates the opportunity and ability for place-making through growing food and through building community. As Brook writes:

> …the most powerful way of establishing co-nurturing relationships is by engaging with plants first-hand: planting seeds, nurturing growth, learning about their needs and shaping their and our environment through such interaction. Studies of place attachment have repeatedly shown that engagement with and taking part in the shaping of a place are strongly indicated in care for, and later affectionate

> reflection on, a place. (2003: 232; see also Cooper Marcus 1992)

This quote points to the importance of being actively involved in the creation of a place or space in order to cultivate a feeling of placedness or being "in-place." In this way, those involved in urban agriculture who actively work on growing food and all the other labor required to maintain an urban garden or farm are not only in the act of making food, but in the act of making place, and, as will be shown in the next chapter, in the act of making community.

The Importance of Land as Place

Land is central component in this conversation about place and nature. Sartteka, who was mentioned previously, said that for her, community-building must incorporate the concept of land:

> This has everything to do with land because depending on the goals or beliefs of the community members, having access to land allows us to become rooted in the land, we can build and we can have something lasting. For example, I always talk about wanting to find someone and someplace where I can plant trees, meaning that commitment to many years. In my mind, having a place for the children of our community to remain not only minimizes some of the stress and struggles (such as homelessness, which I experienced many times as a youth) but also allows them to focus on building up, generational wealth is built with assets that remain in the family or that are reinvested into the family. There was a significant decrease in the number of Black land owning farmers, many farms lost to families selling the land. This is why I believe it is important to have land to live on and to work. A community can still be a community without land, many groups have done this throughout history, many people say African Americans are a landless people. But for me, to be able to feel secure, I would want to have a way to keep my community safe, sheltered and fed, with land, all of these are possible.

In Sartteka's view, the near necessity of access to land derives from the need to provide a space for community, to have shelter, and to have food. These are major tenets of land justice, and as many have argued, there is no food justice without land justice (Holt-Giménez and Williams

2017; Kerssen and Brent 2017; and Sbicca 2018). Providing a critical perspective on what happens without that connection to land, Mel Lions, who was mentioned previously, stated that "In modern times, land has lost its connection to community, becoming a commodity (property) that is strictly owned independently of other properties, tied together by utilities and zoning laws. Land ownership has served to isolate us from others and hide our shared connections. I have mine, you have yours. Leave me alone." In Mel's understanding:

> Isolation like this is overcome with common enterprise, such as a community garden or urban farming CSA…Rather than land ownership, I prefer the concept of land stewardship—that we are caretakers for something that doesn't really belong to us except for a short time. The land was created long ago by forces beyond human comprehension, and will be passed into the hands of future generations or other natural communities after we're gone. Maybe we should try to not fuck it up and leave our offspring cursing us?

Mel's sentiments here echo many of those in the urban agriculture movement. Community gardening and urban farming are seen as ways to counter the entrenched ills that commoditized land ownership inculcates. And at the same time, access to land is entirely necessary for these agricultural pursuits.

A final, beautiful example comes from an important event that occurred in the San Diego-Tijuana food movement during my fieldwork. In 2018, after months of planning and hosting build-up events, the Carbon Sink Convergence was held at Solidarity Farm in Pauma Valley. This convergence brought together stakeholders in regenerative and sustainable small-scale farming from across the continent—people came from México, Canada, and from all over the United States—to join in conversation around using farming as a way to combat climate change through carbon sequestration techniques. At the same time, the Convergence was meant to put these disparate stakeholders into conversation with one another. During the opening ceremony, Mai

Nguyễn, a grain farmer and then-leader in the National Young Farmers Coalition, as well as an Indigenous farmer who lead food growing efforts at Soul Fire Farm in rural New York (led by Leah and Naima Penniman, among others), gave a riveting opening speech. Both Mai and the Indigenous farmer made important connections to the importance of land in agricultural pursuits, as well as to developing a new relational ethic:

> *Indigenous farmer:* And the story today is that our ancestors bones are flying through the sky. Not just our human ancestors, but our tree ancestors, our plant ancestors, our ancestors and relatives of all beings. And we have a role in that. We have a role as mediators of the relationship between soil and sky. A lot of times when you see paintings or depictions of colonialism, of westward expansion, of manifest destiny, of what happened when in 1823 the courts of white man's law said you could plant a flag and claim land. Those depictions show the bison fleeing across the plains. They show First Nations people fleeing through forced migration and through genocide. And what they don't show is: as above, so below. The creatures and communities of the soil were being displaced at the same time. The fungal communities, the bacterial communities were fleeing from colonialism. So we today, we here have a role to call those communities back in. Into this collective of what is land. Land is a collective of beings floating on this deep blessing of water. Our ancestors gave us stories to understand that, they gave us the medicine, they gave us the science, they gave us everything we need. We have all the tools that we need already. We have it all already.
>
> And so what we're trying to do now, what many communities across this now country, this Turtle Island, are doing, like those fungal communities or soil communities, is bringing communities in, creating connection. Healing rifts that were created by colonialism between Black communities, between Indigenous communities, between Black and brown communities all over the country, and mediating that relationship between soil and sky. And listening to the land and recognizing the land as a being with agency, as a collective of beings with agency and rights… So how can we listen? How can we listen? The land is already speaking with us. It's speaking in carbon, in carbon, which is the stories and memories held in the soil. It's speaking in breaths, in invocations, in sighs. In great belches, in gaseous emission. It's speaking in life and death, in regeneration, in decomposition. And all we have to do is listen the way our ancestors taught us to listen. Just listen to these languages that we know already, and to recognize that we, too, are speaking with the land. And we can offer back the land, and be in conversation, and hold on to these memories and the stories in the form of carbon and in the form ourselves, as a part of this great collective that is the land.

> *Mai:* So as we listen to the land, to each other, we also just need to remember that we are the tools, we are the future, and we are enough. So I'd like you to remember that, and to say that out loud. And now when you say 'we,' look around at who this 'we' is. We. And now, to your neighbors, remind them: we are. We are more than enough!

Land here is more than a commodity, and more than something that provides food and shelter. It is a living relation, and one that requires a particular ethical and emotional orientation by those who work the land. This orientation centers values of reciprocity, gratitude, and connection—all of which the current private property orientation of land ownership actively destroys. Just as connections to nature cultivate a sense of place, as described above, connection to land does the same. In this same vein, Raj Patel writes that "…'common' could be not only a place, but a verb to describe how to value and share the world around us" (2009: 92). The land, or the commons, as a verb motivates a different value orientation toward place. But of course, land is one of the most contested sites of power within the urban agriculture movement. This contested space will be described in more detail in the following sections.

The City, Place, and Politics

In *The Urban Revolution* (2003), Lefebvre writes that urbanization is central to the survival of capitalism, and is therefore bound to be a crucial focus of political and class struggle. This struggle, Lefebvre demonstrated, would be for the right to the city, or, in other words, for the right to command the whole urban process. How might this connect to the phenomenon of urban agriculture and the urban agriculture movement? If urbanization is central to the survival of capitalism, can urban agriculture truly compete against the industrial/corporate food system?

Does the fact that urban agriculture emerges from urban or peri-urban settings lend itself to being more neoliberal/capitalist than it does to it being a radical, collective political project? I argue, along with others (Barron 2017; Cutts et al 2017; McClintock 2014), that urban agriculture is a dialectal project that abides by Polanyi's analysis of capitalism's Double Movement—that is, that it is both neoliberal *and* radical, both engaged in upholding capitalism *and* in dismantling it (Polanyi 1944). Although situated within urban city settings, urban agriculture attempts to radically re-envision what it means to be urban by injecting values historically forgotten in the pursuit of capital, development, and neoliberal values of individuality, self-reliance, etc. Despite it being conflicted and perhaps not always very successful, urban agriculture, as one leg of the food movement, is an attempt to break down urbanity and enact hope and the desire for an alternative way of being in the world, infused with collective, sustainable values (see Goh et al 2022). As Patel argues, "The enclosure of the commons has destroyed the rich networks of knowledge that once helped guide the way we valued the world. Polanyi's transformation is, however, never total and never complete—there are always practices, ideas and experiences that persist, and offer tools with which we might begin to think of new ways of valuing beyond profit-driven markets" (2009: 107). Countermovements such as the urban agriculture movement are therefore trying to rebalance market society and transform the way value is set—not by returning to the commons, but instead by reinventing it.

From the Lefebvrian perspective, space is therefore not seen as a passive stage for social action, but as the means, the medium, and the ends of social action. Deconstructing space uncovers the social relations, everyday experiences, material values, and struggles that reproduce space. His framework is particularly useful, in fact, for examining urban space, whose

production—not only its consumption through management and regulation—is constantly and publicly negotiated. This conceptualization of space also allows for the integration of socio-political praxis into the political economy of space, complicating our understanding of "the urban" and the "urban commons" (Eizenberg 2012: 765). Indeed, unpacking space is not only an intellectual task, but also a *political* one that could support social change through space. This dialectic process reveals the social relations that produce space as well as the social relations it produces, and helps explain the mechanisms by which people organize collectively in order to produce, manage, and sustain the urban commons (Eizenberg 2012: 767). This type of analysis can therefore be applied to urban agriculture as a site of place-, community-, and value-making. The desire for community creates particular social relations within urban agriculture, which is manifest in urban agriculture sites that are produced through those social relations and thereby produce similar and different social relations than those with which it began. In a neoliberal context, the physical, spatial sites of urban agriculture are also explicit efforts at reclaiming the commons, which demonstrates the constant negotiation of the production of urban space between several actors—the public, civil society, the state and municipal governments, and the third sector. And within this environment there is borne, necessarily and inevitably, conflict and contestation.

Urban Agriculture as a Space for Political Contestation

Community gardens and small urban farms like Joe's Pocket Farm and Mt. Hope Community Garden tend to be discussed in terms of (1) spaces of contestation, (2) controlled space, and (3) neoliberalizing space. Urban agriculture sites are spaces of contestation in the

sense that they are a spatial embodiment of the reaction to social and environmental injustices afflicted by the progression of the neoliberalization of urban space (Eizenberg 2008; Staeheli et al 2002). These sites are also controlled space since gardens and gardening itself are used as a controlling mechanism by municipal governments and other institutions to produce citizen-subjects (Foucault 1979; Pudup 2008). And finally, urban agriculture sites are neoliberalizing space because, within the paradigm of ecological gentrification, the garden is viewed as a tool for financial gains under the disguise of an environmental agenda (Quastel 2009).

Despite the dialectic nature of urban agriculture sites—with them being both neoliberal and, in my words, radical simultaneously—they *are* part of a wider phenomenon of urban contestation by which space is utilized to voice and fight for alternative socio-political arrangements (Eizenberg 2012: 767). In this way, "Actually existing commons then should not be seen as a 'return' of some noble but possibly archaic ideal but as a springboard for critiquing contemporary social relations and as the production of new spatiality, initiating the transformation of some fundamental aspects of everyday life, social practices and organization, and thinking" (Eizenberg 2012: 779-780). I echo Eizenburg's point in arguing, along with Brad Weiss, that the process of (re)making place is the wider framework within which to situate the current interests and actions of the urban agriculture movement (Weiss speaks specifically to the locavore movement) (Weiss 2011). These places and the land they inhabit are suffused with experiential qualities, which provides a grounding for sociopolitical projects (Casey 1998). Place is a constitutive feature of human habitation (Casey 1998; Merleau-Ponty 1962), and defining the contours of the production of space allows us to specify how a politics of food is spatialized and how relations, practices, and value or meaning are produced, evaluated, and contested via place

(Premat 2009).

These points were reiterated consistently throughout my fieldwork. Aside from having a long-time positive association with plants and nature that encouraged practitioners to feel a connection to the act of growing their own food, many of those I worked with also expressed the critical importance of the political nature of their work that connected them with spaces of urban agriculture. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, Sartteka, for instance, in addition to connecting her interest in urban agriculture to her mother's growing of many plants when she was younger, explained that:

> Not long after [moving to San Diego and beginning to grow many plants on my own], there was social unrest in my city after the police murdered an unarmed Black man, which pushed me further into my focus on sustainable living and sovereignty….What keeps me loving agriculture is two things: the past and the future. To honor our ancestors by remembering the past when we grew our own food, when we could feed our entire families and villages and looking forward to a future where my children and children's children no longer suffer from the same diet-related preventable diseases, when food is growing on trees all about the neighborhood, in parks and on streets and it is legal for people to eat the food, to a future that is green and growing and in sync with mama nature rather than killing off and depleting all of her resources and turning our planet into a wasteland.

Not unlike the story of the unjust murder of Earl McNeil that began this chapter, for Sartteka the murder of a Black man—of someone in a community she belongs to—was enough to push her toward the value of sovereignty and self-sufficiency through gaining the skills and knowledge needed to grow her own food and to live more environmentally sustainable, as was discussed in the previous chapter. This kind of social unrest and that Sartteka experiences compelled her to do something differently, to try to make some kind of change in her own life that could give her a sense of control over very uncontrollable and oppressive surroundings, and to support others in doing similarly.

Paul Watson, a middle-aged Black man and one of the directors for the non-profit Global ARC that runs—in conjunction with the UC San Diego Urban Studies and Planning Department—the Ocean View Growing Grounds community garden in Ocean View, mentioned that for him, coming to urban agriculture was a way to wed environmentalism to concepts of social and racial justice. He said: "I hadn't paid much attention to urban agriculture until I started to work at The Global ARC in 2013. Prior to joining this organization…the focus of my work was on social change, that is—addressing racism, criminal justice reform, equity, community organizing, and community development." Working with faculty members at UC San Diego, Paul and his co-director Bill Oswald negotiated a way to join the university's desire to focus on urban agriculture with their focus on concepts of justice. "We then used a justice lens to view how we researched urban agriculture," Paul said.

Nathan Lou, a grower that I mentioned in the last chapter, also described his sustainability- and politically-oriented origin with urban agriculture. He told me, "I first became interested in urban agriculture after realizing that I can grow food for myself that has a much lower carbon footprint than food I could buy from a market. So much of our food has to travel long distances to arrive at our table. If I could offset even a small portion of my food though home cultivation, then I would be contributing to a positive social change." Realizing that his individual actions could make a difference for larger environmental issues propelled Nathan to make a change and take matters into his own hands. This politics—his belief that something needed to be done environmentally and that he should do something about it—was infused in all of his work as a food grower. Melissa Canales, a grower of microgreens who would sell her product at local farmers' markets, similarly mentioned a politics-oriented beginning to her story:

> I became interested in politics of food first. I had become vegetarian when I was 14 after becoming aware of how our food choices impacted the environment. My parents were not pleased with my vegetarianism decision and told me I had to know more about it. So I turned to books, which subsequently caused me to be very sure about my decision. I didn't realize at the time that I was interested in politics, per se. So it wasn't surprising that later I latched on to more sophisticated food politics books as I matured. I was fresh out of undergrad when I stumbled upon Marion Nestle's *Food Politics* while roaming the bookstore (back when people found books at bookstores!). That book was just the start. This was all in the early 2000's. However, while learning about food system was fun for me, it was more of a hobby or interest; certainly not something I thought I actually take part in (I felt strongly that I had a brown thumb and would always live in a condo by the beach). So, I pursued other career paths and, along the way and surprisingly discovered that I actually could care for plants… When I eventually admitted to myself that being outside, doing things with my hands, and having control over my food was what I wanted to do, I had the courage to find a way to make it happen.

Melissa's connection to urban agriculture came in the form of an interest in food politics and was inspired by others that were involved with the food movement. This was an issue of such importance to her that although it didn't seem feasible at first, she did eventually decide to spend the majority of her time making a difference in the food system by growing her own food and eventually selling it to others.

A final example comes from Diane Moss, the director of the Black-led non-profit Project New Village that runs the Mt. Hope Community Garden. For her, community health was an important factor in her advocacy work, particularly among low-income and people of color communities, but the issues surrounding food and environmentalism were not on her mind. She said:

> Project New Village got started in 1994, with a total different sense. It's always been a community-based organization, looking at community issues and trying to work together cooperatively, to look at—we didn't call it that back then—but, social equity kinds of issues. But in 2008 we made this turn towards food. I happened to be at a conference sitting next to Ellee Igoe, and if you know Ellee,

> she's at Solidarity Farm. Well, she got me connected here. I'm an activist and an advocacy kind of person on most social justice issues, but food wasn't on my radar. I was raised in Los Angeles in a community very similar to the communities I serve and work for here [in San Diego], and I figure food—you just had to make your way. I didn't know the politics behind food and food scarcity. So when I sat at this conference and talked to Ellee all day, I then went to a subsequent meeting and found out what was going on in the state of California. I looked around this room, I didn't see anybody from my neighborhood. I didn't see very many people of color. And food scarcity, food access, is a social justice issue. So I ended up calling meetings with my community members, and we just got started down this road to see what we could do to fix the issue of food access in our neighborhoods. So that came under Project New Village. We subsequently became a nonprofit in 2010 so that we could really get serious about community change and working with others to change our situation, and access and relationship to food.

Despite my fieldwork taking place ten years after PNV's shift toward food and food justice, I found that Diane was not exactly the paragon of farming or even healthy eating, even though she is a leader in this space. However, she did often volunteer her labor at the garden during major volunteer days, but her leadership approach was rather hands-off, serving more as a facilitator of healthy eating and urban food production, rather than serving as a model for such. This is therefore an interesting example of how politics do not always manifest in a particular way, and yet still have power to help change hegemonic narratives.

For so many people involved in the urban agriculture movement, with or without a tie to growing plants or food in their early days, their interest came from a place of wanting to make some kind of difference, politically, socially, and/or economically. In each of these examples we see how urban agriculture reflects Eizenburg's (2012) estimation that community gardens are always spaces of contestation. When people like Nathan, Sarah, Sartteka, Diane, Paul, and Melissa get together in spaces in their search for greater political and hands-on engagement with the world and systems around them, they then create a community of like-minded people that

cohere over very specific and unique values of self-reliance, community sovereignty, environmental sustainability, social justice, and political-economic engagement. As Eizenburg noted, these urban agriculture spaces are launchpads for critiquing contemporary social relations and values, as well as sites for producing new spatiality and modes of relation between humans and nonhumans. In this way, these places are saturated with experiential qualities that provide grounding for sociopolitical projects. I believe that this theoretical grounding, supported with ethnographic evidence, provides a solid basis on which to understand how urban agriculture is an attempt to shift dominant, hegemonic discourses of value away from those reliant on capital and exchange toward those based in community and place-making. In this estimation, value is not contained in things by themselves, but only in a total social context of people and objects. Value is therefore not given in nature, as is often presumed within a capitalist framework—instead, value is produced by human action and intentionality. In this way, value can be seen as the chains that link relations between things to relations between people (Gregory 2005 [1997]: 12). These concepts are further explored in the next section.

Connecting Place to Values

Values have underlined much, if not all, of the points on place and space discussed above. Indeed, although this section is about the study of value and what that can contribute to our understanding of urban agriculture, it is necessary to emphasize place once again in order to situate my approach to value.

As is obvious from many of the works and authors mentioned previously, when place is discussed in relation to the city, the narrative of loss often becomes apparent: loss of meaning

and loss of proper connection between places. According to Mahyar Arefi (1999), the transformation of the components of place is characterized by the narrative of loss, which affects the emergence of geographies of "nowhereness" and "otherness," as well as crises of identity (179). It has been explained that the production and meaning of place is affected by modernity and globalization: modernity has lead to the commodification and devaluation of place (Sack 1992), and globalization has called into question the importance of place (Agnew 1984, 1987) by those who think that place is no longer relevant (Toffler 1970). However, there are those who continue to think that "place still matters" (Massey & Allen 1984; Shuman 1998).

A difficulty with place is that is resists definite interpretation. "For one thing," Arefi writes, "[place's] scale varies from the size of a country or a region to a neighbourhood" (1999: 180). Secondly, its meaning and purpose can be different for different people—for some, place carries a significant emotional, cultural and/or historical value manifested in local, regional or national identity. For others, though, place signifies a location for economic transactions. This is an issue of value and valuation. And finally, place can be confusing because of the conventional notion of place as "coherent, bounded and settled" has shifted to one of a "diluted, diffused…space of flows" that is unbounded and stretched out (Arefi 1999; Castells 1989). As Altman and Low point out, anthropologists tend to focus on place as a sense of place or attachment to and conception of their environment (1992). This, according to Agnew (1987), is called a "sense of place," which examines people's ties and attachment to their places. I follow in this trend and connect the idea of place and place attachment to the concept of value, with community being both a value and a product of making place within urban agriculture.

Arefi (1999) writes from the perspective that communities of interest nowadays are

considered the successors to place-centered community, rather than to communities of place. The ties that were once the main characteristics of place-bound communities—communal ties and bonds (i.e. social capital)—have been weakened due to increased technology. What has emerged is a "non-place urban realm," which has affected place as a site of social relations and has resulted in the loss of connectivity (Kunstler 1993) and in changes to social obligations (Augé 1995). In order to strengthen place, then, there is a need for "proper connections" between places. Arefi explains:

> The call for proper connections between places goes far beyond a test of architectural ability and talent for urban design. The dilemma lies deep in our social norms and collective consciousness. The non-place urban realm has, over time, altered what the French anthropologist Auge calls the 'contractual obligations'. He argues that non-place is conducive to 'solitary' as opposed to the traditional 'collective' contractual obligations based on shared values and beliefs. In our urban landscapes today, these two types of social obligations coexist. Freeways, airports, supermarkets, even automatic teller machines (ATMs) exemplify solitary contractual obligations where codes and 'how to' instructions shape the individual's behaviour and obligations. Under such conditions individual behaviour is not based on pre-modern place-centred, shared values and beliefs accumulated over time and experience. Instead, individuals react to a set of predetermined instructions, codes and numbers programmed for carrying out certain activities, i.e. boarding an aeroplane, taking money from an ATM, shopping at a supermarket or driving on a freeway. (1999: 182)

The author goes on to explain that, alternatively, place-based collective obligations require a different set of conditions that rest on social values and norms, whose legitimacy stems from the community's longstanding values, desires, norms, and needs. This effectively connects all three concepts of place, value, and community quite succinctly. In essence, Arefi is describing how being place-based must rest on values that are supported or backed by a community of people. And that these collective circumstances are not encouraged by the sterility of planned, urban environments. In fact, connection between place and non-place requires physical and

“chronological connectivity,” which is “a historical connectedness or a sense of belonging to the same context, which emphasizes harmony instead of competing or negating the immediate surrounding” (Kunstler 1996: 44). Meaning, or value, is closely related to the concept of chronological connectivity. Notions such as a sense of place or “rootedness” are clear examples of this (Tuan 1980) since they focus on emotional attachment to place. “Rootedness” is defined by geographer Tuan (1980) as an unselfconscious, unreflectively secure and comfortable state of being in a locality—so much so that one’s immersion in place is such that one is not even conscious of the flow of time or of the world beyond one’s immediate surroundings. But what results when there is a lack of that place attachment? According to the logic laid out here, loss of meaning or values, which perhaps is a result of loss of community, causes a loss of place, or “placelessness.” Although being in place, or placidness, embedded in rootedness connotes belonging, envisions fate and destiny, and embodies will and volition, placelessness signifies loss of meaning (Hayden 1995; Jacobs and Appleyard 1987; Relph 1976). Therefore, loss of meaning not only indicates a major paradigm shift in urban form, but also reflects how people’s perception of attachment to place has transformed over time (Arefi 1999: 183).

As was mentioned before, modernism disrupts the emotional attachment to place. As a conscious act and in the legacy of modernism, sense of place is often considered a romantic, nostalgic approach toward identity formation. The connections to Brook’s work (2003) here is evident, with nostalgia for an imagined past or inauthentic relationship to nature characterizing the placedness of many gardeners. This modernist approach to sense of place coincides with what is referred to as the “commodification of place” (Agnew 1984). Concomitant with the commodification of place was its devaluation. In addition to commodification and devaluation of

place, globalization also generated and continues to generate standardized landscapes and inauthenticity (Relph 1976; Jacobs and Appleyard 1987), again harkening back to Brook's analysis. In urban settings, this kind of placelessness and sense of place is a highly self-conscious act of creating meaning (as opposed to the unself-conscious approach of rootedness explained above). For instance, in many urban settings there arise plans to demolish old neighborhoods and then, later, the adoption of policies to preserve the old neighborhoods that are left. This treats these locales like endangered species on the brink of extinction. What results with all of this is a standardization of landscapes, which is a byproduct of modernity and, subsequently, globalization. This signifies the power of capital. However, Arefi argues,

> Bemoaning the loss of meaning does not just reflect the "sameness" and "standardization" of landscape as a physical phenomenon, it also reflects other relevant contradictions of the late capitalist cities. Some of these contradictions, such as the "use" versus the "exchange" value, "public use" versus the "private'" value, "economic space" versus "life space" or "commerce" and "culture" have been identified and addressed by various scholars. All these trends, patterns and/or transformations in the political economy of place one way or another reflect placelessness. (1999: 185)

What results from placelessness and non-place are first, geographies of nowhereness and otherness (which are direct outcomes of modernism and global capitalism), and second, crises of identity (which reflect major shifts in social relations). Of course, Arefi explains, both place and non-place can coexist, just as solitary and collective spaces can coexist. In essence, "places are constantly in tension between what they are, what they ought to become and what the mediations of global capital and power make of them" (1999: 191). The connection here to urban agriculture is quite apparent—sites of food production in cities are consistently at the nexus of what they are (e.g. a community garden, a vacant lot, etc.), what they ought to become (which depends on who

is determining that "ought to"—e.g. a community garden, urban farm, housing development, public park, etc.), and what the mediations of global capital and power make of them (which can be a confluence of previously listed examples). These mediations are derived from disparate value orientations, which, as Arefi's work demonstrates, have real and tangible effects on place and the making of place.

Conclusion

Joshua Sbicca writes that, "It is incontrovertible that place shapes social life and that social life shapes place. The relationship morphs over time and depends on trajectories set in motion by the built environment and the people who interpret, interact with, and modify it. Most commonly, however, the local is the discernible conjunctural terrain. It is also the terrain of prefiguration" (2018: 84). This fluid, shifting relationship between place and social life is reflected in the struggle for land and space by urban agricultural practitioners, especially those of color. And its prefigurative manifestations and potential will be discussed in greater depth in chapter four of this dissertation. Although much more could be said and analyzed from the National City City Council meeting described at the beginning of this chapter, it is sufficient to demonstrate the role the urban agriculture social movement in Tijuana and San Diego has in affecting the political, social, and collective values of the communities in which they are situated and, conversely, how those values shape the movement itself. By examining the ways in which food producers relate to their work in urban agriculture projects, how they situate themselves within that work and the ideologies used to justify and motivate that work, we can therefore piece together their narratives and patterns of ideology construction and maintenance in order to

better understand the complexities, contradictions, and nuances of what it means to be a food producer situated in a larger social movement pushed forward from multiple angles, including community-based organizations, the third sector, and the state.

The urban agriculture movement is certainly shaped by hegemonic narratives surrounding it, such as "nature vs. culture" and profit-making over other kinds of values, but it also attempts to reframe the story in order to create its own kind of knowledge. In an effort to compete against large social, political, and economic regimes of truth, urban agriculture attempts to sustain an alternative story against the prevailing one in order to shape and cultivate a new world outside of the realm of capitalism and development. Joe's Pocket Farm is an excellent example of this attempt, but also of how the power differential is very much tilted in the other direction. It is a sign of incredible resilience for organizations like Mundo Gardens, with whom we started this chapter, and the people who comprise them to continue to push back against hegemonic narratives despite the odds being against them. In large part, such push-back is necessary due to the very conditions Mundo Gardens described in their Facebook post—those hegemonic narratives are not meant to include poor folks and people of color, but rather rely on their continual exploitation to continue to thrive. If those participating in urban agricultural projects and spaces do not push back, they are likely to never be heard from and continue to live with the knowledge of their own exploitation. Such a way of living is not justice-based and is not tenable, so back to the soil they go, working the land, composting food scraps, planting seeds, and educating others on what it means to live with respect, sovereignty, and autonomy. As Indigenous scholar Robin Wall Kimmerer has said, "We should not only be raising our gardens, we should be raising a ruckus!"

In the next chapter, I will discuss the role of community in urban agriculture and interrogate it as a site of cultural inquiry. I also connect it to other exigent themes of place and value.

Chapter 3

Searching for Belonging: The Creation of (Ethical) Community in Urban Agriculture

> The definition of value is always as much about politics, and about particular views on how society ought to be constructed, as it is about narrowly defined economics. Measurements are not neutral: they affect behaviour and vice versa.
>
> -Mariana Mazzucato, *The Value of Everything* (2018: 14)

> …understanding how to value the world around us without sticking prices on it may be the key to our survival as a species, if it is not already too late.
>
> -Raj Patel, *The Value of Nothing* (2009: 156)

> The ultimate goal of farming is not the growing of crops, but the cultivation and perfection of human beings.
>
> -Masanobu Fukuoka, *One Straw Revolution* (1978: 119)

In December 2017, Dr. Maulana Karenga—an accomplished activist, scholar, author, and the creator of Kwanzaa—sat in the auditorium of the Educational Cultural Complex in the Mountain View neighborhood of southeastern San Diego. As a panelist for an event on food justice, he spoke with force to the sparse audience sitting in the seats in front of him. "It isn't an issue of not having enough food," he said. "It's an issue of that food being justly and humanely distributed. Capitalism and racism are at the root of this distribution problem. So when we talk of food justice or social justice, we have to also be talking about racial justice." He paused, giving a knowing look to his spectators. "How do we challenge such a large project as that of the U.S. food system, you ask? It comes back to organizing. Organizing for a world that is better, more just, more equitable, and that leads to a better life. We need to turn neighborhoods into *community*, where values are shared and people cooperate for a common good on a common ground. Local food production and community gardens are a way to do that."

In Dr. Karenga's talk, the values of community, resistance, racial justice, and equitable food distribution come to the fore. As a community organizer, he understood that it takes strategic and disciplined efforts to undermine hegemonic systems of oppression, including, and especially, those as large as capitalism and the U.S. and globalized corporate food system. Tying together the strands of racial justice with food justice and the urban agriculture movement, Dr. Karenga shared utopian visions of marginalized people not just living together in neighborhoods, but creating the elusive concept of an ethics-based "community" through common goals and aspirations within local food production. Through such a practice, a group of people is turned from disconnected faceless and nameless neighbors into action-oriented, values-based citizens with a common cause, all working under the same banner. This pushes against the hegemony of neoliberalism as it presupposes the individual as the locus of action. Focusing instead on collective action and value-making sums up what it means to be someone practicing urban agriculture: taking part in the creation of ethical communities.

In this chapter I explore the role of the idea and ideal of "community" in the urban agriculture movement, and in particular its role in the formation of collective values formed and shaped by those who practice urban farming and gardening. This is particularly important because what and who constitutes a community varies and reflects power relations (Collins 2010; Sbicca 2018). And community is not merely a cognitive construct—it is infused with value-laden meanings (Collins 2010). By examining the ways in which food producers relate to their work in urban agriculture projects, how they situate themselves within that work and the ideologies used to justify and motivate that work, I am able to piece together their narratives and patterns of ideology construction and maintenance in order to better understand the complexities,

contradictions, and nuances of what it means to be a food producer situated in larger social movements pushed forward from multiple angles, including community-based organizations, the third sector, and the state.

I begin this chapter with an explanation of how place-making and community are intrinsically tied together, using both academic literature and evidence from my fieldwork. This helps to tie together material from the previous chapter and this one. I then describe the role of community more particularly with the urban agriculture movement, as the bases of food justice and sovereignty are rooted in conceptions of local food procurement and distribution. I then use several ethnographic case studies to describe some of these processes, and to uncover the struggles for belonging that occur within neoliberal capitalist logics and power structures.

Cultivating Community through Place

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the study of the social production of space deals largely with meaning creation. Creating meaning in cities includes inquiries of being or belonging in community (Benson 2005; Firth et al 2011; Galt et al 2014; Glover 2004; Kingsley and Townsend 2006; Lyson 2005; Poe 2014). Urban agriculture is therefore not only a site for place-making within the city, it is also a site for the creation of community. And has been shown, the act of place-making is intimately connected to the act of community-creation. I argue that urban agriculture is an attempt to shift dominant, hegemonic discourses of value away from those reliant on capital and exchange toward those based in community and place-making. In this estimation, value is not contained in things by themselves, but only in a total social context of people and objects. Value is therefore not given in nature, as is often presumed within a capitalist

framework—instead, value is produced by human action and intentionality. In this way, value can be seen as the chains that link relations between things to relations between people (Gregory 2005 [1997]: 12).

The various meanings held within the term "community" make it an interesting discourse and value to interrogate and to use as an analytical framework. Raymond Williams, in his book *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, writes that the word "community" has a range of senses: (1) the commons or common people; (2) a state or organized society, though relatively small; (3) the people of a district; (4) the quality of holding something in common; and (5) a sense of common identity and characteristics (1976: 75). All of these meanings are reflected in discourses and values held within the urban agriculture movement as I participated in it, although it should be mentioned that they indicate both social groups as well as particular qualities of relationships. For instance, Sartteka from Mt. Hope Community Garden told me that for her:

> Community is what you make it, like family. Sometimes we don't get to choose who is in our family or community, but for the most part we can choose to bring people into our inner circle making them our chosen family, tribe or village. Community in my eyes is people who care for and respect one another and may share similar goals or plans for the future. Community members help each other out when someone is in need, they look after each other's children, pets and home when we are in need. People often belong to multiple communities at the same time and sometimes one community might not intersect with the other. Community is very closely related to the words 'unity' and 'commune' which to me means people coming together to live in unity and harmony with one another and with the Earth.

Sartteka's explanation of what community means to her hit on all of Williams' senses mentioned previously, though with an emphasis on the quality of holding something in common and having a sense of common identity and characteristics. This is how an ethical community around urban agriculture is created: the very idea of what a community is becomes baked into the concept of

participating in urban agriculture as a revolutionary act, so in order to become involved one must take on the ideal of what a community is.[19] And not only that, the ethos of this type of community is one that is striving toward ideals of unity, mutual care and respect, and reciprocity. In so doing, one is revolutionizing the very social systems they critique. As one interlocutor put it, "Crear comunidad, cambiar el mundo. Poquito a poquito." ("Create community, change the world. Little by little.")

The emphasis on relationships within community is also important to point out here, as shifting the kinds of relationships that are privileged in society manifests often in the urban agriculture movement. Neoliberal logics have encouraged individualization and discourses of personal responsibility and self-sufficiency (McClintock 2014). These narratives can also be seen in work on other urban agriculture and alternative food movement spaces. For those who dive into this spaces of radical politics, however, it becomes obvious that the narrative on *self*-sufficiency is less helpful than one focused on *community*-sufficiency. Of course personal responsibility and self-sufficiency are vital and can be strengthened through urban agricultural work—learning how to grow food, cook, build things, and care for the Earth are very effective ways to increase a sense of self-sufficiency and become less reliant on structures and systems that seem to have one's worst interests in mind. However, self-sufficiency only takes us part of the way toward liberation from these structures and systems. It is in *community* that a greater sense of freedom can be found, though of course not without its own challenges and setbacks.

For instance, in his book *Indigenous Economics*, Ronald Trosper describes how Native views on individuality differ quite starkly from Western, EuroAmerican perspectives on the topic

[19] See more on prefigurative politics in Chapter 4.

(2022). Rather than an "individual" that exists in potential isolation and distinction from those around them—which is often the idea evoked when talking about "personal responsibility" and "self-sufficiency"—many Indigenous worldviews see them as "persons." A "person" comes with them a whole set of personality traits, desires, needs, talents, and potentials, and it also indicates a unit that is embedded within a web of relations.[20] A "person" exists in relation to other "people," and many Native societies understand that intrinsically economies are described by a series of relationships. This "en-webment" or "en-webbing" of people to others and to their environments is an intrinsic and explicit element of the urban agriculture movement. To move away from the disconnection and anonymity that occur under neoliberal capitalist sociopolitical and economic processes, including very high levels of corporatization and industrial farming practices, urban agriculture attempts to create not only physical but also emotional and mental spaces for people to develop new ways of relating to one another and to the natural world. In their book *Food, Farms, and Community*, Chase and Grubinger (2014) put it this way:

> Anonymity and distancing are powerful symptoms of what's fundamentally wrong with food systems. At the core of many problems is the way relationships among people are structured. To transform our food system so it is significantly healthier will require changing the structure of relationships so they are built around more than prices and profits. They must be shaped by shared values that support a 'triple bottom line' for individuals and society: economic, environmental, and social benefits. (60)

The authors promote the building of horizontal rather than vertical networks of people in order to restructure relationships (see Figure 10). Urban agriculture, as it was practiced in many spaces that I saw and interacted with in my field research, attempted to create horizontal relationship structures like those described by Chase and Grubinger. In this way, it is an attempt to see

[20] There is some limitation here in trying to describe these processes and concepts from within the English language, which has embedded within it a tendency to de-animate and separate units from the whole.

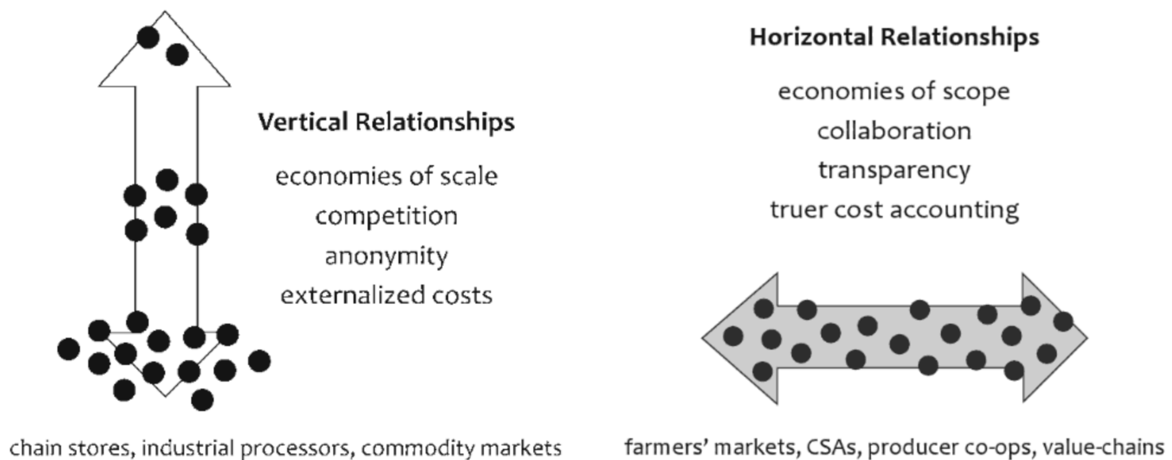


FIGURE 4.3 Vertical and horizontal networks in a food system. The dots represent people in the two types of networks. In the vertical network, power is held by a few people at the top who have little direct connection to those involved in distributing, marketing, and consuming products. In the horizontal network, power is more evenly shared among participants, and activity is aimed at achieving both economic and non-economic benefits.

Figure 10. From Chase and Grubinger 2014, page 61, figure 4.3. They argue that restructuring relationships towards horizontal paradigms can help us achieve more sustainable social and economic values in the food system, rather than emphasizing price and profit, which often happens within vertical relationships structures. This can combat the anonymity and distancing that happens within the current industrialized, global food system.

"persons" and not "individuals," and to de-center profit as the foundational value upon which relationships are made and maintained. Non-economic benefits can be better achieved and focused on in these horizontal networks, although they are often difficult to maintain in large part because many are inexperienced with the way they function and have not developed the interpersonal skills needed to sustain them.

Although the concept of "community" overlaps in some ways with the terms "society" and "civil society," it is more closely and immediately felt than these two terms. In the context of this chapter, I distinguish community from society and civil society in such a way that

community refers to grassroots organizing and neighborhood residents. When those residents organize into social movements, that can then be considered civil society. Society, on the other hand, refers to larger groupings of people on regional, state, or national scales. As Williams writes, "Community can be the warmly persuasive word to describe an existing set of relationships, or the warmly persuasive word to describe an alternative set of relationships" (1976: 76). The term "community" is applied in both ways to urban agriculture, both by food producers and those who study them. In fact, both meanings are often evoked simultaneously to describe both a set of existing relationships that the speaker desires to have shift toward something different, perhaps closer or more meaningful or more reciprocal. Therefore, one of the most interesting elements of the idea of "community" is that it is both descriptive and aspirational at the same time, and in invoking the concept of "community" one is in the act of creating or petitioning for that sense of community and belonging (see Anderson 1983 and Collins 2010). By expressing the need for community, in other words, one is also in the act of creating community, even if just for a fleeting moment. It is thus important to note that when a group of people are engaged in similar actives, such as farming or gardening, especially regularly, and these feelings of community are often discussed, not only is "community" being enacted by the very act of engaging in similar activities regularly, it is also being co-created by a metacognizant talk about the need or desire for greater "community." In other words, social bonds are created by talking about the desire for more social bonds.

These two meanings of "community" were very frequently evoked during my fieldwork with urban agriculture practitioners in San Diego and Tijuana. Indeed, it would come up quite naturally and unsolicited, as there was an intrinsic and implicit understanding that the reason for

engaging in urban agriculture in the first place was for the purpose of creating shared community and a sense of belonging. Without that, it was merely a gardening practice with no association to a sense of food justice or security, much less sovereignty. Again, the concepts of food justice and sovereignty have at their core the desire to create greater autonomy using democratic principles of fair and just governance, so the concept of "community" is intrinsically linked with these visions of alternative food production, procurement, and distribution. Elle, an urban agriculture advocate who worked for UC San Diego's Center for Community Health, said that, "Community means a lot of different things to me, but most consistently it means a sense of belonging and acceptance." And Janice, the manager of Mundo Gardens, referred to community as "village values," which draws a direct connection to the idea of community being the enactment of shared values as well as holding "the village" or community in utmost regard. Again, this use of "community" both describes a set of relations as well as points to the desire for greater connection through community.

It is interesting and important to also note, as Williams does, that "unlike all other terms of social organization (*state*, *nation*, *society*, etc.) [community] seems never to be used unfavourably, and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing term" (76). Community is therefore an ideal, perhaps utopian goal, toward which the urban agriculture movement and its practitioners orient their agricultural and place-making energies. This brings with it a political flare, as well, and in fact using community as a framework to build collective power around some kind of goal may be essential. As Sbicca writes, these goals can "include the desires of people constituted by a place, by identity based on a shared social position, by a desire or an ideology such as social justice or environmental sustainability, and/or by a common

practice, culture, economy, or form of politics" (2018: 182). All of these goals manifest throughout the urban agriculture movement, and the framing of community helps to build political power behind these efforts. Patricia Hill Collins helps us to see that community is a political construct that can help elucidate social inequalities:

> No longer seen as naturally occurring, apolitical spaces to which one retreats to escape the pressures of modern life, communities of all sorts now constitute sites of political engagement and contestation. The new politics of community reveals how the idea of community constitutes an elastic political construct that holds a variety of contradictory meanings and around which diverse social practices occur. (2010: 7)

Community is at once, then, political, aspirational, and imbued with the values of those who comprise the group. The formation of community itself helps to push towards those values and goals, dialectically forming community while it is being formed.

At the same time, however, there was the idea of "community" as a term that was being co-opted by those outside particular social spheres. Ariel, a young white Jewish woman a big advocate for food justice and urban agriculture and who worked for the County of San Diego's Health and Human Services Agency, said that this was a common occurrence in regional government. She said:

> I really like that you asked this question, because I always get this sense—and I've asked this question of other people—when we talk about "community," it feels like we're saying "these other people who aren't here to speak for themselves." And I would prefer for us to co-opt the term, and thinking of ourselves as being part of that. Because I think that's when we truly move from like a savior position, or othering position. We move from charity to mutual aid, right? The whole notion of mutual aid is, I'm not giving, because for me to pass this on to you, it's like I'm giving to get, because I'm not better than you, or I might be in your situation at some point in the future. It is this more mutual relationship. So, when I hear the term "community," and I used it quite a bit in our discussion already, a lot of times it makes me think of this amalgamous, anonymous group of people, probably mostly like people of color, low income

> people, that we haven't necessarily talked to, but that we know have all of these problems facing them. What I would love for "community" to be is centered around all of us, and when we talk about it we're talking about ourselves as well. Because if things are better for me, things are better for you. You know what I mean? If things are better for you, then they're better for me, too. It's not an either/or, it's an "and."

In this, Ariel is pointing to a big issue within many organizing spaces, but also the food justice movement in San Diego (and to some extent in Tijuana, as well). This issue is that of people working outside of particular groups—in the urban agriculture space this often manifested as people working for the City or County of San Diego, universities, and food-oriented non-profits—seeing "community" as pointing to a space that they do not occupy, but that others who are not like them do occupy. "Community" in this way was used to refer to low-income BIPOC folks who were in need of help to get out of their negative life situations, whether that was referring to housing inequities, lack of food or healthcare access, low education, or any other number of negative social indicators. As Ariel made clear, this kind of mentality—the "othering" of "community"—is unfortunate and ultimately unhelpful. It is interesting to note that those who actually practiced urban agriculture—the farmers and gardeners working in the soil—did not use "community" in this way. The outside and charitable role of government, academia, and non-profits elicited this outsider perspective, encouraging a top-down approach and the concomitant elitism that often follows. But as Ariel critiques this approach, it is apparent that divisive forces within those spheres are pushing back against this hierarchical approach and attempting to instead see themselves as part of the community of people deserving of better access to fresh food.

The concept of community means something different than it does for those with greater

access to privileged resources and information (i.e. those who largely benefit from the larger political-economic structures), particularly for communities marginalized by the larger structural forces of neoliberal capitalism, an industrial, corporatized food system, and racial and ethnic violence and oppression. Within these underserved groups, there exists a kind of resilience and ingenuity in asserting their own visions for the cities and neighborhoods in which they live, especially in the face of impersonal, imperial municipal planning processes like that in San Diego (Karjanen 2016).

The anthropologist Rhoda Halperin discusses strategies utilized by working-class people in Cincinnati's East End to deal with neighborhood issues in her book *Practicing Community: Class, Culture, and Power in an Urban Neighborhood* (1998). In this work, Halperin serves as both scholar and advocate for the communities of African American and White and Black Appalachian families. She theorizes that the concepts of "householding" and "equivalences" have a large role in these blue-collar community strategies. Householding refers to the "material provisioning process at the margins of state systems…[F]amilies combine their resources (cash, land, labor, and capital) and allocate these resources in intricate ways among members of extended kin networks" (125). Examples of this that Halperin highlights include sharing electricity by running an extension cord from one apartment, whose power has been shut off, to another nearby apartment. This is an informal and predominantly non-capitalist internal economy that provisions and maintains kin and neighborhood groups through a circular flow of goods, resources, and obligations (126). Equivalencies, on the other hand, describe "how much and what kind of a particular good or service (broadly defined) is appropriate (that is, expected) in a given context" (139). Both householding and equivalences are survival mechanisms for

marginalized communities. They also constitute the basis for a communities' resistance to domination by outside forces while reinforcing its struggle for local autonomy.

In these ways, Halperin demonstrates how East Enders sustain a community and identity against the duress of urbanism and capitalism, as written about by Lefebvre and Harvey, through everyday practices. "[C]aring for children and the elderly, providing work, helping in times of crisis, granting favors, passing along information, or lending support" Halperin writes, "represent the essence of East End life and culture" (2). Livelihood strategies of householding and equivalencies define community life and members to each other around the institutions of extended family, church, and neighborhood. These patterns operate outside the purview of greater society, and remain largely uninteresting to that larger society until the spaces in which such informal economies operate become valued for their urban development and elite appropriation potential, as happened in Cincinnati's East End. This also continues to occur in San Diego and Tijuana, where communities I conducted research with reiterated over and again that they were not going to wait for local governments to provide adequate food sourcing strategies and resources for them, but instead were intent on creating those spaces themselves through urban agricultural pursuits. For example, Nancy Helt, chairwoman of the Master Gardener Association of San Diego County's community garden program and a white woman, said that in working at community gardens, 'People learn to appreciate the work that goes into our food. There's a big renewal in home gardening and community gardening. People want to know where their food is coming from." Walt Sandford, the executive director of the San Diego Community Garden Network (SDCGN) and a Black man, added to this conversation, talking not just about the importance of access to healthy food, especially in low-income areas, but also the community

aspect of the gardens that is a draw for many: “There are a lot of lonely people out there,” he said (Schimitschek 2017). Unfortunately, however, in creating these agricultural spaces gardeners and farmers end up inviting the very government intervention they are often organizing against, resulting in opportunities for cooptation, hybridization of grassroots and public sector collaborations, and loss of more radically-leaning political values.

The Role of Community in Urban Agriculture

Following from Halperin’s emphasis on everyday practices among marginalized communities as the basis for community resistance and autonomy, Monica White writes about similar processes among Black farmers in Detroit (2010, 2011a, 2011b). White also helps us bring the conversation of everyday practices and community resistance back to the topic of urban agriculture, since she analyzes community building and political agency through the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (DBCFSN). In White’s estimation, farming is a strategy of resistance against structural forces that have left Detroit food insecure. Farming and gardening, therefore, are not only mechanisms for producing food, they help to build community by transforming the social, economic, and physical environment. Akin to Halperin’s work, White surveys this community-based model for increasing access to healthy food as well as community improvement through everyday practices rather than through mobilization against power structures. This emphasizes a revival of the city of Detroit, albeit mired in racism and poverty. For White, the work of Black farmers “is a resistance strategy to re-create a sense of community around intergenerational engagement, exercise, and better-quality food…. The result of their work is a visible example of community-based transformation, where abandoned city spaces

become mechanisms of food delivery and improved access to healthy food through the processes of self-determination, empowerment, and cooperative economics" (2011a: 406). This work by Black farmers is motivated by the belief that successful community change is led by leaders from within its own community. In this way, farmers wanted to be agents of their own transformation, thereby creating new urban spaces and a new vision of a transformed Detroit (409).

In White's work, integral to this focus on community-based transformative autonomy are the concepts of agency and strategy. White defines agency as a "social actors' ability to create and enact options necessary to shape their future" (409). Connected to the concept of value and meaning that will be discussed later, how people conceptualize agency and the strategies they adopt reflect their beliefs about whether they are able to influence events in their own lives based on the information available to them and on their interpretation of that information. Within social movement theory, the concepts of agency and strategy, according to some scholars, is underdeveloped, with these notions not considered as analytical categories in their own right with theoretical dimensions and time-based social manifestations (Morris 2000; Emirbayer and Mische 1998). How, then can urban agriculture be seen as a resistance strategy and social vehicle for self-determination and community building?

Some ideas about agency can help us to approximate an answer to this question. The theory of constructionism, for instance, explores the ways in which "movement organizations and actors are actively engaged in the production and maintenance of meaning for constituents, antagonists, and bystanders or observers" (Snow and Benford 1999: 136). This production and maintenance of meaning goes back to the notion of values, which propels individuals in collectivities to engage in social organizing. Another theorization of agency, this time pushed

forward by Foucault, explores the "origin of agency" (Foucault 1982). In this, Foucault attempts to find the origin of agency by linking the nature of agency to desired outcomes. In order for individuals to resist, they must initiate a specific type of agency based on desired outcomes that demand a deviation from the hegemony, create new identities, and require new kinds of social relations. Foucault explains that the capacity that defines an actor's agency is a product of the operations of power or structure that exist. These circumstances of power and structure ensure a subject's subordination, but simultaneously create the climate for producing a resistant identity. In other words, in the midst of daunting power structures and differentials, contestation is still a possibility and in fact is part of the process or part of having power structures at all.

The second concept of strategy that White describes as integral to understanding collective action is often seen as an enactment of agency. It is defined as "an explicit guide to future behavior" (Mintzberg 1987: 67) or the development of a plan or set of innovative ideas for "performing different activities from rivals' or performing similar activities in different ways" to achieve predetermined objectives (Porter 1996: 62). According to White, it is a "stream of choices" made up of strategic goals and processes. Strategic processes focus on the ways that strategies are created and applied, whereas strategic goals consist of conscious and rational decisions, which result in both intended and unintended consequences, including the ability to manage and control resources and priorities (Salancik and Pfeffer 1977). This emphasizes the desire of "subunits to use their power to influence organizational decisions in their own favor, particularly when their own survival is threatened by the scarcity of critical resources" (17). In other words, strategy can be conceptualized as revolutionary since it is an action antithetical to existing behavioral norms (Hamel 1996).

This analysis of strategy and agency, and how they intermingle and overlap, is essential for White's analysis of how urban agriculture can be seen as a resistance strategy for Black urban farmers. It is therefore essential for my understanding of urban agriculture as a site for the act of place-making—since place is an action, and in this case, an act of community-based resistance—and as a site for communities to negotiate individual and collective value and meaning. This negotiation is made possible through the concepts of agency and strategy that make up the social movement that is urban agriculture. "From a social movement perspective," White writes, "the structural impoverishment of the Detroit community and its environment would appear to diminish organizational capacities for mobilization. Even the more culturally attuned theories are insufficient to explain urban farming not only as a reactive response to deprivation and injustice but also as a proactive activity aimed at self-determination and community building" (2011a: 410). This work is also important for understanding the racial and ethnic dimensions of urban agriculture, since in the United States it is a movement largely dominated by young White people. For anyone who identifies as non-White and is engaged in these efforts, then, there becomes a push toward the right to urban agriculture (to take from Lefebvre and Harvey's "the right to the city")—this is a democratic push for proportionate representation within the urban agriculture movement.

Blomley (2004) explains that urban restructuring is ruled by the hegemony of property ownership and has resulted in the erosion of public spaces since the 1970s. But this hegemonic rule has not gone unchallenged. Urban agriculture, as one manifestation of the contestation against the erosion of public spaces and, to some extent, the hegemony of property ownership, is a small attempt to recapture the sense of the commons. In this way, it is an "alternative political

project" and an "actually existing commons," which refers to "live relics of the ideal of the commons; they are never complete and perfect and may even have components that contradict the ideal type. Nevertheless, even in the face of pervasive neoliberal ideology and practices, 'alternatives do exist' and they pave the road to new politics and another possible world" (Eizenberg 2012: 764-765; see also De Angelis 2003). Other examples of "actually existing commons" include collective ownership of housing designated for, and managed by, poor urban population in the form of limited equity cooperatives (Saegert and Benitez 2005), workers' cooperatives (DeFilippis 2004), and community gardens. In this way, urban agriculture is a way for people to reenvision new modes of production and ways of being that work outside of the capitalist framework. "The task at hand," Eizenberg writes, "is to re-envision the commons outside of the public-private dichotomy and introduce the social, cultural, and political practices that allow new possibilities, thus reconstituting the commons as an object of thought. The commons can then serve as a platform for envisioning and developing an alternative framework for social relations and social practices" (2012: 766). What emerges from this is the urban commons, which is characterized as being produced; offering a set of livelihood qualities over which rights are negotiated; non-commodified fulfillment of social needs, necessitating communities (De Angelis 2003) to operate them through collaboration, cooperation, and communication rather than through private interest and competition; and providing the opportunity to obtain social wealth and to organize social production (Eizenberg 2012: 766).

This, of course, contributes to collective efforts towards Lefebvre and Harvey's idea of the "right to the city," as was discussed in the previous chapter. Collins astutely recognizes the challenge in achieving this collective right, however, and helps us to see how community in

grassroots organizing—such as through urban agriculture—can help to reach that radical potential:

> Under neoliberal policies, individuals may have formal rights, yet these individual rights may be rendered meaningless in the context of group subordination. Within disadvantaged groups, individuals who lack material resources or the capacity to exercise their formal rights often only have each other. In such situations, a self-oriented political language of individual rights may be far less useful than a language of community that potentially provides a functional statement of collective political demand. (2010: 16).

Coming together in community therefore fulfills an intrinsic need for a sense of belonging, a physical need to create a commons, and in so doing creates collective power.[21] William Domhoff describes collective power as concerning "the capacity of a group to realize its common goals… It is what makes possible the existence of distributive power: if the group didn't have the collective power to grow and produce, there wouldn't be anything worth fighting over" (2005). Collective power is therefore needed to achieve the outcomes of social, economic, and political revolution. Patricia Collins adds to this and ties it to the concept of community, saying that "Because the term community serves as a core construct for organizing a variety of social groups for very different ends, it is central to the symbolic and organizational structures of intersecting systems of power" (2010: 10). Like other collective efforts to create and challenge power, the social movement of practicing urban agriculture is an important driver for collective power.

Manifestations of Community in Tijuana Urban Agriculture

White's view of urban farming as a resistance strategy focuses on its use of land to create

[21] Using Bertrand Russell's insight that, "Power may be defined as the production of intended effects" (1938: 35).

community spaces.[22] In this way, space is also seen as a form of resistance, or rather, the control and creation of space as an act of resistance. Just as for the racial and ethnic dimensions of urban agriculture, community-controlled space is a step toward more democratic, representative, and autonomous processes. Especially in a food system in which an individual's or community's engagement with the system is characterized by a lack of control, resistance manifests in the form of a push to gain control over how, where, and when food is produced, distributed, and consumed. White speaks to this when she writes that "Restoring the earth and transforming the food system is an example of what can happen when the community controls the social institutions with which it comes into contact, as in community-controlled education, community-based policing, and the like" (412). The farm is therefore a tangible model of collective work, self-reliance, and political agency. Urban agriculture then becomes an example of how community-based, autonomous activity can function. This means that food and food production, although important factors in the drive for urban agriculture, still maintain a background position when juxtaposed to the community-oriented effects, benefits, and resistances that result from gardening and farming activities. In other words, it is less about the food, and more about the intangible factors of community, resilience, and sovereignty. As White writes it, gardening is an issue of survival, agency, and lack of dependency for minoritized communities, and the production of food is almost incidental (2011a: 415).

Both an example of this and a challenge to the centrality of land come from Ricardo Arana, director of Cultiva Ya! in Tijuana and a middle-aged Latine man. Cultiva Ya! is an organization dedicated to educating the people of Tijuana about healthy living through local,

[22] As was discussed in more depth in Chapter 2.

small-scale food production. Ricardo explained:

> We've learned from over 10 years cultivating in this zone that it's really easy [to have your own garden]. Fortunately in Tijuana we can grow year-round, the climate for that is really advantageous. Of course there are certain cultivars that are easier to grow at certain times of the year, but that is also one of the changes we have to make—that is, we're accustomed to have tomatoes all year, or papaya, when these are clear examples of vegetables or fruits that we should only be consuming in the time of year they grow, because if you don't you are eating chemicals they use to ripen them…
>
> It's really easy, you can have your own garden in a pot, in containers, boxes—*you don't need to have land to do it*, and that's what we teach. We have reduced the time one needs to prepare down to one or two days. If you go with us to our workshops, you leave with the tools you need to start [a garden].
>
> That's one part, one half of what's important. The other half how to get people involved in growing food: your family, your community, your school. Because it can't be a solitary hobby: growing food is a social phenomenon, a collective phenomenon, and that's what we teach—not just the technical side of what to grow, when and how you do it—that's important, but the other half is how to get people involved, that's what we do in our workshops. (from Villicaña 2019; emphasis added)

Ricardo makes clear here the importance of growing one's own food for own's health, but importantly that it is not something that is ultimately an individual pursuit. Instead, it is a social and collective "phenomenon," one not done in isolation but in community with others. And pushing against the significance of land from White's analysis, Ricardo is clearly saying that land is perhaps less important than the concept of community and the mere fact of growing one's own food. Because many people in Tijuana (and San Diego, for that matter) do not have access to large swaths of land, Cultiva Ya! makes explicit that one can start to learn about and grow one's own food from even just a few pots and other containers, and that one can learn how to do it quickly. This lowers the barrier to entry for many, making the story they are sharing with Tijuanenses more palatable and approachable. In fact, I believe in some ways this even

strengthens and reinforces White's argument that the "farm"—if we expand its definition out to any space where people are growing food, whether in containers or in the ground—is a radical political space of collective work, self-reliance, and political agency. Ricardo is certainly arguing for the same.

Access to land for communal food growing is, in my observations, even more scarce in Tijuana than it is in San Diego. Of course many vacant, undeveloped spaces exist in the Tijuana landscape, but rarely is that space converted into community gardens as happens with more frequency in San Diego. This is in large part due to issues with topography (many of these vacant spaces are in small valleys or hillsides, which are difficult to cultivate; see Illustration 8), contamination from trash and other pollutants, and lack of water infrastructure. With a steady population growth rate of at least 2% over the past two decades, and up to 6% in the decades before that, Tijuana's more than two million residents have experienced very rapid urbanization. Mixed with factors of industrialization and globalization, Tijuana's growth rate has surpassed that of the national growth rate in México for the past three decades. This has resulted in serious problems with the scarcity of potable water, residual water contamination, and wind and water erosion as residential, industrial, and commercial zoning areas have been built out.

This means that less common, larger-scale urban agriculture do exist in Tijuana, but within protected spaces like that at Ecoparque, which covers several acres—all enclosed—and is subsidized by El Colegio de la Frontera Norte (Colef), or educational agricultural sites at the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, where they have high tunnels over food growing demonstration sites (see Illustration 9). More often, however, urban agriculture occurs on *patios*, the developed spaces within one's enclosed household but that are open to the elements (see

Illustration 8. An example of what "open space" looks like in many areas of Tijuana—the topography is not entirely conducive to urban agriculture (at least without knowledge of terracing systems) and there are issues of contamination due to toxins from pollutants and debris.

Illustrations 10, 11, and 12). Ricardo's emphasis on growing food in containers fits the landscape and parameters of urban agriculture here, then.

In a TEDx Tijuana talk he gave in 2015, Ricardo further platformed his view of what urban food production can do for community within the context of urban infrastructure in Tijuana, beyond providing fresh and healthy food. He said:

> More than food, we are throwing parties and get-togethers where our local communities get to celebrate the production of food, and celebrate the magic of living in community and of growing something…

Illustration 9. A high tunnel where educational and practical food growing happens at the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California. Here, open space is in greater abundance than many places in Tijuana.

> With whom do you want to build, plant a new communitarian culture? With your family members, your friends, in the communities in which you live and with those you live with? With whom? With what kind of talents and skills do you want to participate in this society, that's going to produce and consume in responsible ways?…In community, everyone [should be] doing what they like for a much greater end goal….
>
> I sow in community! [Siembro en comunidad!
> My talent cultivates! Cultiva con mi talento!
> I harvest more than food! Cosecho más que alimentos!]
> (Arana 2015)

Here Ricardo argues explicitly that food growing is about more than food. In short, it is about

Illustration 10. A developing urban agriculture site in a *patio* in the Divina Providencia barrio on the west side of Tijuana. This was a community-led effort at improving community health, and later joined forces with the University of California San Diego to help build out their infrastructure.

cultivating oneself and cultivating community. Sbicca writes about this expansion of the idea of food within food justice organizing, saying: "Expanding our view of food justice requires decoupling food justice from the overly simplistic idea that food itself is the site of struggle. Food politics that first identify the root causes of problems and then work to tackle these problems will then transform people's relationship with food." (Sbicca 2018: 4). The root causes, then, according to Arana and many within the Tijuana-San Diego urban agriculture movement, are a lack of community and a lack of self-awareness. The antidote is to build a sense of

Illustration 11. Food growing in the same *patio* in Divina Providencia.

community and one's place within that community, and growing food can both help to do that work and change one's relationship to food in the process.

A unique challenge to the movement and a sense of community south of the border, which came up in my work and conversations with urban agriculturalists in Tijuana, was the role of social media. Although a key tool in building a sense of unity across the movement, especially in San Diego, social media also proved destructive to the collectivism and community sought after by so many, in large part because of its individualist nature. That is, the fight to become an "influencer" around urban agriculture meant that the movement became more about

Illustration 12. In Tijuana's Zona Norte, just a few blocks from the U.S.-México border, this rooftop *patio* urban agriculture site was being developed at El Comedor, a space of refuge for migrants and refugees.

showmanship than collectively building new food systems. And not only that, but the standards by which social media rewards content creators meant that people who do not actually know much about growing plants and food could still rise to the top and become important figures in the movement. This because they gained a sizable following and created catchy content, not because of their knowledge and experience. Both Ricardo Arana, with Cultiva Ya!, and Samuel Perez, the Urban Agriculture Coordinator at Ecoparque, described this phenomenon.

Live Well Example

In August 2018 I attended a "community conversation" for the County of San Diego's "Live Well Neighborhoods" pilot program. Here, community members were invited to the one space in Southeastern San Diego big enough to hold a couple of hundred people: the Educational Cultural Complex in Mountain View. "Live Well San Diego" has been the county's attempt over the last 12 years[23] to tackle profligate health and wellbeing issues throughout the county, mainly by partnering with over 500 local community organizations and non-profits to hold workshops highlighting "healthy" habits that "support positive choices," such as exercise, eating better, receiving important vaccinations, and getting blood pressure and depression screenings. Other goals of the Live Well program are to improve the quality and efficiency of social services "delivery" systems, from the county government to residents; pursuing policy and environmental changes; and "increasing understanding" of what it means to "live well" among county employees and program partners.

The impact of these efforts is of course gathered through "key indicators," taken consistently before and during the inauguration of the Live Well program. There are 10 key indicators and they fall into five categories: Health (*life expectancy* and *quality of life* [defined as "percent of the population sufficiently healthy to live independently," but not including those in nursing homes or other institutions]), Knowledge (*education* [defined as the "percent of the population aged 25 and over with at least a high school diploma or GED"]), Standard of Living

[23] With, of course, antecedents from years before. For example, Community Health Improvement Partners (CHIP)—which was a reoccurring supporting organization for food and agriculture-oriented city- and county-wide events I attended during fieldwork, through these event's connection to human health—released a San Diego Community Health Needs Assessment in 2011 that highlighted the importance of key health indicators and community priority-setting. The Live Well program was created in part in reaction to this needs assessment. (CHIP 2011)

(*unemployment rate* and *income* [defined as "percent of the population spending less than one-third of their income on housing"]), Community (*security - overall crime rate* [defined as "number of crimes (all crimes) per 100,000 people], *physical environment - air quality* ["percent of days air quality was rated as unhealthy for sensitive populations], and *built environment* ["percent of population living with a 10 minute walk (quarter mile) of a part or community space]), and Social (*vulnerable populations - food insecurity* ["percent of population with income of 200% or less of the federal poverty level, who have experienced food insecurity"] and *community involvement - volunteerism* ["percent of population who volunteer"]). These "key indicators" demonstrate the quantification of what it means to live a good life, or what it means to live well.[24] These are valiant efforts to categorize human experience, and distill what "living well" means to its core components. Without these measures—some of which could be considered rather progressive in their inclusion, such as access to park space and volunteerism (which, to me, is a somewhat odd inclusion at the end)—funding would not be received to put on the programs that Live Well sponsored, much less to build the enormous structure that razed a previous, long-standing community center called the Tubman-Chavez Community Center in the heart of Southeastern San Diego.[25]

Much of the conversation that I was privy to during fieldwork regarding the Live Well program was centered around the destruction of the Tubman-Chavez Center to build the Southeastern Live Well Center. In response to pushback around this kind of wanton development

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[24] We could make an interesting, and perhaps depressing, comparison here to the *buen vivir* or *sumak kawsay* movement in South America. The epistemological chasm between the way this is theorized in Latin America versus in neoliberal San Diego is astounding. But I'll leave it at that.

[25] Built in 1995 and named after Harriet Tubman and César Chávez, a meaningful ode to the powerful social activists and the fusion of Black and Latine populations in SESD.

and the imposition of San Diego County "helpful" surveillance in a very busy part of SESD, Live Well leaders decided to keep the original sign of the previous community center and pay homage to it through a small exhibit housed in the main lobby corridor of the new Live Well Center. At the time this struck me as pandering, but it was obvious to all that this wave of power and wealth infusion from on-high was not going to be stopped. Trying to resist it was futile, so although there was some loud push-back at first, it was quickly overridden. At some point during my fieldwork, I noticed on my frequent commute to a garden space just past Euclid Avenue that the Tubman-Chavez Community Center was slowly, and then entirely, flattened. As I write this—now 4.5 years after the community conversation I took part in at the ECC—the huge Live Well Center is in the final stages of construction, and only the memory of the Tubman-Chavez Community Center remains.[26]

Returning back to that community conversation around "Live Well Neighborhoods," it slowly became apparent to me that was going to be less "community" oriented than I had imagined. My vision was that hundreds of residents from certain neighborhoods of SESD (the Live Well program was on a tour, and only several neighborhoods that comprise the conglomerate known as "Southeastern San Diego" were brought together at a time) would crowd into a space and be very passionate about what was needed in their communities. What I saw was the opposite. The large room, capable of holding hundreds, held maybe 40 people. The Live Well employees running the conversation gave an introduction highlighting the program, the key indicators of health and wellbeing, and their vision for the future Live Well Center. They were there to get "community input" on what the goals of the Live Well Neighborhoods program

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[26] For more on this, see the website: https://www.livewellsd.org/content/livewell/home/community/live-well-communities/southeastern-live-well-center/SELWCInput.html

should be, and "how to impact a community from cradle to career." Through the conversations and questions, I slowly gathered that in fact this already small "community" conversation was much further from my aspirations—not only was there a much smaller turnout than I thought, which seemed to deflate the energy and impact of such a get-together, but most of those in the audience were not exactly community members: they were the *partners* for the Live Well program. Although I was a new transplant to the area, and had no sort of historical ties to SESD, I was in the odd position of being, in some ways, more representative of the "community" in question than most of those there *meant* to represent the community. This, of course, depends on how you define "community," but place-based, geographic location seems to be an important factor in my mind. The audience members split up into groups based on their interest in discussing factors related to the key indicator categories: health, knowledge, standard of living, community, and social. The last two groups—community and social—actually combined into one group because there were so few interested in these categories. I had chosen to partake in the conversation with the "social" group. Most of those in attendance were interested in the "health" conversation, where they did in fact talk about the role of community gardens and farmers' markets in augmenting community health.

Through the small-group conversation, it became clear that this "community" Live Well was trying to help was not very clearly defined. Of course, Southeastern San Diego had fairly clear geographic boundaries, based on the jurisdictional delineations between small neighborhoods—Mount Hope, Mountain View, Shelltown, Encanto, etc. Using that geographic logic, one would think that this "community" Live Well sought to help were all those who lived within these boundaries. And yet, at this "community conversation," only a handful of people

actually represented this type of engagement with the area. In our small “community/social” based group, the partners (non-profits and NGOs that partnered with Live Well) were asking the three residents in the group—myself included—about the neighborhoods and the needs in the area. It struck me as supremely odd that here we were, meant to have a “community conversation,” and yet the community had not shown up. Although an already small crowd, the small gathering of people was largely deceptive—those attending did not know the area or have a stake in the matter, except that they were hoping to pump non-profit grant money into the space and wanted to know how. At least there was that. They wanted to know how and were asking.

This example is emblematic of the kinds of ways the idea of community was whitewashed and appropriated, but also utilized for helpful things within underserved spaces of the city. The next example comes from an organization that also works in this area of San Diego, and struggles with similar, fluid conceptions of what community means and to whom it refers.

Project New Village Case Study

In my ethnographic work with a San Diego based non-profit called Project New Village, these concepts of place-making and community-creation were front-and-center. What also became apparent were the ways social values based in community and place tremendously conflicted with political-economic values that instead emphasized capital and development. Project New Village is a very small non-profit and the brainchild of N. Diane Moss, a middle-aged Black woman from Compton but who later transplanted to San Diego after attending college at UC San Diego. Ms. Moss has been living in Southeastern San Diego for more than 30 years, and created Project New Village in an effort to encourage collaborative efforts to increase

social wellness. This has manifested, among other initiatives, in engaging healthy eating and urban agriculture as ways to revitalize and organize communities of color. The board of Project New Village is largely Black-led and emphasizes people of color in their leadership.

In 2011, after advocating the year before, along with other food justice-oriented organizations, for fewer city regulatory restrictions on things like beekeeping, having chickens and goats, and establishing community gardens, Project New Village established the Mt. Hope Community Garden in the Southeastern neighborhood of Mt. Hope. Southeastern San Diego is known locally as one of the most socially and economically disadvantaged areas in the county, as well as one of the most violent. The median income in the area is just under $40,000, which is just above half of the county's median income. Almost a third of the population lives below the federal poverty line, and 21% of households in the area receive SNAP (food stamp) assistance. And with these statistics come high rates of chronic disease and childhood obesity. The late Project New Village board member Robert Tambuzi said this of Southeastern San Diego just as PNV was laying out the plans for Mt. Hope Community Garden:

> We have several challenges [in our area], and one of those challenges is that, a lot of times—because we live in an area where a lot of our people live below the poverty line, and are struggling to make everyday existence a reality for them and their families—a lot of times people don't have time to stop and think about what they're putting into their mouth. We have a proliferation of fast food restaurants—we've actually been called a 'food swamp' because we have so many fast food, greasy food restaurants. So we want to take empty lots that are in Southeastern San Diego and actually make them green growing places that will produce healthy, affordable fruits and produce.

Project New Village has stated their desire to change the narrative of this space from one of lack and hardship, to one of resilience and self-determination. That is, rather than highlighting a *deficit model* that focuses strictly on disadvantages, they want to uplift an *asset model* that

prioritizes the cultural and social strengths that communities of color can bring to urban agriculture, health, and food justice (Sbicca 2018). Project New Village has also recently expanded its geographical and visionary purview to include the surrounding areas of Lemon Grove, Barrio Logan, and National City. They informally dubbed this the "Corridor of Color," since it boasts one of the largest concentrations of people of color in the county. For them, they want Southeastern San Diego to be "a community of active neighborhoods supporting and contributing to the health, wealth and well-being of community members" (from the PNV website).

In order for this to happen, Project New Village serves as a catalyst for local residents, businesses, academics, and government officials to work together to build stronger neighborhoods, improve quality of life, and stimulate collective investment in better health. They envision strengthening communities through the development of beneficial neighborhood food options. When I was conducting fieldwork, they ran two farmers' markets in the area and sold produce grown at Mt. Hope Community Garden. Improving fresh food access for them is part of a broad-based movement to build social equity.

Project New Village has embraced urban farming and community engagement as their primary tools to improve food access, food security, and environmental wellness. They use a social determinant of health model which views food equity and self-determination as key factors for achieving better health. The "Good Food District" is their model for transformation, which aims to elevate and integrate urban farms, community gardens, and food-related businesses as key components of community revitalization in food insecure neighborhoods. This initiative is aimed at supporting "a strong sense of community and infrastructure for an improved

neighborhood-based food ecosystem" by connecting "Southeastern San Diego residents to the land; to reclaim social, environmental and economic health in our neighborhoods."[27] The next phase of their work focuses on wealth-building activities that strengthen existing small businesses in the area and identify new food-related businesses. A big part of this work includes plans to build a multi-story mixed use, food-oriented development on the site of the current community garden.

Since the implementation of Mt. Hope Community Garden, Project New Village had an agreement with the City of San Diego to lease the land and use it for a community garden (Florido 2010). But early in 2018 a sign was put up at the garden indicating that the land was up for sale after decades of vacancy and garden use. At first it seemed it was time to move the garden to another spot, but encouraged by board members with interests in development, Project New Village set out on the road toward developing a proposal to acquire the land. After an arduous bidding process, they eventually won the bid at City Council and have established escrow thanks to various funders who have decided to support the project. After the $20,000 down payment to the City, Project New Village needed to fundraise and acquire financing for a bit more than $600,000 to acquire the land. The Conservation Fund, a national non-profit, gave Project New Village an incentivized loan on the condition that they could raise $100,000 in cash and pledges. The small nonprofit achieved this goal and was able to cover the larger sum for land acquisition through the Conservation Fund loan (Brandeis 2019). Now having celebrated being the owners of the land (with the Conservation Fund as lien holders, essentially) in early 2020, they have turned their sights toward other options to fund the very expensive development of the

[27] This is drawn from a Project New Village grant proposal.

site.

This development, dubbed the "Good Food District Hub," is planned to feature 20,000 square feet of commercial space including a local health food market and prepared local food area, as well as office space for holistic healing, a community kitchen to help cultivate local food entrepreneurs, and 15,000 square feet for low-income senior housing. Elements of urban agriculture will also remain, although the existing garden will need to be relocated, to another spot hopefully nearby. As they see it, the development project addresses the structural, systemic underpinnings of racial inequities, and the capacities needed to support change efforts led by those most affected by racism. As Tambuzi has put it, "We need to call racism for what it is. We need to get to a point where people talk about it. The good food system is a point of entry for discussions about institutional racism." Furthermore, Project New Village board and advisory members have written that:

> Indicators of success for the Good Food District Hub are community-driven priorities and include: increased awareness of the value of neighborhood-based food ecosystems as an alternative to the dominance of the corporate food industry; increased stakeholder participation in active processes that inform and influence decision-making toward more healthy and economically stable lifestyles for residents; increased awareness and involvement from people of color in the food justice movement to advance better access to good food and equitable food production practices; increased demand for locally-sourced food through redirecting purchasing priorities; increased influence to change food policies and practices that contribute to disparities; increased production and marketplace development assistance to historically underserved farmers/socially disadvantaged growers to improve local farm viability; and changes in food production and post-harvest practices, informed by neighborhood demand.

However, Project New Village board and advisory members have engaged in discussions about how to avoid inviting gentrification to the area through both their urban agricultural initiatives and the Good Food District Hub. Discussions about the local healthy food market, in particular,

have raised concerns about who the market will cater to and whether those living in the area will be interested in shopping there, or even be able to afford it. The financial viability and sustainability of the development hinges on economic realities of making enough money through sales at the market and prepped food areas, and through rent. By necessity, this means that customers need to come from both within the community and outside of it in order to generate enough sales. These discussions have not led to easy answers or conclusions, but the tension between "staying true" to their values and moving forward with an inherently capitalist, potentially gentrifying project, is always present.

So despite their radical orientations, Project New Village is faced with the economic realities of living and working within neoliberal capitalist structures with respect to organizational needs in governance and fundraising, and ongoing city and business efforts to redevelop and gentrify these majority Black and Latine areas. In this case, Project New Village opted to resolve ongoing threats of eviction by buying the land. In doing so, some radical values were compromised as a sacrifice for the longevity of the organization, and landownership became more clearly central to their work, signaling a particular stance on land and capital. I frame this in terms of value, and how idealist values of moving away from larger capitalist frameworks is necessarily fraught with the realities of living within a neoliberal capitalist system. As Joshua Sbicca says, "This dilemma understandable when survival, chasing grant money, and trying to keep up with the whims of consumers who love kale one day and kelp the next day feels like a Sisyphean endeavor of well-meaning work versus 'the system'" (2018: 84). In other words, these organizations are struggling with how to change the system, or create a new system, from within the system itself. It's not an easy battle.

Competing Struggles for A Sense of Belonging

As I have written before, urban agricultural efforts happen under the aegis of larger social movements that encourage engagement with issues of climate change, food distribution, racial and ethnic disparities, and health and nutrition (Bush 2010; Chakrabarty 2009; Escobar 1995; Ferguson 2015; Fischer and Benson 2006; Harvey 2008; Satterthwaite et al 2010). In other words, the urban agriculture movement is typically strongly aligned with other ideological and social movements, and can often be subsumed under those other movements, making it difficult for it to have a clear, unified voice or message and resulting in a rather messy, loosely tied together group of people engaged in agricultural pursuits in non-rural settings. Besides this, localized urban agriculture movements often experience great difficulty for other reasons, with many movements never getting off of the ground. Most struggle with financial concerns, low levels of community engagement, and, for the most successful, eventual absorption into more formalized models of local food production and distribution, as can be seen in the Project New Village case highlighted above (Alkon and Mares 2012; Cutts et al 2017).

For instance, Bethany Cutts and others (2017) detail the shifting discourses surrounding the Mandella Community Garden in Sacramento, CA. They write, “At first blush, [the Mandella Community Garden] narrative seems consistent with portrayals of gardeners as radical activists pitted against the forces of capital in a fight for the ‘right to the city’ and for environmental justice” (Cutts et al 2017: 2). And yet, the Mandella Gardeners opposed other ideological groups seemingly in line with their values who had different visions for the implementation of a community garden. Cutts et al assert that such seeming contradictions resulted from the need for urban gardens to simultaneously serve radical, reformist, and neoliberal projects. In short, urban

agriculture both resists and promotes capitalism. They write, "At one end of the political spectrum, urban gardens are radical tools of resistance against privatisation of the commons and structural inequities in capitalist food systems." And at the other end of the spectrum, "gardens serve neo-liberal political goals when they aid in retraction of the state, bolster capital logics of the food system, abet privatisation and gentrification of the urban landscape, and downscale the sphere of social action from the structural to the individual" (Cutts et al 2017:3). This messiness is not an issue for Cutts, however—it merely reflects the complexities and nuances of the world in which urban agriculture is situated. "Urban agriculture is not monolithic," the authors say, "it can be both neo-liberal and a radical countermovement" (Cutts et al 2017:4). This kind of seeming contradiction lies at the heart of the urban agriculture movement. It also results in a diverse set of values held by those engaged in urban agriculture, and it is this diversity that I aim to bring to light through this project so as to contribute to the building of rooted communities.

The shift from radical to neoliberal in urban agriculture narratives is not, however, merely ideological or inevitable; it is a strategy for the survival of the urban agricultural project, and it comes with practical, real world effects for urban farms and gardens and those who work on them. When this shift happens, movements for urban agriculture that emphasize collective community-based efforts to undermine unequal food distribution often sacrifice their radical political orientation and adopt more liberal, individualized discourses that highlight personal contributions over collective ones (Cutts et al 2017; McClintock 2014). For instance, pulling again from the Mandella Community Gardens example, the garden started as a counterculture college student collective project called "Terra Firma Garden". Nearly a decade later, the garden underwent a name change (to the "Ron Mandella Community Garden") and adopted a non-profit

structure, allowing it to more effectively engage politically and resist a potential development plan to replace the garden with a parking lot. 25 years later, after years of political pressure and unsuccessful contestations, the Mandella Garden was razed to make way for a future-oriented apartment building complex with highly standardized and regulated raised garden plots available for rent (Cutts et al 2017). In the end, the garden plots remained (albeit with different soil and in different locations), and could still be considered urban agriculture. However, the nature of the garden shifted dramatically over time due to external and internal pressures emblematic of the garden's need to serve both radical and neoliberal ideals. This shift also betrays the power and weight behind the neoliberal ideals versus the radical ones, with radically-orientated projects losing out to the more politically-weighty capitalist and neoliberal ones. To this point, Collins writes that "While elites and ordinary people may agree that any given core idea is significant, they may disagree on the meaning of the idea." If we take community to be one of the most significant core ideas, it can be framed as as site "of political contestation over the social practices and institutional formations that ensue" (2010: 8). Whether urban agriculture is neoliberal or radical, therefore, depends in part on in whose hands it rests, and the relative weight those hands have in shaping larger discourses.

It should also be noted here that these struggles around who gets to define "community" or who makes up a community is especially charged in a border region like that of Tijuana and San Diego. At this border, racialization and militarization are vividly present (as is discussed in greater depth in the conclusion to this dissertation). Agriculture in California is entirely reliant on a racialized and immigrant workforce, largely drawn from México and Central American countries. Although the urban agriculture sites I worked with on the San Diego side of the border

exist close to a different country—some residing less than a mile away from the border, with migrants crossing through these farms frequently—conversations around farmworker labor or inclusion of farmworkers into the idea of "community" did not happen often. In part, this is due to the separation of these differing groups of people in a geographic sense—farmworkers and their families often live further afield and in less urban spaces, closer to the larger, rural farms and where the cost of living is lower. And second, because urban agriculture either relies heavily on volunteer labor or, if it is profitable, often employs workers only part-time or only has one position available for a full-time farmhand. Besides the racialization of these urban agricultural spaces, whose occupants experience discomfort around knowing how to wed the issues of labor justice and food justice, there is also often the expectation in urban agriculture that the work there is not only that of growing food, but also of educating others about the importance of one's connection to food, land, community, and other values I have delineated in this dissertation. When strong linguistic and cultural differences exist as they often do between migrant farmworkers and those privileged enough to engage in urban agriculture, such coalition-building or crossover rarely happens.[28] Additionally, those working in urban agriculture and food justice settings often see the existence of farmworkers—used as cheap, immigrant labor—as emblematic of a food system built on exploitation.

Joshua Sbicca, who conducted fieldwork around six years before I did in some of the same locations in San Diego (including, importantly, Wild Willow Farm and Education Center,

[28] Though notable exceptions certainly exist. Especially during conferences or large gatherings, conversations around immigration, farmworker labor, and economic justice interweave, perhaps uncomfortably, with conversations around food justice and sovereignty, with farmworkers present and engaged in conversation with urban farmers and food justice advocates. Examples include the 2019 Carbon Sink Convergence at Solidarity Farm (in a rural area of San Diego), the EcoFarm Conference in Asilomar, California, and the work of the National Young Farmers Coalition.

which is located in the Tijuana River Valley), writes about this tension and the neoliberal constraints that place limits on the radical potential of food justice organizing:

> Historical path dependencies, political and economic expedience, and the abstract liberal belief of 'freedom of choice' erect barriers to solidarity. Together these beliefs located social change outside of the control of San Diego Roots [the non-profit that ran Wild Willow], which instead must stay afloat in a competitive food movement nonprofit sector. (2018: 115).

Sbicca argues that practicing food justice in these contexts of immigration and border politics cannot rely merely on creating alternatives to a food system viewed as undesirable, since powerful actors in the food system exploit ethnoracial and citizenship differences for profit. In other words, our food politics and fights for food justice must always wrestle with the contradictions of fighting for justice among differing communities, some of whom make up parts of the exploitative food system itself. Despite working with urban agricultural initiatives led by or heavily involving people of color, Latine and Indigenous farmworkers were often left out of the purview of those initiatives. It is important to point out this narrowsightedness so as to re-instill the imperative that labor and economic justice are essential to true food justice and to the collective power instilled in community.

As can be seen from the Mandella Garden case and the tensions around farming at national borders, the project started off as a collective counterculture movement but transformed over time into something highly individualistic and regulated. This is echoed in the Project New Village case study as well as what we see happening in the Live Well program. This shift, I argue, results in the perceived loss of community solidarity and community-building values among individuals and, most often, in the dissolution of the urban agriculture project altogether in the face of competing and misaligned social values on the part of those who make up the

movement. Although such complexity is fascinating, it also makes for a disjointed movement. My argument, then, is that in order for a social movement, such as urban agriculture, to create rooted communities where community residents are secure enough to place authentic demands on the institutions that affect them, that movement must be strong and coherent. In here bringing to light the nuance and messiness of urban agriculture, I hope to contribute to its eventual strengthening, coherence, and viability. I will discuss these concepts more in the conclusion of this dissertation.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided a basis from which to understand the interrelated and complimentary concepts of place, community, and social value. The theoretical underpinnings of these concepts are varied, but each rests on the concept of value and meaning. As was outlined in the previous chapter and reinforced in this one, place and space are constructs that are shaped and negotiated by value and meaning in the creation of the concept of community. However, in a neoliberal capitalist political economic climate, place has become commodified and devalued according to capitalist notions of the terms, leading to a concomitant breaking apart of community. I have illustrated here that community is a place-based concept and value, as well as an aspirational ideal. In this discussion, urban agriculture emerges as a cultural fact positioned at the nexus of the relationships between these concepts, with grassroots efforts to re-cultivate place-based community through a social movement poised to challenge the taken-for-granted hegemonic values and valuations within neoliberal capitalism. This is made apparent in the story of Project New Village's land acquisition process, as well as the Mundo Garden story from the

previous chapter. Urban agriculture pushes for alternative ways of valuing and of socially organizing. In these ways, urban agriculture serves as a site for the act of ethical place-making (i.e. the creation of place and place as an action), for community, and for urban food growers to negotiate personal and collective value and meaning. Urban agriculture projects can therefore serve as sites of resistance against certain demands of capitalist valuation.

Growers struggle to balance competing values that move their work away from industrial food production while also earning them a profit in the market. This results in a sense of dissonance and anxiety that is integral to the experience of food producers today. These growers see their work as vital to the creation of local community, sustainable food systems, and as a site for the formation of larger movements toward equitable food distribution. Having to work toward such goals from within a capitalist, profit-driven system, however, produces anxiety over ways to realistically and effectively contribute to the movement.

The next chapter will describe what it takes for urban agriculturalists and food justice organizations to keep pushing forward in the midst of such daunting forces—hope. As they rework ideas inherited from the past, the construct of community enables those in the urban agriculture movement to imagine new forms of community, new ways of organizing and relating to one another and to the world around them. In imagining, hope is allowed to thrive. Collins says it well:

> People do not aspire for a better or different world for intellectual reasons only. They act because they care… A good deal of the power of community lies in its ability to wed strong feelings to projects with diverse political agendas, especially aspirational political agendas. People who care about their communities, and projects that harness emotions for political ends, possess a staying power. Community provides a window on a holistic politics, drawing on its proven track record and its relational cognitive frame, to provide the hope that is needed for

politics. (2010: 26).

Engaging with and valuing community—which, as I have shown in this chapter, many in the urban agriculture movement do, even in its disparate, variable, and shifting definitions—then opens up the space for a politics that can center and grow within the concept of hope. The concept of community therefore serves as a template for aspirational political projects, including growing food in urban settings so as to increase the health, wellbeing, and autonomy of city-dwellers. This hopeful prefiguration is the topic of the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Hope in the Soil: Prefigurative Politics in the Urban Agriculture and Food Movements

> Humans work best when they work for human good, not for the "higher production" or "increased efficiency" which have been the nearly exclusive goals of industrial agriculture. "The ultimate goal of farming," Mr. Fukuoka says, "is not the growing of crops, but the cultivation and perfection of human beings." And he speaks of agriculture as a *way*: "To be here, caring for a small field, in full possession of the freedom and plentitude of each day, every day—this must have been the original way of agriculture." An agriculture that is whole nourishes the whole person, body and soul. We do not live by bread alone.
>
> -Wendell Berry, in his preface to Masanobu Fukuoka's *One Straw Revolution* (1978: xiv-xv)

> Many of our deepest thinkers and many of those most familiar with the scale of the challenges we face have concluded that the transitions required can only be achieved in the context of [the] rise of a new consciousness. For some, it is a spiritual awakening—a transformation of the human heart. For others it is a more intellectual process of coming to see the world anew and deeply embracing the emerging ethic of the environment and the old ethic of what it means to love thy neighbor as thyself. But for all it involves major cultural change and a reorientation of what society values and prizes most highly.
>
> -James Gustave Speth, *The Coming Transformation* (2009: 4)

In 2016, the New York Times published an article by Michael Pollan, well-known author of *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (2006)—a book that turned out to be just the momentum that was needed to get the U.S. food movement off the ground, along with earlier years' books *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* (2001) by Eric Schlosser and Marion Nestle's *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health* (2002). Written a decade after the release of his book, a New York Times Magazine article of Pollan's gave a less-than-hopeful view of the food movement, which he characterized as "a collection of disparate groups that seek change in food and agriculture but don't always

agree with one another on priorities." He writes:

> Under [the] big tent [of the food movement] you will find animal rights activists who argue with sustainable farmers about meat; hunger activists who disagree with public-health advocates seeking to make soda and candy ineligible for food stamps; environmentalists who argue with sustainable cattle ranchers about climate change; and so on. To call this a movement is an act of generosity and hope. But whatever it is, it has been no match for Big Food, at least in Washington…. [The] food movement still barely exists as a political force in Washington. It doesn't yet have the organization or the troops to light up a White House or congressional switchboard when one of its issues is at stake. (Pollan 2016a)

Other journalists and writers echo this sentiment of a disorderly and unorganized social movement, as well. Tamar Haspel, in her 2016 Washington Post article, "The Surprising Truth about the 'Food Movement,'" quoted a Rutgers University Human Ecologist professor to say a similar thing:

> Is there a food movement? Hallman at Rutgers says there is, but he says "it is much smaller than is assumed by many in government and the food industry," and everything I've read and heard indicates that he's right. The biggest problem, though, isn't size but substance. As long as consumer concern about additives, chemicals and preservatives overshadows concern for the environment, workers and livestock, progress on those fronts may be stymied. When eliminating preservatives from processed food we shouldn't be eating anyway is what passes for progress, don't look to consumer pressure for meaningful improvement. And that's troubling, because, at the end of the day, we'll get the food supply we demand. (Haspel 2016)

Well known food movement writer and activist, Eric Holt-Giménez—Executive Director since 2006 of the organization Food First, which advocates to eliminate injustices that cause hunger—shifts us away from Haspel's emphasis on individual consumption patterns and toward large-scale structures. As he explained in his new book *A Foodie's Guide to Capitalism: Understanding the Political Economy of What We Eat* (2017), "Activists across the food movement are beginning to realize that the food system cannot be changed in isolation from the

larger economic system. Sure, we can tinker around the edges of the issue and do useful work in the process." However, he continues, "to fully appreciate the magnitude of the challenges we face in transforming our food system and what will be needed to bring about a new one in harmony with people's needs and the environment, we need to explore the economic and political context of our food system—that is, capitalist society" (198-202). Joshua Sbicca contributes to this more radical critique, stating that "While food movement coalitions form and dissolve regularly, which reveals a degree of ideological flexibility to work across differences, leveraging coalitions into a sustained power bloc that prioritizes food justice at a national level remains unrealized" (2018: 27). From these leaders of the food movement, there begins to emerge a question: as stated in Haspel's words, "Is there even such a thing as a food movement?" (2016).

Between the lines of these author's writings, we see urges to make the food movement more forceful, more powerful. For Pollan, it seems that having enough political power to sway politicians in Washington is a characteristic of a legitimate—and ultimately useful—food movement. Well-known agroecology expert Miguel Altieri agrees, along with his collaborator Peter Rosset, saying that effective organizing is essential for overcoming the obstacles blocking the way toward legitimating and scaling up more sustainable agricultural practices. Indeed, the kind of systemic pressure that is needed to successfully change politics and policies cannot be achieved without strong organizations and organizing capacity (Rosset and Altieri 2018; see also Rosset and Martínez-Torres 2012). For Haspel, better communication and similar values shared among consumers and food movement leaders are necessary. For Holt-Giménez, a hard look at the political economy of the food system and a critique of capitalist society are important. And

Sbicca emphasizes the need to include the critical categories of race and class in our conceptions of food justice. These authors are all striving, in their own ways, for a unified set of values among those who make up the food movement. Only with a shared set of values can the food movement have the force it needs to make substantive changes to the current food system, what with the myriad political, economic, and social barriers that present themselves when trying to make changes to Big Food and Big Ag.

Because of these social barriers, I agree with Holt-Giménez that, in the end, a fruitful food movement needs a thorough understanding of political economic structures. However, an emphasis on everyday forms of resistance and lived experiences within the food movement can contribute additional insights that are lost when focused on such large scales. As Forno and Wahlen write:

> By practising alternative value practices, activists aim to demonstrate that what they do is important—not only in withdrawing support from a structure deemed unjust but also to prefigure, and experiment with, an alternative and desirable society. In other words, considering the everyday as an enacted performance in social practices emphasizes the link between the everyday and politics. (2022: 124).

The everyday, then, is a generative site to hone in on so as to get a glimpse of what values are embodied in social practices manifesting as politics and political engagement. And understanding everyday political practices around food production, distribution, and consumption can make for a more effective food movement overall.

In this final chapter to my dissertation, I add another critical component to what is needed to have an effective and meaningful food movement: that of *hope*. This chapter is based both on ethnographic data I collected during fieldwork, but also from personal experience as a farmer-

scholar. For instance, in August 2018 I attended a "community conversation" around the implementation of a new Live Well Neighborhood program from the County of San Diego in Southeastern San Diego, as was described in more detail in the previous chapter. A common trope within this meeting was about the lack of safety in the area. In a space known for crime—sometimes violent—and gang activity, those attending the Live Well event emphasized the need to address the trauma and fear in the area if any improvements were to be made for the standard of living. "People need hope," the organizers pushed. One of the areas where this hope could be found, they believed, was through making space for community gardens and more farmers' markets.

I near the end of my dissertation by exploring these ideas of prefigurative politics and hope in the urban agriculture movement in Tijuana-San Diego. As a way to wrap up this part of my work, I hope to end on a note that is encouraging rather than defeating. Many critiques are to be made about the urban agriculture and larger food movements, certainly, and from a variety of angles. Some of these critiques I have embedded into the previous chapters of this dissertation, and some the reader will find here in this chapter. However, one cannot overlook the valiant attempt of those who try to make the world a better place, according to their definition of what constitutes "better." Such seemingly small and futile grasps at hope through getting connected to food and the natural world have followed me throughout my work on this dissertation. These techniques have been used to boost morale not just around community safety from physical violence, but also around the knowledge of being a minority in an underserved area, the weight of knowing just how bad the food system is set up, and the looming existential threat of climate change. But how could such plant- and food-based activities bring a sense of hope at all to any of

these melancholic situations?

On Hope, Grief, and Survivance

Brian Brett, Canadian poet and author of *Trauma Farm* (2011), famously said that "farming is a profession of hope." Contrary to the idea that hope is based in unrealistic expectations or could be summed up by mere prayerful requests for some irrational miraculous intervention, the kind of hope I refer to here is based in action, steely determination, bald-faced courage, resilience, and a deep awareness of reality and the [often low] probability of positive outcomes being achieved. As Saladdin Ahmed writes in *Revolutionary Hope after Nihilism* (2022):

> Hope does not exist metaphysically. It is rather something for which the conditions must be created. There is an urgent need for a postnihilist philosophy that has the courage of both admitting the hopelessness of the existing order and the will to move beyond it. Effectively, this philosophy has always been at work among those oppressed of the oppressed who choose a final stroke of rebellious act grounded in a hopeless reality and the courage to choose life nonetheless. Philosophies that are not prepared to face the darkness of the historical moment and those not ready to identify with the struggle of the hopeless ones are doomed to fail and fail us. Only such a postnihilist philosophy can face the scale of the ecological crisis and react without falling back into the rich tradition of false redemption and apocalypticism. (97-98)

People working in social movements are gripped by the idea that the world does not have to be how it is today. Embracing and accepting the systems of oppression, domination, subjugation, stress, disenfranchisement, and disconnection seems like such an unfathomable idea for people who think and want to believe that life has so much more to offer. Although aware of these systems, and often suffering from the negative effects that those systems dole out (this is particularly true for people of color and other marginalized groups)—in *addition* to the way that

even being *aware* of those systems causes further double consciousness[29] or cognitive dissonance—these people find the idea of *accepting* those systems as true, valid, or otherwise good as absolutely abhorrent. How could someone easily accept that they are being mistreated just because of how they look, where they live, and other reasons entirely out of their control?

This, of course, causes a lot of suffering: living in a world that does not serve you, and then actively fighting against it, is not an easy way to live. But these people *have* to believe that something better can exist. Farming and gardening—as ways of reconnecting to land, space, and other beings (be that plant, animal (including human), and fungal)—provides something that feels long lost to these people. Something that oppressive socio-economic political systems have taken from them, instead replacing it with shadows and shells of what it truly means to be human. Rosset and Altieri speak of this when talking about agroecology:

> Defending agroecology from colonization and institutional cooptation means rejecting myopic economics that would reduce the concept to mere production, productivity, and competition based on neoliberal economic and scientific precepts. It also has to do with constructive criticisms that reconfigure agroecology and unite various worldviews of the people, their forms of symbolic understanding, their relationships built on reciprocity, and their ways of existing and re-existing, with differing ways of inhabiting the Earth. (2018: 197; my own translation)

Despite often being historically disconnected from land, earth, and deep relationships, those that begin to engage in farming and gardening tend to feel something novel that also feels old, a feeling that Indigenous writer Robin Wall Kimmerer says is not entirely new, but is instead a remembrance passed down from one's progenitors. "Most people don't really see plants or understand plants or what they give us," Kimmerer said in an interview with *The Guardian*.

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[29] To use W.E.B. Du Bois' term.

People have “a really deep longing for connection with nature,” she continued, referencing Edward O. Wilson’s notion of biophilia (1984), our innate love for living things. “It’s as if people remember in some kind of early, ancestral place within them,” she pointed out, “They’re remembering what it might be like to live somewhere you felt companionship with the living world, not estrangement” (Yeh 2020; see also Kimmerer 2014). This beautiful concept of remembrance, which cannot be proven and yet is felt, guides many who have been exploring their connection to the past through connection in the present.

For instance, Sartteka Am Ab Nefer, a gardener from Mt. Hope Community Garden referenced in previous chapters, said this about her love for farming and gardening:

> What keeps me loving agriculture is two things: the past and the future. To honor our ancestors by remembering the past when we grew our own food, when we could feed our entire families and villages and looking forward to a future where my children and children's children no longer suffer from the same diet-related preventable dis-eases, when food is growing on trees all about the neighborhood, in parks and on streets and it is legal for people to eat the food, to a future that is green and growing and in sync with mama nature rather than killing off and depleting all of her resources and turning our planet into a wasteland.

Sartteka here connects her interest in gardening to an undefined time in the past when self-sufficiency was the norm, when understanding of the natural world gave power and strength to families and communities. This utopic past is referenced in contrast to a dystopian present, where “dis-eases”—here Sartteka emphasizes the intentional or curated nature of the health struggles many BIPOC people and communities suffer from, which are products of human-built structures of hegemonic oppression that cause an underlying sense of unease that manifests in sickness—are entirely preventable and are very much related to what one consumes. This undesirable present is seen as a “wasteland,” or at least near to one as we continue down a path of

disconnection from the Earth and overconsumption. Simultaneously, Sartteka also calls into existence a utopic future, where food is abundant and integrated into our spatial realities, and where humans live in greater harmony with the natural world.

During my fieldwork, other gardeners and farmers also echoed these sentiments. Nathan Lou, a San Diego farmer mentioned previously, called upon connection with the natural world as a way to reengage with one's ancestors. He said that "When we start acknowledging community and the relationships within the ecological web of life, we recognize our ancestors and begin to honor our role in this lifetime." In this view, as in Kimmerer's Indigenous understanding, deepening one's relationship with the ecological world is a gateway to connecting to one's progenitors, and, in a way, fulfill our responsibilities in the present. Mai Nguyễn, a wheat farmer in San Diego we have heard from before, also indicated that an essential part of community is "relationship to elders, ancestors, neighbors—including plant, fungal, and animal." And Janice Luna Reynoso, leader of non-profit Mundo Gardens in National City, teased that although her formal education was limited, her wisdom and experience came from those who came before her: "I want us to continue to challenge the system when people say it can't be done or challenge your education or credentials. I joked a lot and said yes, I have my Master's, and I point around in reference to my ancestors." This idea of connection to one's past as a function of connecting to farming and gardening in the present was echoed by many in the urban agriculture scene on both sides of the border—particularly by those who derived a sense of spiritual satisfaction from the activities involved with growing food and developing community around it.

As was mentioned previously, this positionality—although beautiful, vulnerable, and attempting to live in greater harmony with one's values that are not situated in capitalist

production—also exposes one to tremendous suffering. As Kimmerer points out, “We are in the midst of a great remembering. We’re remembering what it would be like to live in a world where there is ecological justice, where other species would look at us and say those are good people, we’re glad that this species is among us.” She continues: “We’re remembering that we want to be kinfolk with all the rest of the living world. When we remember that we want this, this profound sense of belonging to the world, that really opens our grief because we recognise that we aren’t” (Jones 2020). The “flip side to loving the world so much,” she points out elsewhere, and citing the influential conservationist Aldo Leopold, is that to have an ecological education is to “live alone in a world of wounds” (Yeh 2020; see also Leopold 1949). Kimmerer explains that “We tend to shy away from that grief. But I think that that’s the role of art: to help us into grief, and through grief, for each other, for our values, for the living world. You know, I think about grief as a measure of our love, that grief compels us to do something, to love more” (Yeh 2020). This grief, and love, and new value orientation can be overwhelming and paralyzing. It can instill one with despair and depression. And yet, those engaged with urban agricultural projects continue to push—often after confronting that abyss—out of a sense of survivance, to call in Indigenous scholar Gerald Vizenor’s term (Vizenor 1999). That is, out of a sense of active presence and a renunciation of dominance by others, tragedy, and victimry.

In this way, urban agriculture and engaging in political action is also a way to feel in *control*, to actively fight something that is so overbearing, historically entrenched, and megalithic that it feels impossible for it to ever be toppled in one’s own lifetime. Forno and Wahlen support this claim when they write that, “new food movements exemplify how the everyday becomes the locus through which people attempt to regain control over their lives by experimenting with

alternatives" (2022: 126). This sense of control—of *agency* and *autonomy* amidst large, overbearing power structures—gives people engaged in the urban agriculture and larger food movements a sense of *hope*. Hope that maybe things can change, that things can be better—if not for us, then for people coming after us in future generations. And if things cannot be perfect *now*, then maybe at least we can create a little sense of normalcy, justice, democracy, and values-based living (as opposed to *value*-based living, or profit-based living) in our own small spheres of influence. As Patel writes:

> The increased mismanagement of the planet's resources is almost inevitable when profit-driven markets set the terms of value. It is possible to quantify some of the hidden costs behind prices, and this should happen, but the overall solution to the misallocation of society's resources is not to start slapping prices on everything. There are some things that can't be captured by a single number, but still need management, and the only way that can happen fairly is through democratic politics. The answer to the market's valuing of the world at naught is not a democracy run by experts, but the democratization of expertise and resources. (2009: 171)

In other words: create a homestead, bring some plants to your indoor and/or outdoor space, reduce your food waste and other forms of waste, buy in bulk, get closer to natural products that require less processing, eat local and fresh, care about your body and the bodies of others. And not only those personalized changes—these acts of prefigurative politics, which I will come back to further in this chapter—but also the impetus to engage in larger movements with other who are trying to do the same thing, and who are trying to make positive changes at much larger scales. This, in turn, creates a sense of community with like-minded people—people who also think that things need to get better, and fast, and that the values and ethics perpetuated by the current food system are not the best ones to be pushing forward. The current food system does not encourage the base values of connection, solidarity, caring, sustainability, or any kind of land

ethic—all of which are values that those engaged in urban agriculture deeply believe in and fight for. Again, in all of these ways, a sense of control and even a taste of sovereignty is gained—however tenuously and however briefly—for those who choose to grow their own food and engage in agricultural activities. And that sovereignty makes way for the feeling of hope that maybe, just maybe, the world can be different and one can live in different relationality to the natural world and to other people.

"'How do you encourage people to keep their hope…but not their complacency?'" a friend asked the American novelist Barbara Kingsolver, as she recounts in her book *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* (2007). They were speaking about climate change and the sense of hopelessness and paralysis that comes with such a looming problem, and the conflicting, immediate need to do something about it. Kingsolver mused:

> The truth is so horrific: we are marching ourselves to the maw of our own extinction. An audience that doesn't really get that will amble out of the theater unmoved, go home and change nothing. But an audience that *does* get it may be so terrified they'll feel doomed already. They might walk out looking paler, but still do nothing. How is it possible to inspire an appropriately repentant stance toward a planet that is really, really upset?…However much we despise the monstrous serial killer called global warming, it's hard to bring charges. We cherish our fossil-fuel-driven conveniences, such as the computer I am using to write these words. We can't exactly name-call this problem, or vote it away. *The cure involves reaching down into ourselves and pulling out a new kind of person*." (345, emphasis added)

In order to preserve hope, Kingsolver suggests that we look inward and "pull out a new kind of person." And this is not simple, she admits. None of us can be purists in a world where we are inculcated in the ways of consumption just by living in it. Knowing this, changing only some habits feels like a failure. This scenario then often lead to defeat—why even try? The problem is too large, our will too small, and our ability to do anything about it doubtful. Kingsolver says

that this is an immoral choice, though, because of who it affects down the road.[30] Even if we give up now, there are others that are coming after us who will experience the negative effects of climate change even more strongly. Philosopher Steven M. Gardiner would call this an "intergenerational ethic" that is necessary to uplift the collective project of mitigating climate change, rather than falling back on moral corruptions such as complacency, delusion, distraction, or holding on to unreasonable doubt (Gardiner 2006). This is also often referred to as the "Seventh Generation Principle," based in Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederacy) philosophy, which stresses that virtue that the decisions we make today should be made holding in mind those who will be alive seven generations into the future. In other words, we can avoid complacency in the face of tremendous problems by caring for and about others, which transforms us into new kinds of people and, in the process, find the hope that keeps us pushing forward despite setbacks.

And the climate, environmental, and food justice perspectives push for recognizing that there are those experiencing the negative effects of climate change, environmental issues, and food insecurity currently, more so than others in more privileged positions. This is a fundamentally political stance, and one that brings hope into the sphere of collective action. Saladdin Ahmed astutely writes that "The existing state of the world continues to make a dignified life for billions of humans less and less attainable. This crisis is just as ecological as it is political, for ecological crises are fundamentally political, and the domination of naturalized politics of nation-states has catastrophic ecological consequences" (2022: 38). Even Kingsolver, who tends to shy away from political analyses, had to make the connection between the

[30] And a choice made easier by the myth of individualism that is encouraged by liberal thought.

environmental or ecological and the political, and, once again, the personal:

> Global-scale alteration from pollution didn't happen when human societies started using a little bit of fossil fuel. It happened after unrestrained growth, irresponsible management, and a cultural refusal to assign any moral value to excessive consumption. Those habits can be reformed. They *have* been reformed: several times in the last century we've learned that some of our favorite things like DDT and the propellants in aerosol cans were rapidly unraveling the structure and substance of our biosphere. We gave them up, and reversed the threats. Now the reforms required of us are more systematic, and nobody seems to want to go first. (To be more precise, the U.S.A. wants to go last.) Personally, I can't figure out how to give up my computer, but I'm trying to get myself onto a grid fueled by wind and hydro power instead of strip-mined coal. I could even see sticking some of the new thin-film photovoltaic panels onto our roof, and I'm looking for a few good congressmen or -women who'd give us a tax credit for that. In our community and our household we now have options we didn't know about five years ago: hybrid vehicles, geothermal heating. And I refused to believe a fuel-driven food industry was the only hand that could feed by family. It felt good to be right about that.
>
> I share with almost every adult I know this crazy quilt of optimism and worries, feeling locked into certain habits but keen to change them in the right direction. And the tendency to feel like a jerk for falling short of absolute conversion. I'm not sure why. If a friend had a coronary scare and finally started exercising three days a week, who would hound him about the other four days? It's the worst of bad manners—and self-protection, I think, in a nervously cynical society—to ridicule the small gesture. These earnest efforts might just get us past the train-wreck of the daily news, or the anguish of standing behind a child, looking with her at the road ahead, searching out redemption where we can find it: recycling or carpooling or growing a garden or saving a species or *something*. Small, stepwise changes in personal habits aren't trivial. Ultimately they will, or won't, add up to having been the thing that mattered…. Something can happen for us, it seems, or *through* us, that will stop this earthly unraveling and start the clock over. Like every creature on earth, we want to make it too. We want more time. (2007: 345-346)

Kingsolver points us in the direction I want to end this dissertation on. When talking about social movements, we tend to see only the forest and bat away the trees as unnecessary distractions from seeing the bigger picture. However, being able to tack back and forth between these lenses is absolutely necessary to get a true view of what is actually happening, rather than relying on

either blind optimism or narrow-minded pessimism. As political philosopher Michelle Moody-Adams writes in her book *Making Space for Justice* (2022), “Social movements must be ready to help make space for justice not simply by means of protest and dissent, but by taking on the challenge of making conceptual, perceptual, and motivational space for justice. To do this, social movements must be ready to draw on the constructive powers of imagination” to motivate readiness to act and to sustain “confidence in the value of acting despite the delays, disappointments, and uncertainty with which human effort and action inevitably must contend” (113). This sustained confidence is necessary because “making space for justice…involves constructively exploiting the political possibilities of hope” (225-226). A true view of the world, imbued with this motivation and sustained confidence that Moody-Adams talks about—a form of dogged perseverance and values-aligned action—is what can get us out of the mess a certain portion of humanity has created.

Shifting Values through Prefigurative Politics: A Key Tool for Collective Action and Change

One of the major players in the urban agriculture regulatory scene in San Diego was Ariel Hamburger, who worked for the Health and Human Services Agency of San Diego County. Ariel was incredibly active in Promise Zone meetings around urban agriculture, a big supporter of and consultant for Project New Village’s work in Southeastern San Diego, and a key member of the San Diego Food System Alliance. Talking with Ariel, who also considers herself a “leftist”—indicating more radical politics than mainstream progressives or democrats—we began to discuss the need to dismantle capitalist structures and logics in order to make true change to the

food system. I mentioned the "elephant in the room" that many organizers around food and agriculture did not seem to want to talk about—out of political politeness, a desire to steer away from polarizing topics, or in an attempt to keep projects narrow and achievable, I could not say—the near impossibility of dismantling capitalism while working within its structures, which our lives and livelihoods are built around. Ariel jumped on the opportunity to share her thoughts:

> I think you're spot on. I mean I think it's always easy to wax poetic about these things, and just say…point at capitalism and be like, "That's the issue! If we got rid of that then everything would be solved!" But no one's, like, "Well okay, but that's not going to happen, it's not going to happen overnight, it's not going to happen probably even in our lifetime. So, what do we do in the meantime that's not a bandaid?" Because I hate that as a solution. But [instead an approach] that is working towards something that is somewhere closer to where we want to be. And, I kind of see urban agriculture as that, right? Because it's operating within the bounds of our reality, but it's offering a different use of the space that we're so used to seeing monopolized by cars and concrete and things like that.

Continuing the conversation, I said, "It's like providing an alternate view of what things could be." And Ariel added:

> Totally, absolutely. And even thinking about, like, a lot of cities, their tree canopy doesn't include edible trees because they're so concerned with rats and maintenance and it's just like, why is that more concerning to you than people going hungry, people being unhealthy? Like, the things that we value and the way the value them are really tilted on the wrong side of the scale.

Ariel's last sentence echoes what I have tried to emphasize throughout this dissertation. To those thinking about food access, security, and justice, the absurdity of not utilizing public space to grow food for people who need it is glaring and an indication of extreme negligence. This is due, as Ariel mentions, to an incorrect placement of moral and social value on things that do not provide utility or increase justice and equity, and instead are frivolous, self-centered, or unexamined and outdated relics of history. The greater value placed on concerns about rodent

and pest issues and who to pay to maintain an edible tree canopy keeps city planners, councils, and workers from thinking outside of the box, even if it meant increasing the livelihood for many of its citizens. This means that ideas such as edible tree canopies or tree lawn gardens like those of Ron Finley in Los Angeles are deemed unrealistic, too much of a hassle, or, at worst, demonstrations of subversive character. In his book *From What Is to What If*, Rob Hopkins writes, "Most of the institutions shaping the world today are incapable of imagining anything other than their everlasting existence. And so things carry on, no matter how toxic, how ridiculous, or how contrary to values that most people share" (2019: 141). In this light, Moody-Adams argues that imagination is a necessary precursor for socially constructive hope: "hope [is] deeply intertwined with imagination: [it depends] on the ability to consider unfamiliar possibilities and perspectives, and to engage in novel reflection on what is actual and familiar." (2022: 226). Komporozos-Athanasiou and Bottici define this kind of "radical imagination" as "the capacity to produce ideas and visions of the future that materially condition an increasingly uncertain present," and that it's "generative function"—its role in producing, mediating, and structuring our lived social realities—is what makes it radical (2022: 65). Patel echoes this sentiment: "In order to reclaim politics, we too will need more imagination, creativity and courage" (2009: 193). Without this imagination, no hope for changed or redirected values can be made.

To many in the food justice movement, this makes apparent that those in power do not truly have the most needy among us in mind—if that were the case, simple solutions like those proposed by urban agricultural thinking would be immediately implemented, or at least carefully and seriously considered. Because this is not the case, something else is at play. For some radical

thinkers, the explanation for why this is the case can go as far as nefarious intentionality on the part of those in power. At the very least, those who work in the realm of urban agriculture and food justice understand that much of it boils down to differing ideas of what is important, what is valuable, and what deserves our attention, money, and time. Moody-Adams frames this as a need to "first envision the possibility of a robust shared understanding of the social world," before the possibility of collective hope can be had (2022: 226). As Rutger Bregman wrote in his book *Utopia for Realists*, "The inability to imagine a world in which things are different is evidence only of a poor imagination, not of the impossibly of change" (2014: 43). But, Moody-Adams continues, "the members of a complex, modern society cannot actually *have* a common hope unless they can articulate shared goals and shared interpretations of how to achieve them" (2022: 226-227). What is needed, then, in the eyes of those within this movement, is a shift in our collective ethical and social values.

In *Geographies of Food: An Introduction* (2021), authors Kneafsey et al stress that when thinking about future scenarios for food and farming, we first "need to be prepared to *reimagine* food production-consumption, to contemplate how things can potentially be other than they currently are, in order to achieve the objective of 'better' food provisioning, bearing in mind that there are different perspectives on what 'better' means…" (263, emphasis in original). In order to do this reimagining and rethinking of food production and consumption, though, it "demands that we think *ethically*, and make ethical judgments about what to prioritize, about what actually constitutes 'better' provisioning and sustainable food production and diets… There will be different perspectives on this as different interest groups become involved in defining priorities, and as different sets of knowledges and practices concerning the best ways to organize food

provisioning compete" (2021: 263, emphasis in original). Similarly, Michele Moody-Adam argues that social movements are spaces for such moral inquisition and recapitulation. She writes, "The moral reflection produced by social movements is engaged moral inquiry: moral insights that emerge from the painstaking struggles of their participants, initially as 'situated' knowledge that is deeply enmeshed in ordinary life and political practice" (79). And these social movements have various categories of *values* that "ought to shape a society seeking to establish and preserve humane regard… [Social] movements have helped to reshape at least some important institutions and practices in accordance with those values and thus to show what it might mean to realize justice in particular domains" (99). The search for embodied ethics, embedded in values, through performance and engagement in social movements reflects exactly what is happening in the urban agriculture and food movements.

This is precisely what I have tried to point to in this dissertation. The matters of food and health inequities, the benefits of urban agriculture to practitioners or to neighborhoods surrounding garden and farm spaces—all of this is extraordinarily important. But urban agriculture is also more than these things. Collectively, these elements create a social movement that is looking for a change to the status quo, with a very critical eye toward how things are currently run. In so doing, this social movement is making an ethical claim, that things are not as they *should* be, and we therefore *should* change them. Forno and Wahlen echo this sentiment when they write, "By showing that food means more than merely satisfying a daily need at home, these [alternative food] movements have positioned food as a means through which to build a socially and ecologically just future" (2022: 125). In other words, for those working in the realm of urban agriculture and food justice, giving of their labor in community gardens and

urban farms spaces, are engaged in a kind of prefigurative politics, enacting the world they want to see and engaging in what political scientist Adom Getachew calls a "worldmaking project" (2019).

What Is Prefigurative Politics?

Prefigurative politics, a term coined by revolutionary movements writer Carl Boggs, refers to the modes of organization and social relationships that strive to reflect the future society that is sought by a particular group. This is born of the idea of dialectical materialism, coming from radical Marxist thinkers.[31] Boggs, writing about Marxism and issues of recidivism and movement stagnation within communist groups, says that prefigurative politics means "the embodiment, within the ongoing political practice of a movement, of those forms of social relations, decision-making, culture, and human experience that are the ultimate goal" (1977: 4). These "prefigurative structures," he writes, "can be viewed as a new source of political legitimacy, as a nucleus of a future socialist state. They would create an entirely new kind of politics, breaking down the division of labor between everyday life and political activity" (1977: 9). In other words, prefigurative politics is about enacting, *embodying* even, something outside of the current political and economic power structures that currently exist. These kinds of politics are not superficial or weak—they fully engulf ones way of existing in the world and relating to it and other beings.

The ontological claim here is, of course, that individual actions, when collectivized, add

[31] Developed in large part by James and Grace Lee Boggs—no relation to Carl, as far as I know. Grace Lee Boggs has become an icon of urban agriculture in Detroit, as well. For more on the ties between dialectical humanism and food justice, see Sbicca 2018.

up to something greater, and that mere resistance to the status quo is not enough. However, these individual actions—no matter how many or in what form they take—are ultimately insufficient to make institutionalized social change. This is to say that both bottom-up and top-down strategies are needed to bring about lasting social change. Prefigurativism, as a foundational concept of prefigurative politics, is a way of engaging in social change activism that seeks to bring about a different world by showing what a world without the tyranny of the present might look like. It is a way of finding hope in the realms of lived and imagined possibilities. This could be interpreted as a form of escapism, but a true prefigurative politics does not seek to avoid current states of the world. Instead, Komporozos-Athanasiou and Bottici write that, "channeling a radical and productive imagination points to a type of prefiguration that is not merely an illusionary escape from political reality, but rather a blueprint for a radical future" (2002: 65). As Ahmed argues in *Revolutionary Hope after Nihilism* (2022), the hegemony of capitalism makes it incredibly difficult to see beyond an apocalyptic vision of an inevitable future doomsday, and individual actions therefore seem insufficient to do anything about the behemoth, wicked problem of climate change. "In either case," Ahmed writes, "the problem is the lack of a holistic, interdisciplinary, and daringly critical knowledge of our reality as well as the potentialities of the future we are creating" (80). Although Ahmed does not believe that the moralizing of individual actions can overcome the ecological crisis nor the dismantling of capitalism, he does agree that we must fully accept and understand the current political, social, economic, and other paradigms are as they are: however oppressive, unequal, anti-democratic, etc. And not only that, but there must also be a revolutionary negation of capitalism itself. Ahmed argues that most approaches to avoiding catastrophic ecological disaster "miss the point because they do not stem from a

universal awareness of human activities and history…a holistic critical philosophy is a prerequisite for the necessary awareness that could comprehend the crisis well enough to be able to, in principle, consider a way out in terms of a revolutionary negation of capitalism" (82). When that reality is accepted, then the true revolutionary practices can begin. Then, practitioners of prefigurative politics can truly push back, findings points of leverage and power so as to more effectively bring about change, and to dismantle and replace those inequalities and oppressions with genuine egalitarian practice.

As a form of activism, prefigurativism highlights that social structures enacted in the here-and-now—in the small confines of organizations, institutions, and rituals—mirror the wider social structures we can hope to see in the future. Drawing from this, Raekstad and Gradin in their book *Prefigurative Politics: Building Tomorrow Today* (2020) explain that "Being committed to prefigurative politics means being committed to the idea that if we want to replace certain structures, then we need to reflect some aspect(s) of the future structures we want in the movements and organisations we develop to fight for them" (10). They define prefigurative politics as "the deliberate experimental implementation of desired future social relations and practices in the here-and-now," and that this is a much more common phenomenon than is often thought (10). Urban agriculture, as I have explained—or the practice of creating urban garden and farm spaces where people work to grow their own food and organize collectively to achieve greater community coherence and healthier lifestyles—is a space for prefigurative politics to play out, with varying degrees of success but always with the intent to make the world a different place in the here-and-now. As Detroit urban agriculture advocate Grace Lee Boggs has asserted, "We want and need to create the alternative world that is now both possible and necessary. We

want and need to exercise power…" (2011: 76).

Applying Prefiguratism to Environmental Thought

Jason Mark, editor for the journal *Serra*, writes about this type of political and ethical orientation in relation to environmentalism and sustainability advocacy efforts. Of course, "it's unfair to put the burden of climate change solely on individuals," he writes (Mark 2016). As I wrote about in previous chapters, we want to avoid falling into the trap of believing that individual change will solve systemic problems—in part because it simply will not work, in part because it ignores the much greater responsibility that bad actor industry giants have in contributing to climate change and institutional oppression, and in part because these giants have tried to use the tactic of individualism and individual responsibility to deflect from their own moral and environmental failings—and it would be a shame to do what they hope we will do. Ahmed writes that, "those who are in favor of continuing with the status quo want us to believe that as long as we make certain reforms here and there, which mainly come down to more consumption in the name of green choices, there is nothing fundamentally wrong with the existing order" (2022: 81). Ahmed argues that, at its base, the issue with environmental and ecological degradation lies with the very socioeconomic and political system itself—namely capitalism—and its engrained eco-imperialism. To take away its eco-imperialist and extractive nature would be to cause capitalism to cease to exist. Because of this, "there is nothing better for the ruling capitalist class than the prevailing wisdom that the ecological crisis is simply a matter of predetermined fate or a question of ethics" in order to maintain the status quo (80). This "presents capitalists an easy out, whereby they can engage in eco-philanthropy while continuing

their destructive business practices as usual" (80). He makes the case that the scale of the climate crisis is so large that "it cannot be dealt with in terms of individual ethical choices, such as buying local, embracing a vegan diet, installing solar panels on one's rooftop, purchasing an electric car, or 'acting green' in whatever other fashionable way" (82). It goes without saying that this would also include urban gardening and farming. Sarah Boltwala-Mesina, who we were introduced to in chapter one as an entrepreneurial urban agriculture advocate and founder of Food2Soil, echoed Ahmed's point when describing what to her feel like the limits of collective action within the urban agriculture movement and its related policies. She told me:

> Right now urban agriculture policy is the classic case for lip service that arrived too little, too late. It is written to enable individuals to grow their own food, but the minute that individual starts thinking of scaling up to feed their neighbors, the policy becomes a barrier. Urban agriculture falls short when communities—groups of those same individuals as a collective entity—want to do something to build a food system that challenges existing market channels and large/midsize players. Community gardens is right now the glass ceiling for urban agriculture in what it can hope to do at a collective level.

Contrary to Ahmed, Sarah is trying to work from within the logics and rules of capitalist systems, but they agree on the fact that individual efforts at making larger change just is not enough. And not only that, but collective efforts at larger, structural change are stymied rather intentionally through mechanisms such as policies and regulations. More radical in his thinking, however, Ahmed claims that any coherent, holistic, and "serious consideration of the nature of the crisis would clearly realize that the survival of capitalism will inevitably amount to the destruction of the ecosystem" (82). He makes the point clear: voluntary action alone is unproductive in achieving the necessary complete overhaul of our politico-economic systems. In this line of logic, collective efforts to undermine the systems of oppression that keep individuals and groups

from living fulfilling lives and living in greater equity with one another are therefore incredibly important, and they are really the only true saving grace in the face of the existential threat that is climate change.

My question for this, then, is how do collective efforts at "negation," as Ahmed theorizes it, come to be? Do not collective efforts begin with individual ones? Ahmed focuses on the need to undermine capitalism itself, rather than focusing on individualized, moralized behaviors. In a certain way, I entirely agree. But as with urban agriculture's double movement, I do not see the problem with these two ideas existing simultaneously. Ahmed sees the moralizing of individual action as "inherently anti-ecological, simply because ethics is an individual territory, whereas the ecological crisis is systemic and anonymous insofar as it is created by the capitalist modes of production, as opposed to evil intentions of certain individuals" (96). I disagree with Ahmed and others who make these kinds of arguments, purporting that ethics is inherently individualistic. As those that have pushed for prefigurative politics have argued, it is precisely *because* individuals exist within networks of relations and because individual actions collectivize into something bigger than the sum of its parts, that ethical decision-making and ethical behaviors amount to something. One of my informants, Dr. Xiomara Delgado, who helps run Ecoparque in Tijuana as the Environmental Education Coordinator, made this collectivist case for urban agriculture. She said:

> In recent years, interest in urban agriculture has made a strong comeback all around the world for various reasons, including its capacity to produce healthy and nutritious food in a sustainable way and on a small scale, which serves as a way to confront malnutrition, reduce the carbon footprint of the food system, reconnect people to their food, and to green cities.
>
> Nowadays, there are a lot of people practicing urban agriculture around the world.

> Studies show that a relationship exists between urban produce and the promotion of environmental education opportunities, which is a great hope for it. Additionally, through environmental education, there is the possibility to demonstrate that urban agriculture can be a response to many of the challenges and demands of global urbanization, as well as the increasing vulnerability of the people experiencing a lack of healthy and nutritious food.

For Xiomara, the fact that urban agriculture is being practiced by many around the world and is gaining traction means that it has a greater capacity to address particular societal ills that are important to her: having access to healthy and nutritious food, urban sustainability, and connecting people to their food, to name a few. Because the mandate of Ecoparque centers around environmental protection through "promoting a change in the consciousness of visitors and the community in general,"[32] having urban agriculture become more widely practiced means that that change in consciousness is more likely to be achieved. Without individuals practicing urban agriculture all over the world, collective practices of urban food growing is impossible, and that means collective—and, ultimately, individual—change of the kind Xiomara is tuned into is impossible.

Ahmed incorrectly paints a broad stroke when he says that "The appeal to moral discourses of right and wrong is meant to portray the ecological crisis as a matter of lifestyle solvable within the bourgeois limits of civil society" (96). I agree with him in that "There is no lifestyle under capitalism that is not ecologically abusive" (96). We are all a part of the capitalism systems and its modes of production, and therefore none of us is "pure." Rather than being about individuals qua individuals, though, prefigurative politics is ultimately about individual action with an eye toward collectivism. Nor is that individual action, as Ahmed conflates, about "green capitalism" or "green consumerism." He says:

[32] Drawn from Ecoparque's website.

> Under advanced capitalism, everyone, including capitalists such as Bill Gates and Bill Clinton, can be on the right moral side, which is the new religious redemption on which capitalism in the West relies to continue accumulating profit. We are made to believe that it is possible to live happily under capitalism as long as we are virtuous. To live virtuously, all one needs to do is to purchase certain commodities and, on a more general level, live the right lifestyle, which is of course obtainable as long as one can afford its cost. (96)

I completely agree that such pushes for the ethical consumption of greenwashed products do nothing to get us out of the logics of capitalism, and do very little for improving the state of the climate crisis. These green options give the illusion of purity where there is none, and is often, as Ahmed says, only available to those who can afford it. At the same time, Ahmed makes a common error on the part of leftist thinkers by lumping together any sense of ethics and morality with mechanisms used to maintain the existing state of capitalist affairs. This immediate rejection of ethics is borne of an emphasis on positivist historical materialism, which is an attempt to get away from the dogmatic and abusive aspects of religion and the moralization of behavior. To me, however, this is much too hasty, and blames the mechanisms through which certain narratives have been perpetuated, rather than pointing to the fallacies and abuses of the narratives themselves.[33] The "mechanism" of morality or ethics is inevitable—human beings are nothing if not primed to be moral thinkers. To act as if we can extirpate that from our existence will only create worse outcomes in the future. Instead, harnessing and understanding our moral nature, and having it work toward larger goals—such as the dismantling of capitalism and creating new societies built on modes of production that live in greater harmony with nature—is a more productive and, in my view, fruitful path forward. "[There] is no unrevolutionary way out

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[33] And, of course, in true leftist fashion, ignores the moralized language and, especially, moralized practices borne of an adherence to secular historical materialism. What one rejects, one finds difficult to see in oneself.

of the capitalist hegemony," Ahmed writes, and I would argue that prefigurative politics is one major way to create that needed revolution.

In all of this, Ahmed misses the point of prefigurative politics, which emphasizes the need for *both* individual action and collective organizing to be engaged *at the same time*. Forno and Wahlen support this when they write, "the example of new food movements shows [that] building new, localist food economy networks does not necessitate abandoning lobbying and protesting for (national and transnational) food policy reforms" (2022: 127). One form of political engagement does not negate or replace the other—it is not zero-sum or either-or. To only engage in one or the other misses an extremely important part of the puzzle. To fully and completely put the onus of responsibility on the bad industry actors erases what it means to enact a prefigurative politics. That in itself can become "an obstacle to the sweeping changes" that are needed to challenge pre-existing power hierarchies, much less to keep the globe from warming much more than 2°C (Mark 2016). Marks explains, "Yes, it's true that taking personal responsibility for climate change is insufficient to address the crisis; and *it's equally true that individual action is essential to the climate justice equation*" (emphasis added, Mark 2016). Similarly, Raekstad and Gradin write that prefigurative politics is not "an alternative to struggle against our society's oppression, exploitation, and injustice; it's a way of carrying that struggle out" (2020: 10).The binary between personal action versus political action is unhelpful. Fixating solely on system change, over individual and personal change, can open "the door to a kind of cynical self-absolution that divorces political commitment from political belief. This is its own kind of false consciousness" (Mark 2016). This everyday, personalized, and internal kind of activism helps to solder "daily lived experience to larger political aspirations." In a word,

prefigurative politics such as these encourages and relies on the moral philosophy of *integrity*.[34] Such integrity can help to ground one from the inside out.

There is fear that guilt will inevitably be involved when it comes to prefigurative politics —the questions are usually: "Where will it end? No one will ever be good enough, no one can be perfect, so why create an expectation that no one can ever reach? That will only inculcate a sense of guilt and perhaps encourage social systems of shaming one another." In the secular liberal era, there is a strong averse reaction to anything that smacks of religiosity, and these kinds of righteous politics and activism certainly recall many religious principles and practices. But I agree with Mark that this need not necessarily be the case, nor do we have to strive for perfection to make meaningful personal and collective change: "This doesn't have to involve foisting guilt on people or blaming and shaming," he argues. "It can also take the form of a steely determination to transform our way of living" (Mark 2016). In my mind, some guilt and some shame will be inevitable, though it need not be intentional on the part of the larger movement.

But is the alternative any better? Not only the loss of our biosphere and whatever stability we have left in a warming world—which of course are reason enough—but an alternative where we feel as if our individual choices and actions do not amount to anything, that we are invisible in the face of larger machinations and forces in the world, that our only hope is to say something about that and hope it changes, but what we do on our free time makes no difference? Personally, I cannot believe that. Much of social theory tends to obscure the role of the individual, seeing the forest rather than the trees, as it were. There is humongous benefit to this (and an opposite issue

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[34] Time and space here do not permit me to do much more than point at this important philosophical realm. For more on integrity as a much-debated topic of moral philosophy, see Babbit 1997, Calhoun 1995, Golden 2019, and Halfon 1989.

can occur when only seeing the trees and missing the forest). However, I believe that we can collectively hold more than one thing at once, and be able to tack back and forth between the seeing larger forces at play, but also that those larger forces are made up by individual actors that are always in relation to one another.

When engaging in prefigurative politics and embodying one's own values, it is "an attempt to align our individual actions with our role as public citizens," in other words, seeing our connections in the larger web of social and political relations—not atomizing and not aggregating to the point of obscurity. It is "making a statement that your actions matter…that you have power" (Mark 2016). Prefigurative politics encourages us to "take personal responsibility for our actions, [and] deepen our commitment to environmental sustainability" (Mark 2016). And when "we take responsibility for the environmental consequences of our daily actions, we feel like we are in control" (Mark 2016). This is no small advantage. Being lost within hegemonic systems of oppression and isolation leaves many people feeling powerless. This powerlessness and hopelessness are the bane of political action and social movement building—it creates apathy, paralysis, and burnout. Even worse, it can push people toward "moral corruptions," in the words of philosopher Stephen Gardiner—corruptions such as denial, complacency, doubt, delusion, and hypocrisy (Gardiner 2006). Earnestness can be contagious, but so can be ennui. None of this is helpful for making systemic change within our environment and food systems, or any others. Nor is it desirable for the individual, who experiences a cognitive dissonance between what they think *should* be the case with the world, and a recognition that it is no where near that. The kind of "self-determination theory" I am encouraging here, in the form of prefigurative politics, helps instead to "bind commitment to conviction," with the belief that

conviction exists for many people out there, even—and perhaps especially—for those displaying those moral corruptions (Mark 2016).

Many of the benefits of engaging in prefigurative politics that I have listed are personal ones, but the collective benefits are just as tremendous. Through the collective change of many, many individual actors acting with integrity and aligning their politics with their values, we set the stage for a bottom-up theory of change through shifting cultural norms and expectations. We "help lay the cultural conditions for a systemic shift" (Mark 2016). We also help foster change in others through living example. And "if millions of people make similar choices, the system might begin to move even in the absence of policy changes" (Mark 2016). Naomi Klein points to this in her work *This Changes Everything* (2014), saying "if there is a reason for social movements to exist, it is not to accept dominant values as fixed and unchangeable but to offer other ways to live—to wage, and win, a battle of cultural worldviews" (53). Social movements—or the collective practices of many individuals acting together for a common good and goal—are therefore essential for achieving on a grander scale goals that personal prefiguration works towards.

In the words of geographer David Pepper, this kind of utopian thinking *and* practice (which can be read as prefigurative politics) play a crucial role in environmentalism because they provide conceptual and material space for developing the "transgressive potential" that is necessary for imagining a future ecological society and "crossing the boundaries of present society and moving closer to one which is ecological and socially strongly sustainable" (2007: 289; see also Centemeri and Asara 2022: 131). As Sbicca writes about the organization that used to run Wild Willow Educational Farm on the border with Tijuana, "Although imperfect, the

projects of San Diego Roots are a prefigurative alternative to capitalist wage labor systems" (2018: 89). Going back to Boggs, he quotes Andre Gorz's edited volume *The Division of Labor*, saying, "There is no such thing as communism without a communist life-style or 'culture'; but a communist life-style cannot be based upon the technology, institutions, and division of labor which derive from capitalism" (1977: 7; from Gorz 1976: xi). In other words, something entirely new must be created and enacted by the workers themselves, something that does not perpetuate the same alienating, exploitative, and hierarchical forces that exist all around them. This is a huge challenge. And at the same time, as anthropologist Angosto-Ferrández writes:

> …for believers, optimists, and for some anthropologists, things are as they are, but they can always be substantially different. And for the anthropologists in particular that is precisely *the* law that can be considered to rest in nature: if there is something they understand by human nature it is precisely the potential for social and cultural creation, and that is always connected with potential for political transformation. (2016: 2)

Change is always possible, especially when you know that things have been different before. New social and cultural creation, paired with the possibility for political transformation, is what humans and the rest of nature are good at. This gives hope that exploitative systems that exist today will not necessarily need to exist tomorrow.

An excellent example of this from my fieldwork comes from the work of the Ecosocialist Working Group of the San Diego chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), who featured prominently during my research time in Southeast San Diego and Tijuana. Ryan Wauson, a young white male-presenting person and someone who became a very good friend over the course of my engaged community work, helped lead a team of DSA members to regularly volunteer at the Mt. Hope Community Garden, run by Project New Village, as

mentioned in previous chapters. Over months of building relationships with gardeners in the space and with the director Diane Moss, in 2019 the DSA volunteers committed to collectively care for an individual garden plot. This was part of their organizing efforts to raise class consciousness in the area, as well as to extend their reach into underserved spaces of San Diego. Ryan led this team, and titled the DSA's work at Mt. Hope "Growing a Revolution in a Community Garden." Ryan wrote a report for this work, stating the Ecosocialist Working Group's goals for their individual plot and providing the political framework for their project. Ryan wrote:

> While the limited output of our 4' x 12' [garden] plot means that the material outcome of this goal will largely be symbolic, we view the work as both a prefigurative example that can possibly be scaled progressively as our group's capacity expands, and a means for our working group to acquire practical experience in crop cultivation. Meanwhile, this work will provide healthy, organic produce to those in greatest need, while expanding our chapter's footprint and showcasing the promise (at least at an embryonic level) of a "farm-to-table direct aid"-type system.
>
> …By engaging in both mass- and activist-oriented base building, we hope to organically raise the area's class consciousness. Our long-term goal is to attract not only additional DSA members, but is instead focused on earning the requisite credibility to form the foundations of a greater constellation of food and social justice-aligned groups in the region. In working in collaboration with other sympathetic organizations and previously unorganized working class people, we hope to build the class consciousness and organizing momentum necessary to articulate and build issue-based campaigns around tangible political objectives.
>
> Because the current corporate-owned market system denies the marginalized and working classes access to organic, healthy food, our task as socialists is to fill in the holes capitalism's systemic immorality refuses to ameliorate. From the Black Panther Party's Free Breakfast for School Children Program to Cuba's organopónicos, democratically produced and distributed food systems have played a substantial role in the left's history. Faced with widespread ecological collapse and the human immiseration of the present, we must strive to connect and organize with sympathetic people and organizations to build localized working class movements that will effectively fight for food justice and its

> intersections.
>
> To build a revolution as expansive as what our planet and its people deserve will require a complete reorganization of the present system's unsustainable production-consumption agricultural model. A left movement, then, should seek to construct alternative institutions that actively establish working class food sovereignty and develop class consciousness; in short, we need to feed the revolution.

Ryan and this group, with of course greater awareness of political and social organizing and critiques of current economic structures than those not engaged with socialist work, here makes explicit the prefigurative nature of their engagement with urban agriculture. Although still very aspirational, they understood that their group of young people, mostly male, with no agricultural or gardening experience, and growing in a very small plot were unlikely to produce any large amounts of food. Rather, they saw their work as building their own engagement with and relationship to food production, while also acting in a service capacity to the neighborhood they were working in. Furthermore, this community engagement and service was seen as one small part of "constructing alternative institutions" through "tangible political objectives," and explicitly brings in the ethical components of this work by denouncing "capitalism's systemic immorality." The work of the DSA Ecosocialist Working Group was resoundingly prefigurative. Over time, their work did not pan out as expected, in large part because of a reticence on Diane's part to really engage their politics and, perhaps resultantly, relationships with PNV fizzling out. As discussed in the previous chapter, PNV's movement away from community organizing and engaged food justice work also contributed to this, as well as the difficult nature of maintaining organizing momentum.[35] This is incredibly common, and I believe it should not be considered a

[35] My own relationship with Project New Village also deteriorated suddenly due, I believe, to ideological differences. Because of my connection to the DSA group, my departure from the Mt. Hope Community Garden was also a factor in the DSA's disengagement there.

failure—it was an important step in this iteration of prefigurative politics.

Boggs goes on to write about how and why this prefigurativism nearly always falls apart in workers movements: namely, that the very contradictions and controlling mechanisms of capitalism, such as bureaucratization, make it supremely difficult for workers to enact new participatory forms of organization in various ways. The "idea of 'collective ownership,'" he says, "remains a myth so long as the old forms of institutional control are not destroyed," (1977: 7) since many of the mechanisms of capitalism produce "a rigidity that resists fundamental change" (1977: 8). This is all to say that none of this is easy. Most of the time, we will collectively fail at bringing about the world we want to live in—not because our individual efforts to prefigure new ways of being are insufficient, but because the forces we are fighting resist change, and encourage cooptation (Polanyi 1944)[36]. But again, to not try is to succumb to the forces of self-obscurity that stagnate movements, and without those movements absolutely no change will happen. We must continue to *try*, and living with integrity is one way to make continued efforts more sustainable. As Naomi Klein writes in *This Changes Everything* (2014):

> …dropping out and planting vegetables is not an option for this generation. There can be no more green museums because the fossil fuels runaway train is coming for us one way or another. There may have been a time when engaging in resistance against a life-threatening system and building alternatives to that system could be meaningfully separated, but today we have to do both simultaneously: build and support inspiring alternatives…and make sure they have a fighting chance of thriving by trying to change an economic model so treacherous that nowhere is safe. John Jordan, a longtime ecological activist in Britain and France, describes resistance and alternatives as "the twin strands of the DNA of social change. One without the other is useless." (405)

We need movements that are not just negating systems, or protecting current ways of being, but

[36] As was discussed in previous chapters.

ones that are constructive—ones that are actively building an alternative economy, an alternative politics, an alternative social order based on very different principles and values. Joshua Sbicca keenly writes that "For food justice activists, the future relevance of the food movement rests on its ability to create more than alternatives; it must embrace confrontational politics" (2018: 27-28). Alternatives in and of themselves are not enough—we must actively pursue them in the face of hegemonic powers that support the status quo. Philosopher Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò describes this as "constructive politics," which concentrates on "building and rebuilding actual structures of social connection and movement, rather than mere critique of the ones we already have" (2022: 14). Raj Patel writes in *The Value of Nothing* (2009) that "…the passivity of the majority is what allows the powerful to rule. It is in this insight that we find the rocket fuel for Polanyi's double movement. The second part of the double movement, where society reclaims power from the market, happens through *demand*, not gift." (118) This demand is necessary for such a shift in values to happen. It is not given on a platter for those who perform the best under our current politico-economic systems, but rather requires active engagement and shaping of the world around us. In this way, we can shape our "local politics of value" (Patel 2009: 143).

Conclusion

As a side quest throughout this dissertation, I have interrogated what it takes to make an impactful social movement and how varying definitions of "impactful" can complicate this notion. For instance, for many food movement followers, particularly the white elite of today's movement, the movement is about a foodie identity. For others, particularly those most

marginalized and negatively affected by the corporate food regime,[37] the movement is about larger notions of political economy, class, and racial justice. Prefigurative politics is an essential component of that. I incorporate this analysis of discord within the food movement, as I referenced at the beginning of this chapter quoting Michael Pollan, with the intent to better understand how it might also apply to urban agriculture and the urban agriculture movement. I am interested in understanding how urban agriculture speaks in myriad, direct ways to critiques of the current corporate food regime, which is based in neoliberal capitalist forms of engaging and exploiting labor, resources, and imaginations. And the multi-faceted nature of these movements may actually be part of their strength—as Sbicca explains, "Food justice is potent politically precisely because of the plurality of its social justice demands, which demarcate sites of social struggle to transform some relation of subordination" (2018: 144). Doing this kind of social movement analysis from an anthropological perspective contributes and important ethnographic interpretation of collective behavior and the ways in which resistance and hope exists not only in mass demonstrations and protests, but also in everyday behavior. This perspective is a vital one to retain when developing a nuanced theory of social movements because of its ability to hold simultaneously both the minutiae of the everyday and overarching structural forces that are at play.

Besides speaking to the creation of social value and a sense of belonging and hope through participating in food cultivation, I am also making two overarching arguments about social movements in this dissertation. First, I argue that social movements are complicated and multifaceted, each with differing motivations, goals, and organizing parties. The same can be

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[37] For more discussion on food regimes, see Friedman 1987, 1993; Friedman and McMichael 1989; Holt-Giménez and Shattuck 2011; McMichael 2007, 2009.

said about the food movement itself—it is viewed as a conglomerate of very many social movements or groups of people interested in food for disparate reasons. Therefore, I make the case that a nuanced, hybrid, and multi-faceted theory of social movements is needed to make the movement effective. I also argue that urban agriculture, as one iteration of the food movement, also reflects this complexity and variation. Urban agriculture, mimicking the discord of the food movement, is both a counter-hegemonic activity and one that reifies neoliberalism simultaneously. This messiness is, in large part, due to the positionality of those involved in urban agriculture (i.e. their race, ethnicity, class, values, and political orientation), which influences specific iterations of the urban agriculture movement to occupy certain locations on the spectrum between neoliberal and radical.

Existing theoretical arguments concerning social movements[38] have contributed much to our understanding of such an interesting social phenomenon and have evolved greatly and positively over time, but they have fallen short in forcing contrived boundaries around a complex social reality. Social movements are complicated and multifaceted, each with differing motivations, goals, and organizing parties. The same can be said about the food movement itself —it is viewed as a conglomerate of very many social movements or groups of people interested in food for disparate reasons. It seeks to challenge the very foundations of the corporate food regime, but is nevertheless fraught with its own tensions and discrepancies. Comprised of two approaches that utilize distinct discourses, the food movement is perceived to be somewhat

[38] For more on social movement theory, see for instance Edelman 2001, Escobar 1992, Cohen 1985, Foweraker 1995, Gamson 1975, Klandermans 1991, Laclau 1985, Melucci 1988, McAdam 2002, McCarthy & Zald 1977, Nash 1992, Plotke 1990, and Turner & Killian 1957.

ineffective because of its disparate and divided nature—Michael Pollan's "big and lumpy tent, covering a wide range of concerns" (2016b). The progressive side of the food movement is governed largely by the discourse of food justice, which incorporates a deep critique of the ways in which the corporate food regime disproportionately negatively affects people of color, people from low socioeconomic statuses, women, Indigenous peoples, and others not typically in positions of power. This perspective calls for major changes to the current corporate-controlled food system. The radical side of the movement, alternatively, draws from politics further left on the political spectrum, and pushes for the discourse of food sovereignty. Rather than merely combatting sexism, racism, and other forms of oppression and injustice embedded in the corporate food regime, food sovereignty calls for the dismantling of this system entirely, calling for the right for people to govern their own food systems as they see fit (Carney 2011; Holt-Giménez and Shattuck 2011).

Urban agriculture, as one iteration of the food movement, also reflects the complexity and variation we see within social movements writ large and the food movement specifically. Because of this, urban agriculture is both a counter-hegemonic activity and one that reifies neoliberalism simultaneously. As I have shown throughout this dissertation, urban agriculture is defined in various ways depending on the perspective, motivations, inclinations, political goals, etc. of those employing the term (or related terms). I have also problematized urban agriculture as not quite radical enough, since it tends to lie squarely within the realm of the progressive approach. However, urban agriculture can also be seen as both neoliberal and radical

concurrently. Again pulling from Polanyi's Double Movement, urban agriculture dialectically and easily moves between these political and discursive realms, resulting in a complex and contradictory set of approaches to resisting and contesting the corporate food regime. Further inquiries into the complicated nature of urban agriculture and its movement have the potential to reveal interesting instances of hybridity, conflict, value, and discourse.

It could also help us to understand the question this chapter began with—"Is there even such a thing as a food movement?" (Haspel 2016). If Michael Pollan is right, then a concerted effort at bringing these voices together is the only way to make such a potential movement truly viable and effective. He writes: "So far at least, Big Food retains its grip on the levers of government that determine agricultural policy in this country and, in turn, the rules of the game that determines our food choices." However, "for the first time, that grip is being challenged by the food movement…. This loose, still somewhat inchoate coalition of activists bent on reforming the food system has been growing steadily and in recent years has begun to find its voice—or perhaps I should say voices" (2016b). I aim for this research to be a part of the effort of bringing these voices together while still maintaining them as coming from distinct and disparate perspectives.

This, in its own way, is an enactment of the hope that motivates the work of those in the urban agriculture and food justice movements of Tijuana-San Diego. This performance of prefigurative politics motivates the labor and time that goes into food cultivation, even when time and energy are the things most lacking from marginalized groups experiencing food

insecurity and apartheid. It also is what keeps growers going when the dissonance between the way they envision the world and the way it actually is continues to grow, creating existential threats and dread. This, because "People's longing for a relationship with food not grounded in subordination keeps a flicker of hope alive amid truly daunting odds" (Sbicca 2018: 190). Knowing that circumstances are not as they should be, but attempting to create examples of how it could be today, keep these sustainability-minded dreamers working the soil and connecting to land. Ricardo Arana calls this "plantando esperanza verde," or "planting green hope." Through urban agriculture, "Estamos plantando esperanza verde en cada rincón que podemos"—we are planting green hope on every corner we can (Arana 2015).

A Personal Reflection

> The future will be shaped by our will to imagine a different kind of market society, and new ways of valuing the world without resorting to the tic of free markets.
>
> -Raj Patel, *The Value of Nothing* (2009: 23)

Throughout the many years I existed while this dissertation was in progress, a persistent drumbeat has followed me throughout the ebbs and flows of the qualifying exam papers and defense, the fieldwork, the dissertation writing (or avoiding writing), the percolating of ideas, and everything in-between: this was the concept or idea of *hope*. Perhaps, rather, it was the *need* for hope that persisted. As I swam in the dark and endless waters of ennui, isolation, confusion, alienation, depression, imposter syndrome, anxiety, and everything else that tried to tear me apart from within, there was a part of me—sometimes so small as to not really be existent anymore—that clung to the need to have something to believe in. Why do all of this work if it is for nothing? Not just the dissertation, but the work of trying to fight for justice, or discover injustices, and the prefigurative politics of enacting the world I and the other urban agriculturists I worked with desired? Why do it if it amounts to nothing? If you are just buying soil from big box stores like Home Depot to grow your sad, expensive veggies, not knowing what a dupe you are for falling into the clutches of greedy capitalist monsters, then what hope is there for anything changing substantively?

As I wrap up this dissertation, I want to reflect on what it means to *continue* to do the work of urban agriculture and movement organizing. During graduate school, and even before, I felt a compulsion to bring people together to get to know one another, foster a sense of

community, and *get things done* together. In my mind, doing this fights against the atomism and alienation that often occurs in high-stress environments like grad school, and honestly it just *felt good* to feel in community with others who were in a similar situation and had similar goals, critiques, and desires for the world. Perhaps as a result of this orientation, I could not just look at urban agriculture as merely a leisure activity for those with enough time, resources, and access to engage in it—I had to see it as an act situated within a larger social milieu, a desire to create a sense of purpose and meaning, and a human need to not do this alone. My draw to issues of equity and unearthing injustices so as to move toward greater justice helped me to see those who grow food not just because it is fun—though of course it is also that—but because it is an ethical imperative to take care of oneself and one's family, one's community, in light of the reality of being abandoned by institutional and structural safety nets. When one realizes that corporations and government institutions, among others, do not have one's best interests in mind, one has a choice: continue to play the game and turn a blind eye to the negative costs it is heaping upon you, your family, and others like you or even worser off; or, find a way to move through, around, or outside of the system that has been set in place so as to limit the costs it incurs and, hopefully, increase your sense of wholeness in the process. As fraught as the latter process can be, I myself had to engage in it and I had to know I was not the only one. Seeing wonderful examples of people trying to make a difference compelled me to move forward. I had been thoroughly indoctrinated in the depressive pessimism of my discipline, and was able to find fault and holes everywhere I looked. But something inside of me needed to believe that it mattered, that *I* mattered, that what I did and what others do matters, even if it did not amount to a world-saving outcome.

Why engage in any kind of restorative, reparative, regenerative act if it is all for naught? I struggled with these existential questions every day, hoping that my personal and academic pursuits could lead me to an answer sufficient enough to keep me alive. Without that internal push, without that sense that what I was doing *mattered* at least to some degree, it all felt pointless. And perhaps it all was. For me, though, if it was pointless, I could not keep walking forward. At least not without feeling like I was a parasite on the system, or that my internal values were at deep odds with the "reality" of the situation. As a not-very-helpful therapist once told me, "Just eat your waffles and enjoy them!" But life, in my mind, had to be about more than hedonistic pleasures and pursuits. Of course, I enjoy a waffle as much as the next person—I used to host waffle parties in grad school, in fact—and I am deeply grateful for the access to such pleasures and the warmth that they bring, but I *have* to think more deeply than that. That waffle is not just a waffle: it was made by someone; created on instruments that were made by some machine somewhere; with ingredients grown on some land by some people or manufactured on equipment somewhere, overseen by humans; and my consuming it turns part of it to waste, which is flushed somewhere and sanitized, or placed into a heap—and all along the way, from beginning to end of this odd and complicated cycle, *people and other living beings are involved, impacted, affected*. I just cannot turn a blind eye to that, not without feeling like I am lying. I cannot believe that my actions have no impact on others, and that what I do is only for me.

Of course I matter. I matter because *everything* matters. What I do, who I choose to interact with, how I spend my time, what I say, how I treat others, how I am treated…and turtles all the way down. I exist within a web of meaning, and I am a crucial component of that web. I, probably more than some others in the world by sheer virtue of where I live and the privileges

afforded to me, impact the web in ways that I cannot not be entirely aware of. Of course I am not privy to every impact I make, but as soon as I am aware of them, I can no longer pretend not to know. Once I am aware, I have a moral obligation to remain aware, and to do my best with the privileges and responsibilities I have been given. Of course, this is not to say that everything is drudgery and work. It is important to enjoy life, as well, as that is also an imperative of gratitude. But enjoyment and responsibility do not have to be mutually exclusive.

And finally, I had to do things *authentically*, with all of the caveats and nuances of what that means and refers to. Anthropologists are good at tearing down, but not so great at building up. To me, if you are spending time tearing down, even if it is in the name of revealing inequity and power imbalances, you are equally responsible for the backlash that knowledge can bring for anyone involved. To treat it otherwise shows who your audience likely is, and it probably is not comprised of the people you claim to be supporting. One benefit of this "tearing down" that anthropologists are good at, however, is that it almost forces authenticity—unless you are willing to really split yourself up into multiple, unintelligible, and contradictory parts. If buying soil from that big box store makes me part of the capitalist machine—and I agree, it does, whether I know it or not—then I will do what I can to not be part of it. I will *make* my own soil by composting my food waste. I will drive down to the Miramar landfill and fill up a truck bed with free compost that came from municipal yard waste processing. I will support the local urban homesteading nursery and the neighborhood composters and get soil from them. This is my type of authenticity. To me that means that with new information comes new responsibility to do better, and be better. With the caveat, of course, that none of us is perfect or pure in the systems we are embedded in—that is an impossibility. But there are certainly ways to get to the fringes of

the system if you are willing to make sacrifices, try things anew, and live differently. This may sound like more than a chore, but I would argue that the benefits, both personal and collective, outweigh the costs.

Conclusion

Urban Agriculture on the Border: A Call for New Kinds of Values

> Value is not made up of money, but a tender balance of expectation and longing.
> -Barbara Kingsolver, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* (2007: 292-293)

> When asked why we eat food, few think further than the fact that food is necessary to support the life and growth of the human body. Beyond this, however, there is the deeper question of the relationship of food to the human spirit.
> -Masanobu Fukuoka, *One Straw Revolution* (1978: 134)

"The first step toward valuing and trusting food is probably eating food that has some integrity," says Camille Kingsolver in her mother's book *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* (2007), by Barbara Kingsolver. For Camille, as for many who want to and do develop closer relationships to their food (where it comes from, how it grows, how to prepare it in delicious ways, who grows it, etc.), food is much more than about calories and energy, especially for bargain-shopped cheap calories that are fed to us as ultra-processed conveniences to fit with our busy lives (see Moss 2014). Instead, for Camille Kingsolver and others in the food movement, food expands normal, daily life into a celebration. "It's not just about the food," she says, "but the experience of creating and then consuming it. People need families and communities for this kind of experience… Becoming familiar with the process of food production generates…respect" (2007: 292-293). Integrity, community, and respect for the natural world and what it gives us—these values are central in the urban agriculture and food movements.

Over the years this dissertation was in the works—more than I would have liked, but perhaps just what was necessary—San Diego and Tijuana's urban and rural agricultural

landscape underwent drastic changes. Wild Willow Farm and Education Center, along with the farms and gardens in the Tijuana River Valley Community Garden—such as Pixca Farm and carbon farming test plots from the Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County—experienced devastating floods when heavy rains came, at least four times. Situated in a riverine valley, these farms were directly in the pathway for water surges from the nearby ocean, which would drag in much of the pollution the Tijuana River and Imperial Beach ocean water are known for. Crippling the businesses and livelihoods of the farmers and gardeners in this area, and transforming the landscape in turn, these flood events would be followed by community fundraising and opportunities to help get the growing spaces back on their feet (see Illustration 13). Over time, the farms came back, continuing their CSAs, recruiting volunteers for workdays, selling flowers, and offering workshops to spread knowledge about farming and gardening.

Support for local food production also grew between 2017 and 2022. Through this time, and after many years of advocation from the San Diego Food System Alliance and other partners, the Urban Agriculture Incentive Zone ordinance[39] was implemented in Chula Vista (2018) and then in the City of San Diego (2020), which was meant to support local growers in metropolitan regions gain access to land, thereby encouraging the growth of community gardens and urban farms in city settings.[40] And in January 2022, San Diego County allocated $7 million in federal funding towards community gardens and food production projects. Specifically, this would provide grants to non-profits, administered by the San Diego Foundation, with the intent to provide more fresh and locally grown fruits and vegetables.

[39] Made possible due to the Urban Agriculture Incentive Zones Act, California Assembly Bill No. 551 (AB 551), implemented in 2014.

[40] This program, however, has so far proven to be fairly and sadly ineffective—a topic I plan to write about more at a later date.

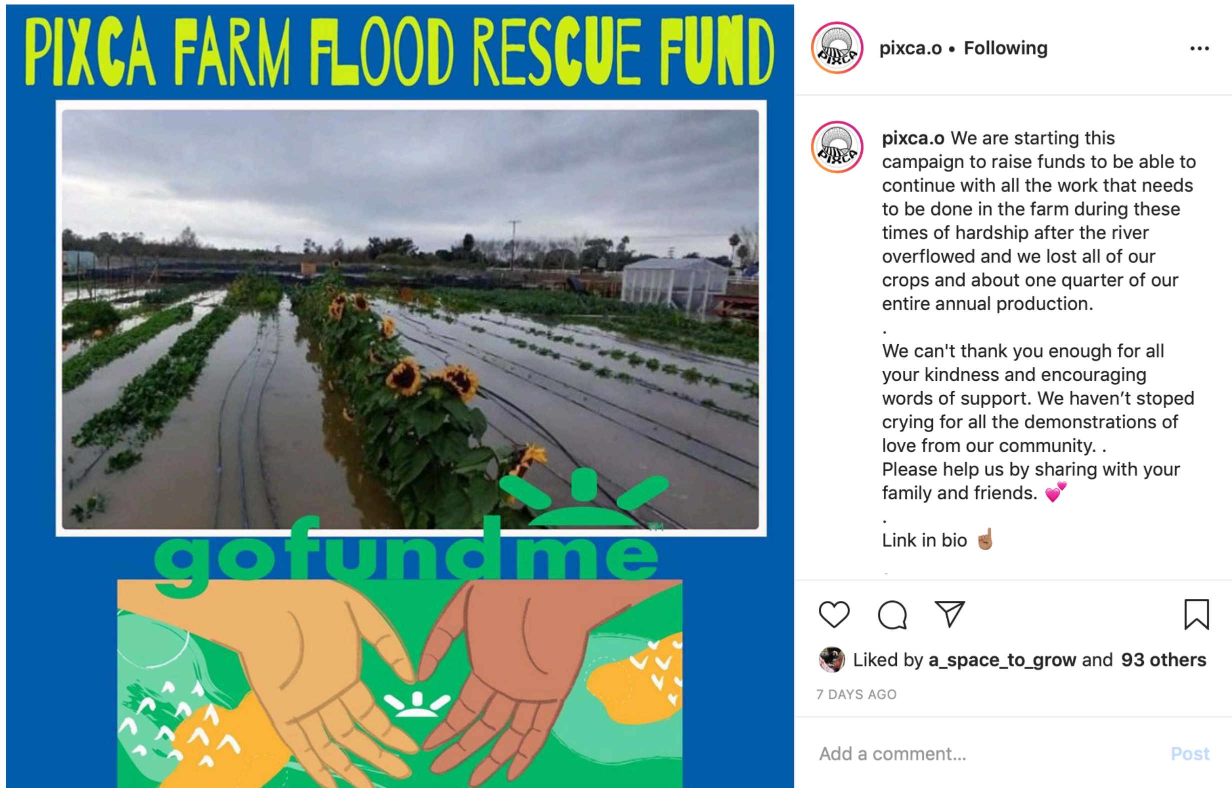

Illustration 13. An example of a flooding event in December 2019. Pixca Farm, a Latine-run and cooperatively-owned farm in the Tijuana River Valley on the U.S. side of the border, underwent several flooding events during the time I conducted fieldwork and wrote this dissertation. Fundraising campaigns like this through social media (in this case, Instagram) helped farms like Pixca get back on their feet after the monetary losses involved with the floods.

The Covid-19 pandemic also contributed significantly to the changing urban agriculture landscape in the Tijuana-San Diego bioregion. In March 2020, San Diegans were ordered to shelter-in-place, like many others around the globe. This caused a rippling effect on health, the economy, and consumer behavior. As panic and uncertainty spread, grocery store shelves quickly emptied as people hoarded resources. Staple foods such as grains and flours became hard to find and, nationwide, we entered into a period of shortages of food- and health- related products.

Through this scarcity, many were forced to consider how current food systems are designed to perpetuate cycles of dependency and insecurity. Topics of self-sufficiency and self-

reliance came to the forefront of local and national conversations. The *Washington Post*, *NPR*, and *Psychology Today* all heralded gardening as a source of solace, well-being, and connection during a time of stay-at-home orders and social-distancing. Many first-time gardeners tried their hands at starting a vegetable garden, even if only on their kitchen windowsill or in potted plants on their balcony (Mayer 2020). Parents no longer working outside the home and children home from school began using gardening as an outdoor activity as well as a learning exercise. Thus, gardening was championed as a coping mechanism for dealing with the stresses of living through a global pandemic (Alford 2020; see also Peterson 2020). For the only local seed company in the region, San Diego Seed Company—where I worked as a farmhand in 2020-2021 during the pandemic—this meant that seed sales skyrocketed, especially as bigger seed companies like Baker Creek and Johnny's ran out of stock and were backordered for over a year's time. This of course bolstered local gardening and farming businesses, and drew more Tijuana-San Diego residents into the urban agriculture fold.

When the pandemic forced residents into lockdown, agriculture writ large was of course considered an essential industry—and this extended to small food-growing operations, as well. At the time I was working as a culinary gardener with Dickinson Farm in National City, and from that vantage point I was privy to the fact that CSA (community supported agriculture) programs and food sales at small-scale local farms exploded during this time. This was the case at Dickinson Farm, as well, where we scrambled to keep up—both in labor and in planting on our small 1/4 acre plot—with the large amount of food shipments we were making on a weekly basis. Again, because of food shortages, scares, and food chain distribution disruptions, people were suddenly more aware of what it takes to get food to their plate, and they were forced to look

into alternative means of procuring food when shortages happened. There was also the ethos, at least among some, that food from local farms was healthier than food from a grocery store—and during the pandemic, the general public was largely hyper vigilant about health and safety. From a local urban farmers' perspective, it was certainly a busy time, and an oddly exciting one for the cause of local food growing, despite the fear, pain, and uncertainty the pandemic brought with it in other realms.

El Jardín Binacional de la Amistad

At the same time, however, the pandemic brought less hopeful news to the cross-border urban agriculture scene. Tijuana—with a greater number of residents than San Diego and with many working in maquiladoras, restaurants, construction, and commerce—was hit hard by the pandemic. Although the border was closed in March, many businesses on the México side, both formal and especially informal, had a difficult time stopping operation, so Covid cases soared and the mortality rate was double the national average in 2020. Lacking hospital infrastructure also complicated this picture (Reuters 2020). During this chaos, the U.S. government attacked an important symbol of solidarity and kinship between the two cities and nations: the Jardín Binacional de la Amistad, or the Friendship Garden (see Illustrations 14 and 15).

Inaugurated in 1971 by First Lady Pat Nixon, this half-acre plot that straddles the border where it meets the Pacific Ocean highlights edible foods and native plants. It has become a demonstration site, at least on the Tijuana side of the fence, for urban agriculture and environmental sustainability—how to grow food, how to tend to native perennials, how to care for soil and avoid erosion, and how to live and think more ecologically. Known as Friendship

Illustration 14. An optical illusion of sorts, when looked at from another angle by stepping to the left, the border fence art now reads "Binational Garden."

Park or Border Field State Park on the San Diego side, this symbol of international amity between the two countries had only a barbed wire fence separating the two sides of the park when it started in the 1970s. The idea was that people of the two nations could meet and reach across to shake hands and touch—of course under the watch of the U.S. Border Patrol. In 1994, however, fear and hysteria around runaway illegal immigration from México led the U.S. Border Patrol to install a 14-mile long border fence, extending into the Pacific Ocean and starting, sadly enough, at the Jardín Binacional (see Illustration 16).

Illustration 15. The Jardín Binacional de la Amistad is located directly on the border, spanning both sides. I took this photo from the Tijuana side of the garden. When looking at the border fence at this angle it spells out "Jardín Binacional."

After the attacks on September 11, 2001 in the United States, the fence was strengthened to the extent that people on either side of the border could no longer have any physical contact or exchange. The garden within friendship park was first planned out in 2007 by students from El Colegio de Tijuana and Kearney Mesa High School. It was then planted during a Border Encuentro ("Border Encounter") event during the Salvemos la Playa ("let's save the beach") cleaning effort within an environmental festival. Friendship Park was closed in 2009 by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, during which time they installed a second, parallel fence that

Illustration 16. Just 50 yards from the Jardín Binacional, located in Las Playas de Tijuana, the tall border fence extends into the ocean.

included barbed wire, sensors, and surveillance cameras. In addition, a 20-foot wide Border Patrol access road and a third, 20-foot wall was erected. However, in 2012, public pressure from the local community was effective in reopening the park, but not before an outer perimeter fence blocking public access—except when permitted by Border Patrol—was put in place. Daniel Watman, a young U.S. man and founder of Border Encuentro and the Jardín Binacional, said in a 2013 TEDx Joven@Zona Río talk that:

> The Binational Garden now doesn't have the same purpose that it had at the beginning, of bringing people together. We have limited access. At least we can

> go in and maintain it and continue, as I mentioned, with our activities, even though there are many restrictions. And well, this, like I mentioned, let's us continue with this idea of getting to know each other and make friendships, and at the same time there are lots of restrictions. And why is that? Because in politics force and militarization are priorities on the border… So I ask myself, what would happen if we changed our priority to include friendship across the border? What if it were part of the politics of the border?… But it's possible that if that were the priority, we wouldn't have walls anymore. (Watman 2013)

On the U.S. side, no more than ten visitors at a time are allowed into the space to try to see and communicate with loved ones on the México side of the border (Friends of Friendship Park 2022; Malone 2020).

In 2015, the Binational Friendship Garden team on the Mexican side joined forces with urban agriculture and food justice group Cultiva Ya! Together, they created a food program called "Realimenta Comunidad" (Re-feeding Community) and held workshops on growing food, building raised beds, and the importance of self-sufficiency and urban agriculture. Through these workshops, raised beds for growing food were added to the garden. One of the current leaders of the site, Ricardo Arana—director of Cultiva Ya! and someone we have heard from in other parts of this dissertation—gave a critical recounting of the origins of the site:

> This place used to be called "Bordo Farms." It's one of the wild and cool things about urban agriculture, is that it's ephemeral. People think that we put a garden in and it stays there for hundreds of years, but the truth is that urban agriculture is really ephemeral. It happens, and…it's really migratory. But at that time, that project was one that some young people started from one of those arms of…like, the International Monetary Fund, or the World Bank, one of those terrible entities. And they have these groups called "Global Shapers," who are young people who are, I guess, preparing for 21st-century capitalism. And those from Tijuana actually had a really good idea that was really logical, very simple, sensible, and human-oriented.
>
> Someone named Miguel Marshall came to us, who was the one leading the project at the time. And he told us, "Hey, look, what's happening at the border between Tijuana and Mexicali is we're receiving, I believe, like 65,000 or 90,000

deportees every year, and the majority of them end up on the street, many in the Tijuana River Canal. So you know, they are the first or second highest earning people, those who cross the border, and normally they send remittances to our country. The economy of this country lives off of petroleum and people living in other countries, burning money from their homes. So when people come here for the second time, we treat them the worst. As soon as a deportee arrives in Tijuana, Mexicali, or in México in general, the first thing that's going to happen is that the police are going to abuse them, take away their money, their identification documents, everything they've had. And they're going to be in a situation even more vulnerable than they were already in. So the logic is economic, really. If they are the group with the highest income, why don't we try to treat them with dignity?" So from there the idea arose to put in gardens near the canal and work with people who are houseless to offer them an alternative for food, for making an income, for self-awareness. And it was a project that lasted many months, and it was really, really interesting.

I think the biggest success was that it brought together many different sectors of society, and every one of us were doing things on our side. And that project was a space where we could all participate. And like with all things that are trying to transform society, the first thing the government did was take it out and get rid of it. I don't think it's new that the Tijuana River Canal—not as much now—but normally, for many years, it's been a huge place for the sale of drugs, and also human trafficking, and commodity trafficking. And that really affected the situation, the coalitions that were forming at that time. It affected *someone's* interests, and it was a bigger opportunity to send these people to rehabilitation centers, without their consent. And that's when things changed. So they cancelled the gardens at the canal, and what we did was take our gardens to other spaces, like here for example [referring to the Jardín Binacional]. That was in 2015. (Arana 2023)

These workshops and emphasis on urban food production extend to today, with Cultiva Ya! and other organizations holding sustainability and urban agriculture-oriented events, learning opportunities, and skill-building workshops. Urban food production, mixed with native plant species appreciation, is therefore the theme of the agricultural part of the garden, at least on the Mexican side of the border wall. And these all serve as symbols of the importance of *amistad* (friendship) and community.

Then, on January 8, 2020, without warning and just a couple of months before pandemic lockdown would change so much for so many, California Border Patrol had a contractor bulldoze the Binational Friendship Garden, including 120 deep-rooted plants, a 500 pound eco-bench, a heavy-duty information sign, and all pathways leading to and from the space. Half of the garden, the result of thousands of community volunteer hours and years of growth and which had been planted on both sides of the fence to engender friendship between the two countries, was demolished in the span of a few hours. Parking guards on the Mexican side captured photos of the destruction, and their posts on social media were quickly picked up by the media. San Diego sector Border Patrol chief Douglas E. Harrison's formal statement justifying the destruction of the garden was:

> Traffickers cut the legacy border mesh and were using the binational garden to cover illegal activities. We had to take measures to eliminate the vulnerability. I contacted Friends of the Friendship Park and will meet with them to discuss the next steps. (Malone 2020: 362)

These accusations and the lack of warning around destroying the garden—not to mention the razing of the garden itself—incensed local groups, with outcry from both sides of the order (see Watman 2023). Chief Harrison was compelled to apologize, writing on Twitter:

> I met with [Friends of the Friendship Park] today & apologized for the unintentional destruction of the garden. The original intent was to have the garden trimmed. We take full responsibility, are investigating the event, and look forward to working with FoFP [Friends of Friendship Park] on the path forward. (Malone 2020: 362)

Just two weeks later, volunteers on the U.S. side were allowed to partially replant the native species that had been destroyed. The number of volunteers to the area tripled in light of the devastation, but the pandemic halted forward progress for several months. With special

arrangements made with San Diego Border Patrol, volunteers have been able to slowly work to bring the garden back to life (Friends of Friendship Park 2022). Several years later, near the end of the most chaotic parts of the pandemic, Friendship Park on the U.S. side still remains closed and plans from the U.S. government to build yet another and now 30-foot tall wall are underway, though progressing slowly due to public pressure and dissent (Del Bosque 2023, Yurrita 2023).

Cross-coalition advocacy from those on both the San Diego and the Tijuana sides continue today, calling on the U.S. government to reopen Friendship Park, rebuild the garden space, and rethink an even taller and more obscuring border wall (see Illustration 17). In September 2022, community members held a design summit—led by James Brown, the original architect of Friendship Park—to communicate with stakeholders and the California Border Patrol their visions for the future of the park (ABC 10 2022). Members of the group Friends of Friendship Park have even trespassed into the closed area to send a message to U.S. authorities that such disconnection between the spaces cannot persist (WFXR FOX 2023).

Friendship Park architect James Brown said aptly that "'Our culturally rich border region is ultimately made stronger and safer through cooperation instead of fear. The best security that we can attain is not achieved by force, but by friendship… Our nations need a symbol of solidarity at this moment in our shared histories'" (quoted in Malone 2020: 375). On the Tijuana side, the park and garden bring together church services, food vendors, weddings, family reunions, and musicians.[41] And on both sides of the busiest land-crossing border in the world, both Mexican and U.S. volunteers tend the Jardín Binacional.

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[41] An annual "Fandango at the Wall" or "Fandango Fronterizo" event always draws a big crowd on both sides of the border and lots of wonderful music.

Friendship Park / El Parque de la Amistad

1d ·

Come and join us on Sunday, May 21st at 1 PM as we march in protest against the 30ft walls that are being built right at Friendship Park!
#NoWallAtFriendshipPark #FamilyUnites #savefriendshippark #FandangoFronterizo #Buildparksnotprisions #StopWallBuildPark #BidenAdministration #usmxborder

Stop the Wall! Build the Park! MARCH

March with us on Sunday, May 21st, 1pm
Gather at Border Field State Park parking lot. 1250 Monument Road, San Diego 92154

Illustration 17. In 2023, demonstrations to resist the building of a further 30 foot border wall, a vestige of former President Trump's anti-immigrant (and anti-Mexican) policies, are ongoing.

That the symbol of unity between these two disparate and yet deeply similar spaces is a garden space is telling. Gardening, growing food, tending to native flora and understanding its importance to the area—these are all acts that connect people to space, to the Earth and the earth,

and to each other. The notion that we can use of food to break down social boundaries and foster solidarity across difference is embedded in the urban agriculture movement. New models of relating to one another are borne of these efforts to rethink the political, economic, and social systems that were built before us and that we find ourselves in (see Illustration 18). Ricardo Arana put it succinctly when he said:

> This place is called Jardín Binacional (Binational Garden) or Jardín Nativo del Jardín Binacional (The Native Garden of the Binational Garden). We are dedicated to growing native plants right in front of the border wall to say that we prefer gardens and not walls. We prefer friendship and not hate. And just like this new wall they put up is really tall, these natives plants have roots that go down 30 feet. And surely these plants will last much longer than this wall here. In the 16 years we've been working on this garden, they've changed the wall twice already, so surely it will change again. (Arana 2023)

Urban agriculture is a way to envision something new and different, something potentially better, than the violent borders that surround us and separate us through systemic forces of neoliberal capitalism, corporately-run food systems, and Western legacies of the nature-culture divide.

Landscapes and rivers that know no political borders have been bifurcated by warring and land-hungry nation-states. Tijuana and San Diego, especially, are separated by a border—made entirely physical by the U.S. government and constantly in flux, as seen in the previous story of the Jardín Binacional de la Amistad—that is incredibly artificial (as in, not tied to topographic features in the landscape). Even the Tijuana River is bisected in an attempt to create boundaries between one nation and another, in a region better characterized in biological terms as one whole, rather than distinct parts. Rather than inevitable, this border therefore feels indelibly imposed. Tijuana and San Diego share the same landscape, climate, weather, and waterways. The Tijuana River, as it passes through the valley, ebbs and flows across both sides

Jardín binacional de amistad/Binational Friendship Garden
updated their profile picture.
Yesterday at 1:04 PM ·

Cuando visitó el jardín el nuevo jefe de la patrulla fronteriza en San Diego principios de 2018 hablamos de ideas para el diseño y en un momento dijo "That's too Mexican" a proponer una idea. El quería que tuviera un diseño diferente del lado eeuu que del lado mexicano. Parece que no entendió el concepto del jardín de crear un solo jardín sin fronteras. Seguimos luchando para que el jardín transmita ese mensaje. Como que la naturaleza nos quería mandar una seña que vamos bien no? Foto de Maria Teresa Fernandez.

16 1 Share

Illustration 18. A screenshot of the Jardín Binacional's Facebook page from July 2019. It reads, "When the new chief of the border patrol in San Diego visited the garden in early 2018, we talked about ideas for the design of the fence mural. At one point when an idea was proposed, the chief said 'That's too Mexican." He wanted the design to be different on the U.S. side from how it is on the Mexican side. It seems he didn't understand the concept behind the garden of creating a single garden space without borders. We will continue to fight so that the garden transmits that message. It's like nature wanted to send us a sign that we're doing well, right? Photo is by María Teresa Fernández."

of the border. This environmental unity between the two spaces, if not political or economic unity—though the case could be made for those, as well—brings together a cross-border community that is several million strong. The permeations of this border space by those engaged in urban agriculture is one instantiation of how local people, in everyday acts of prefigurative politics and systems change, are trying to push for values beyond profit, replacing them with values emphasizing humanity, community, and connection to land and place. As Patel writes, "Under market society, the social bonds of exchange fall under the sign of profit" (2009: 57). These actors are therefore working to act outside of a market society, so that social bonds can be based in something other than profit. In so doing, they hold tight to a sense of hope—that things not only *should* change, but that they *can*. And that collective behavior, with all of its messiness and ineffectiveness, can help get us to a better tomorrow.

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have attempted to provide a basis from which to understand the interrelated and complementary concepts of place, self-determination, community, hope, and social value as applied to the urban agriculture movement. In this space, there is there is of course an existent desire to grow nutritious and healthy food; but there is also a deeper, perhaps more existential desire to commit oneself to important tasks that contribute to the building of community and to the larger goals of creating alternative food systems. In this way, the cultivating of crops and the crafting of a life mutually inform each other, and are ultimately inseparable.

I have adopted an ethnographic and holistic approach to looking at the urban agriculture

movement in Tijuana and San Diego. This qualitative lens provides a view of the everyday for those engaged in urban agriculture and food justice work and advocacy, which allows for an important examination of the link between the personal and the political (Counihan and Van Esterik 2008; Magdoff et al 2000; Guthman 2004). It also highlights the importance of networks and local and actor agencies (Phillips 2006), rather than merely structures, especially in the midst of commodity globalization. This is key for achieving an appropriate balance between these two sides of the same coin: the personal and the structural. As Phillips argues, "Commodities cannot be understood outside the networks of meaning and power in which they are circulated." This perspective then "opens up lines of inquiry that challenge the idea of globalization as a predominantly economic, hegemonic, or singular process" (2006: 40). Again, the anthropological focus on everyday lived experiences and forms of resistance can help to upset—or, better, balance—that structuralist perspective. In this way, this project contributes a critical lens through which to better comprehend the numerous social movements of sustainability and environmentalism that currently permeate international discourses (Milton 1996; Shutkln 2000). It not only lends itself to investigate the values of environmental and social justice, it aims to go further by highlighting the voices of those involved in urban agricultural efforts, which unfortunately are seldomly taken into account.

Throughout this work, I look at the cultural node of urban agriculture from various angles. I elucidate the ways in which place becomes a central factor in the creation and maintenance of community (Brandenburg and Carroll 1995; Brehm et al 2013; Brook 2003; Kyle and Chick 2007; Head et al 2014; Lefebvre 1974). I also provide a critical lens through which to analyze capitalist modes of production and unequal food distribution models, furthering

anthropological studies that document how the retraction of governmental social services in light of neoliberal economic policies most negatively affects the poor and marginalized (Bush 2010; Chakrabarty 2009; Escobar 1995; Ferguson 2015; Fischer and Benson 2006; Harvey 2008; Satterthwaite et al 2010).

Although this research builds off of and expands current anthropological literature on food production, political economy, and race and ethnicity, in a more on-the-ground approach I want it to be part of creating strong linkages between the university and outlying communities. The university, as a site for the production of knowledge, has historically been separated and held above the public. This "ivory tower" model, although persistent and pervasive, has also proven to be very harmful for the ideas of inclusion, equity, and access to knowledge. This dissertation's work can be helpful and instructive to those doing work on the ground, as well, helping to create a strong narrative from which the work of urban food production and ethical community creation can build. Not only that, but in my roles as a farmer, gardener, scholar, and instructor, I engaged and continue to engage in community food and agricultural education. Whether that was instructing high school students on how to prepare the soil for new transplants; or showing a group of leftist volunteers how to plant new seeds; or offering a college class on the intersections of food, sustainability, and culture—both in academia and outside, education is vital to helping change our relationship to the world around us and imagine new possibilities for the future. And not only in a wistful kind of way, but in a grounding of knowledge and engagement in the issues and institutions that impact a community's quality of life. This political foundation is what allows communities and the individuals that comprise it to place authentic demands on

the institutions and systems that effect them, thereby having any chance of making change in larger, structural ways.

In this work, I have also aimed to amplify the voices of underserved and marginalized individuals and communities involved in urban agricultural efforts. In this, I engage in an activism that pushes for an engaged social science that can have an important influence from the bottom-up while simultaneously interacting with top-down institutions. Trying to do this kind of community-inspired research and advocacy within the walls of academia is not easy, in large part because academia has not traditionally rewarded this kind of labor and perspective and because doing bottom-up work from within a top-down structure is a very confusing endeavor. At the same time, utilizing the power of these institutions to do important work for those doing the everyday, on-the-ground work of moving forward new social movements can and has had big implications for helping to create more equitable social systems that are cognizant of their built-in inequalities. In my work, I aim to aid in understanding how certain groups of people are marginalized and minoritized in urban settings—politically, alimentary, socially—and how cultural identities are preserved and resilience is created in the face of such oppression, such as through the manifestation of urban agriculture. And importantly, this organizing work around the production of food and ethical, environmental values and communities helps to deepen democracy and autonomy within these underserved, urban spaces, essentially redefining what governance and governability mean and uplifting the grassroots perspective (Appadurai 2001).

I have also argued here that one iteration of the food movement—the urban agriculture movement—reflects the complexity and variation we see within social movements and the food movement. Because of this, urban agriculture is both a counter-hegemonic activity and one that

concretizes neoliberalism simultaneously. This messiness, in large part, is due to the positionality of those involved in urban agriculture (e.g. their race, ethnicity, class, values, and political orientation), which influences specific iterations of the urban agriculture movement to occupy certain locations on the spectrum between neoliberal and radical. BIPOC farmers and gardeners, for instance, tend to have more radical positionalities and epistemologies, leading to urban agricultural projects that attempt to challenge the status quo. Of course, this is not monolithic nor is it exclusive. Many white farmers and gardeners were also involved in more radical projects, as well. At the same time, most white gardeners and farmers upheld neoliberal ideologies in their growing projects, not using them as vehicles to challenge existing inequities in the food system, but rather as a fun aesthetic project to partake in. Many of the white farmers and gardeners I interacted with came from more well-off backgrounds, and therefore did not have personal experience with the faults and active exclusions built into the food system.

As I have shown, urban agriculture is defined in various ways depending on the perspective, motivations, inclinations, political goals, etc. of those employing the term (or related terms). I have also problematized urban agriculture as not quite radical enough, since it tends to lie squarely within the realm of the progressive approach. However, urban agriculture can also be seen as both neoliberal and radical concurrently. Again pulling from Polanyi's Double Movement, urban agriculture dialectically and easily moves between these political and discursive realms, resulting in a complex and contradictory set of approaches to resisting and contesting the corporate food regime. Further inquiries into the complicated nature of urban agriculture and its movement have the potential to reveal interesting instances of hybridity, conflict, value, and discourse.

I have attempted to provide a basis from which to understand the interrelated and complimentary concepts of place, community, and hope among urban agriculture practitioners and food justice advocates. The theoretical underpinnings of these concepts are varied, but each rests on the concept of value and meaning. Place and space are constructs that are shaped and negotiated by value and meaning in the creation of the concept of community. However, in a neoliberal capitalist political-economic climate, place has become commodified and devalued according to capitalist notions of the terms, leading to a concomitant breaking apart of community. This is because community is a place-based concept and value, as well as an aspirational ideal. In all of this, urban agriculture emerges as a cultural fact positioned at the nexus of the relationships between these concepts, with hope-filled grassroots efforts to re-cultivate place-based community through a social movement poised to challenge the taken-for-granted hegemonic values and valuations within neoliberal capitalism. Urban agriculture pushes for alternative ways of valuing and of socially organizing. In these ways, urban agriculture serves as a site for the act of place-making (i.e. the creation of place and place as an action), for community, and for urban food growers to negotiate personal and collective value and meaning. Urban agriculture projects can therefore serve as sites of resistance against certain demands of capitalist valuation.

My overarching goal for this dissertation has been to understand the ways value plays out in the urban agriculture movement in San Diego and Tijuana. To me, it was striking how the word "value" came to mean so many different things to so many people in the movement, and yet was the binding force between them, each in their own struggle to determine what that meant. Was the main value profit, to be gained from farming as a business? Or, in contradistinction to

that view, was value about building community and *not* emphasizing profit? Was it about being connected to land and space? Or perhaps a way to make alternative visions of the world a reality in the here-and-now?

Naomi Klein writes that "Fundamentally, the task is to articulate not just an alternative set of policy proposals but an alternative worldview to rival the one at the heart of the ecological crisis—embedded in interdependence rather than hyper-individualism, reciprocity rather than dominance, and cooperation rather than hierarchy." She continues, saying that this is a:

> …lesson from the transformative movements of the past: all of them understood that the process of shifting cultural values—though somewhat ephemeral and difficult to quantify—was central to their work. And so they dreamed in public, showed humanity a better version of itself, modeled different values in their own behavior, and in the process liberated the political imagination and rapidly altered the sense of what was possible. They were also unafraid of the language of morality—to give the pragmatic, cost-benefit arguments a rest and speak of right and wrong, of love and indignation. (2014: 465)

Klein argues that only by emphasizing the moral prerogatives behind changes to the status quo will we be able to get things to improve. Stressing the right and wrong, and building new and better values, is one of the most powerful tools we have to collectively fight oppressive institutions and social orders.

APPENDIX I

Description of Methods

This appendix includes a more detailed description of the methods I employed while conducting fieldwork for this dissertation.

Archival and Document and Media Collection

Archival research of primary and secondary sources helped to provide a backdrop to compare and contrast current proposed initiatives to address unequal food distribution with historical attempts. I explored land grants, government policies, and newspapers surrounding issues of farmland, urban agriculture policy, and zoning based on racial and ethnic demographics at public libraries and governmental archives. Some of these locations included the Archivo Histórico de Tijuana, the San Diego County Clerk of the Board of Supervisors archives, San Diego County Public Records, The San Diego History Center Research Archives, San Diego Public Records, and the University of California, San Diego Library. I also explored newspapers, magazines, social media, and other more public records in order to gain an idea of public perceptions and opinions.

Just as spoken words collected through interviews can be transcribed and analyzed as textual data, I utilized written words and images as part of my data collection. I collected data from newspapers, magazines (such as Edible San Diego), social media sources, YouTube videos, and participants' personal archives. This consisted of relevant documents and contemporary media documents. Media resources and documents were examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge concerning the values and identities of urban growers (Bowen 2009).

Participant Observation

A staple of ethnographic work, I participated in and observed a diverse array of events, demonstrations, meetings, educational programs, etc. at gardens and farms, conferences, community gatherings, and many other spaces during the course of my research. This particular method allowed me to collect experiential data and to spend a significant amount of time with research participants while they engaged in practices of urban agriculture and related activities. Participant observation is often a starting point for entering the field and building relationships with research participants, and is an important part of maintaining those relationships. This allows for a deeper understanding of social context, which strengthens both data collection and analysis (Geertz 1973). It allows the researcher to get an understanding of the state of the field site, illustrate relationships between actors, and inform interviews and later data collection (Bernard 1998, 2011), which was certainly true in my case. An integral part of my participant observation was the tracking of observations, insights, and experiences through field notes and journals. I kept detailed notes and a personal journal throughout the course of fieldwork and transcribed them for analysis. In doing this, I developed a recursive approach of examining research objectives and developing new questions while conducting fieldwork. I engaged in participant observation in many spaces throughout Tijuana and San Diego, including gardens,

farms, meetings of community organizations and local governments, classes, forums, farmers' markets, and hearings focused on gardening, farming, land use, food, and sustainability practices.

I also became very engaged with several locations during my fieldwork, as I took on an employee or consultant role with them. These included Mt. Hope Community Garden, where I served as a Food Production Manager for eight months helping to grow food and lead volunteer groups at the garden, as well as selling produce at the farmers' markets in Chollas View and Lemon Grove; Dickinson Farm, where I worked as the Culinary Gardener for eight months; San Diego Seed Company, where I worked as a farmhand for seven months; and worked as a Soil Farmer, or neighborhood composter, for eight months with the organization Food2Soil.

Photography and Video Recording

I utilized photography and video recording throughout all of my dissertation research. Visual forms of ethnography, such as photography and video, enrich our understanding of cultural practices and can be used to offer a more descriptive illustration of the research problem. Furthermore, visual ethnography is a productive method for person-centered and collective approaches to anthropology since it adds a component of recording body mechanics and comparing how those relate to emotional expression and communication (Lemelson and Tucker 2017). I used digital photography and video recordings of public work activities and events at the urban farms and gardens I visited or worked at, as well as of political and government gatherings, meetings, classes, etc.

Interviews

I used informal, semi-structured, and structured interviews in this project. Informal interviews were used throughout the research process and as I met new potential research participants and those engaged or interested in urban agriculture, often during participant observation. Informal interviews complement early participant-observation as they allow the researcher to develop rapport with research participants, gain insight into their lived experience, and discover new topics, questions, and concepts for further investigation (Bernard 2011). Semi-structured interviews were often used with research participants I only had one opportunity to interview, such as group leaders and government representatives (Bernard 1998). For these interviews I had a set of prepared questions and topics to guide the conversation, but still allowed for open-endedness and spontaneity.

Finally, I conducted 23 structured interviews with participants from various urban agricultural sites, all of whom I would consider leaders in the urban agriculture movement in San Diego and Tijuana. Having a standard set of interview questions for these participants made comparison more feasible across interviewees (Bernard 2011)—see a list of these questions below. With the consent of the interviewees, I audio recorded both the semi-structured and structured interviews, which were then transcribed over the course of the research period in order to establish a recursive/iterative research cycle, which allowed me to reflect on the state and progress of the research and to highlight further questions to be pursued. Additionally, I took notes during or immediately following each type of interview, depending on the situation and consent of the participant.

These interviews were carried out both in English and Spanish, and all were concerning urban farmers' daily activities, observations about San Diego and Tijuana's changing urban environments, and the effects of new urban agriculture policies, among other topics. In order to secure research participants, I used snowball sampling (non probability) and case studies, drawing from relationships formed during participant observation at the farms and gardens.

For the structured interviews that I conducted during my fieldwork, these were the questions I asked of participants:

1. What got you interested in urban agriculture and what keeps you doing it / caring about it?
2. In your opinion, what needs to be improved or changed about the current food system?
3. For you, what are some of the major challenges about urban agriculture, and what are your biggest hopes for it?
4. What does "community" mean to you? How does land or property fit into that idea of "community"?
5. Have you had to compromise your ideals or values in any way in order to make urban agriculture work for you? Do you have any examples?

And these are the questions I asked of participants during Spanish-language interviews:

1. ¿Cómo inició su interés en la agricultura urbana, y por qué todavía la practica? ¿Por qué le gusta ese trabajo?
2. En su opinión, ¿Qué se necesita mejorar o cambiar sobre el sistema alimentario que tenemos hoy en día?
3. Para usted, ¿Cuáles son los desafíos principales de la agricultura urbana, y cuáles son sus mejores esperanzas para ella?
4. ¿Qué significa 'comunidad' para usted? ¿Tiene importancia las ideas de 'la tierra' o 'la propiedad' en ese concepto de 'comunidad' para usted?
5. ¿Usted alguna vez ha tenido que comprometer sus ideas o valores de alguna manera para que su práctica de la agricultura urbana funcione? ¿Tiene ejemplos?

Geospatial Data Acquisition and Analysis

I received training through the University of Florida to use ESRI applications to analyze geospatial and cultural data, producing maps such as those seen in the introduction to this dissertation. Data was collected from my own research into urban agricultural sites in San Diego and Tijuana, as well as from the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), SanGIS, the U.S. Census Bureau, the National Historic Geographic Information System (NHGIS), and other open access GIS data portals and databases. This mapping of both quantitative and qualitative data helped me to spatially visualize cultural and social values, which revealed patterns of space- and community-making. This is part of a move towards studying cultural geography (Reid 2022). I have also used StoryMaps to share my research with the broader public.

APPENDIX II

Although my fieldwork extended far beyond these sites, much of my work centered around the urban agriculture projects described below. Here I include an overview of each so as to give more life to each of these spaces:

Ocean View Growing Grounds

Located in the Mountain View neighborhood of southeastern San Diego, the Ocean View Growing Grounds (OVGG) is a 20,000 square foot community garden built out of the collaboration between the UC San Diego Bioregional Center for Sustainability Science, Planning, and Design (BRC) and the Global Action Research Center (Global ARC), a local non-profit that connects the grassroots to policy makers and researchers. A local landowner, Harold Georgiou, purchased the land in the 1980s and made it available to the UCSD BRC and the Global ARC at extremely affordable prices, paying for all the water and charging only $1 per year for them to use the land. The City of San Diego also covered the cost of soil testing (a $20,000 payment), since the land was considered a "brownfield," meaning that it was once an industrial or commercial site, and therefore at risk for contamination (Fokos 2018).

Rather than individual plots, OVGG is comprised of several areas dedicated to the growing of various kinds of foods. Residents from the area come to work and harvest the garden on weekends. The neighborhood surrounding OVGG has a population of 60,000 and is a Latino, African, and African American community with 38% of the area's families living below the federal poverty line. It has also been declared a food desert, but due to the plethora of cheap, unhealthy, fast food available, many also refer to it as a "food swamp."[42] I have connections to this garden through the UCSD BRC and Global ARC, and have been aiding in the development of a Backyard Growers Network, which aims to bring together and put into contact food growers from the outlying neighborhood. I include this community garden in my research design because of its beginnings as a collaborative project between a university, a non-profit, and grassroots communities. The politics driving the facilitators of this project are also intriguing as they are based in leftist ideologies of community building and social and racial justice.

Dickinson Farm

A small, quarter-acre urban farm adjoining the Wallace D. Dickinson homestead in National City, Dickinson Farm is run by an ex-military couple motivated to eat fresh and healthy foods due to family illness. This organic farm business offers a CSA (community-supported agriculture) farm share, provides produce to many local restaurants, sells at farmers markets, and donates to food recovery partners. They also host a variety of food-oriented classes and offer farm tours to the interested. Motivated not by leftist politics, but rather by the desire to change the food landscape in National City, Dickinson Farm provides an interesting case to include in this research project because of the greater emphasis on food as opposed to race, ethnicity, or

[42] Some academics have shifted toward the term "food swamp" to describe areas that are devoid of healthy, fresh food but abundant in cheap fast food (Rose et al 2009).

socioeconomic status. The farm also presents a more individualized narrative of an entrepreneurial couple starting a business rather than one centered on community.

National City has a population of around 60,000 with 63% of that population identifying as Hispanic and 20% as Asian and Pacific Islander. It is the second oldest jurisdiction in San Diego County and only 9.2 square miles. Like other areas covered in this dissertation, National City has been challenged with high rates of childhood obesity and the prevalence of chronic disease among its residents. In fact, the rates of diabetes hospitalization and mortality are 2.3 times higher in National City than other areas of San Diego (CHIP 2018).

Mt. Hope Community Garden

Run by the non-profit Project New Village, Mt. Hope Community Garden claims to be the first community garden in Southeastern San Diego. It provides local residents the opportunity to grow their own food in individualized plots. Run predominantly by Black community members and organizers with values embedded in the notions of social, racial, and economic justice, Project New Village and Mt. Hope Community Garden are grassroots, neighborhood based initiatives with a particularly community-oriented flair, particularly for the majority people of color in the area. The neighborhood surrounding Mt. Hope has a population of 60,000 people and is a Latine, African, and African American community with 38% of the area's families living below the federal poverty line. Southeastern San Diego (SESD), which is adjacent to downtown, includes 22 neighborhoods located near downtown San Diego and is one of the poorest regions in the county. The median yearly income of the area is just under $40,000, and the poverty rate is at 30%, more than twice as high as the overall county. As mentioned, this is a very racially diverse area of San Diego. Due to structurally racist practices such as redlining, SESD has a history of being the heart of the African American community in San Diego. However, over the past several decades the demographic makeup has shifted toward Latine populations, who now represent about 70% of the population, with more than a third of residents in this area having been born outside of the United States (mostly from Latin America).

21% of households in SESD receive SNAP food assistance and 90% of students living in this area are eligible for free and reduced-price meals at their schools. This region was declared a food desert in 2013. A year after the USDA labeled Southeastern San Diego a food desert, Amber McKinney wrote: "Grocery stores exist as mirages in Southeastern San Diego. In a three-minute drive down the main street of Euclid Avenue in Lincoln Park, there are three liquor stores, five taco shops and seven fast-food chains. McDonalds, Jack in the Box and Popeyes operate a crosswalk away from one another. There are even drive-through liquor stores. Two supermarkets, Food 4 Less and Ralph's, serve the nine neighborhood region. However, Food 4 Less fails to meet state standards and Ralph's straddles the southernmost edge of the area, making it difficult to reach by foot for most residents" (McKinney 2014). Again, this is a description of what many now refer to as a "food swamp." The geographical boundaries of SESD include only one traditional supermarket for the more than 110,000 people living there. About half of the markets in the area had no, or a limited variety of, fruits and vegetables. Of those that do sell fresh produce, only two offer organic options. Instead, there are most fast food spaces in SESD than

there are stores selling fresh food.[43] Efforts to combat these kinds of circumstances have led Project New Village to label this area the "Good Food District" in an effort to change the narrative of the geographical area.

Wild Willow Farm and Education Center

Wild Willow Farm and Education Center is located on the Tijuana River Estuary very close to the U.S.-México border. Wild Willow is a major player in the San Diego urban agriculture scene, offering various classes for the public, long-term farm courses, volunteer days, and large events. They offer a CSA and sell at farmers markets. Wild Willow is the agriculture education arm of the San Diego Roots Sustainable Food Project, a non-profit that aims to connect people working to encourage the growth and consumption of regional food. They work to bring awareness toward a more ecologically sound, economically viable, and socially just food system in San Diego. The other arm of San Diego Roots is Victory Gardens San Diego, their urban agriculture program where they help people start growing their own food through collaborative garden builds and hands-on education community outreach throughout the County. I include Wild Willow in my research proposal because of its stature as a large and motivating force in the San Diego urban agriculture scene, as well as its social justice framework. Through my preliminary fieldwork, it is apparent that food and food growing are important to many involved with production at Wild Willow, making it an interesting site to investigate values and place making.

Ecoparque

Run by the local university El Colegio de la Frontera Norte (Colef), Ecoparque is a project that started back in 1986 in an effort to create systems for water desalination and black water reutilization so as to address water access issues in the area. This urban farm serves as an education site to promote sustainability and environmentalism to the general public. Ecoparque is located just south of the Tijuana International Airport in the Otay Centenario borough, which is the borough with the greatest number of *maquiladoras*. I include this urban farm in my project because of its central location within Tijuana and its proximity to factories in the area, as well as its strongly held values in the realms of sustainability and environmentalism.

Cultiva Ya!

Finally, Cultiva Ya! is an organization that has as its mission to "bioempower" emerging communities so that they can produce, consume, and learn new forms of relating to one another economically, environmentally, and socially. As part of this mission, the organization puts on agroecological workshops and provides kits to start home gardens. Additionally, they run a community garden in the Playas borough of Tijuana—a more affluent area of the city. My interest in this garden and the organization that runs it comes from a desire to compare and contrast socioeconomic levels and desires from within Tijuana. Furthermore, their desire to spread agroecological knowledge to populations in Tijuana is reminiscent of San Diego Roots'

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[43] I am drawing here from a Project New Village grant proposal, which refers to an assessment of SESD performed by San Diego State University's Urban Studies program.

Victory Gardens program. Cultiva Ya! is a central hub for urban agriculture and an important site to include in this study so as to get the perspective of those interested in disseminating information about urban agriculture in Tijuana.

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