"What we are doing here is small but I think this is the future": Two Case Studies for Establishing Agricultural Intentional Communities as a New Social Movement

BY
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A Thesis

Submitted to
New College of Florida
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Bachelor of Arts
under the sponsorship of Dr. Jing Zhang and Dr. Sonia Labrador-Rodriguez

Sarasota, Florida
May 2017

Acknowledgments

I would first and foremost like to thank my parents for having the strength and courage to leave their lives in Bogotá, Colombia behind so that my brother, Alejandro, and I could have broader opportunities than they did. They always nurtured my natural curiosity about the world and my desire to learn; they pushed me to always excel academically and helped foster my independent and critical thinking skills from a very early age. For these reasons, I am eternally grateful and indebted to them. Los amo muchisimo. I would also like to thank my de facto family of friends at New College for always being tremendously caring and supportive of me.

Next, I want to give the utmost praise to my sponsors, Zhang Laoshi and Sonia. Thank you for allowing me the space to explore topics that were perhaps out of your fields of study. I am so very grateful for the dynamic we developed over the course of this year and I certainly could not have accomplished as much as I did without your guidance. I also want to recognize my third committee member, Dr. Erin Dean, for helping me illuminate some important criticism and implications of my research that would have otherwise gone unnoticed. In my eyes, faculty support is a cornerstone of the New College experience and certainly indispensable to my own thesis process. I am incredibly proud to have gotten the chance to work closely with all of you.

Finally, none of this would have been possible without institutional support from New College's Educational Technology Services that provided me with integral equipment and software. Lastly, I want to thank the New College Student Research and Travel Grant for connecting me with Zonta International, the organization that funded a large majority of my field research, and a special thank you to my peers in the New College Council of Academic Affairs who saw the potential value of my research and invested in me and in this project.

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“WHAT WE ARE DOING HERE IS SMALL BUT I THINK THIS IS THE FUTURE”: TWO CASE STUDIES FOR ESTABLISHING AGRICULTURAL INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES AS A NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENT

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New College of Florida, 2017

ABSTRACT

This undergraduate thesis poses the question: in the face of global issues regarding food security, environmental degradation, and social inequality, are there any grassroots communitarian solutions to making sustainable and equitable food production systems that challenge the progressivist industrial growth model, and if so how do they manifest? My field research examines two case studies of agricultural intentional communities and I posit that these non-cohesive and sporadic communities cropping up worldwide, although not actively engaged in any legal or political struggles, are enacting real social change at the level of the lifeworld and thus, constitute a New Social Movement. I adopt a critical lens for analyzing this movement and one of the most interesting points of friction that I discovered is how we define “community” in this age of globalization. Furthermore, I present an argument for documentary film as a driver of social change and I endorse a more participatory cinema that works to break down technical and institutional hierarchies between filmmaker and subject. I examine the role that intellectuals and academic institutions play in the participation and representation of social movements, again, taking a critical stance of my own methodological and stylistic choices.

The film component of this thesis showcases the programs that these farms offer and how the audience can get involved in the movement. To make information about these communities more accessible to wider audiences, the film can be found on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5TFXWc-kmMU&feature=youtu.be

Dr. Jing Zhang   Dr. Sonia Labrador-Rodriguez

Humanities

Introduction

> "Communities are indeed the core and essence of humanity, around which everything else is woven or spun. They provide emotional and practical security and a sense of continuity through shared memory. They give us a sense of purpose. They sustain us throughout our lives, in neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, and apartment buildings, as well as more extended networks of friendship and common purpose."
>
> \- David Levinson, *Encyclopedia of Community* 2003

Community is a concept that is difficult to define since definitions of community are contingent on context and vary from culture to culture. The broadest definition of community is abstract and simple: commonality, or sharing things in common. More concretely and practically, community denotes specific groups of people who share certain geographical spaces, circumstances, interests, or beliefs (Levinson and Christensen xxxvii). Community is truly the defining characteristic of humanity. We are the only animal that forms social webs for the exchange of attitudes, ideas, beliefs, and identity; we have a fundamental desire to belong to a community while simultaneously wanting to be valued as unique individuals. This conflicting tug and pull that drives the pursuit of purpose, meaning and value in our lives may be stronger on the side of community or individuality at different time periods and in different cultures. As Levinson and Christensen point out in the introduction of their *Encyclopedia of Community* (2003), "we live in a time when our desire for community seems to grow in proportion to our sense that it is declining" (xxxi).

This quote really hits home for me as someone who grew up in the age of globalization - I live in a society that values independence and glorifies individuality but I still yearn for some connection to the multitudes of people and cultures in our globalized world. Being bilingual in such a cosmopolitan city as Miami made me acutely aware of how many more people it was possible to connect with when you share a common language. For this reason, I decided to study

languages throughout my entire education. Spanish being my first language, English my second, then French and Mandarin, I have always loved the feeling of reading a book or watching a movie in a different language and being able to understand it. I loved learning about the history of places I had never been to. But the most rewarding and horizon expanding benefit was having the ability to talk to people from different countries.

In that same vein, something that I always turned to as a way to feel this bigger sense of human connectivity was film. In particular, I have always been drawn to documentary because it deals with real life people in real life situations. Watching documentaries exposed me to other people's lived experiences and helped keep me informed about things I wasn't being taught in school. As a teenager, I picked up a camera and started playing around with photography. In high school, I wrote scripts for films that were too ambitious to produce with the means that I had. I completed assignments for TV production and film class, but hadn't produced anything I was truly passionate about. College is really when my first passion project was born, and when I had the institutional resources to make it a reality.

As a general studies major at a liberal arts college, I had a wide array of varied interests. This thesis and its film component are a manifestation of the intersection of all of my personal and academic interests - languages, culture, film, history, sociology, and anthropology with environmental studies being the thing that ties them all together. They are the result of my search for communitarian and cooperative solutions to what I see is the biggest issue facing our globalized society today - environmental sustainability in food production systems to support unprecedentedly high populations.

The scholarship and literature on community is vast because it is a concept that truly lies at the core of human existence. Spanning fields as diverse as sociology, anthropology, history, psychology, and archaeology, scholars, activists, and government officials alike study the many aspects of community on both a descriptive theoretical level and a pragmatic level that seeks to actualize stronger communities. Interestingly, traditional social movement theory has completely ignored communitarianism because its lack of overt state-directed conflict has been analyzed as being naively visionary and utopian. In his 1997 book, *Dynamic Utopia: Establishing Intentional Communities as a New Social Movement*, Robert C. Schehr offers a reconceptualization of New Social Movement theory through a postmodern application of chaos theory that counters linear conceptualizations of social movements as fitting the collective behavior or resource mobilization models of social change. Following this re-articulation of New Social Movements as multiple, heterogeneous, and dynamic, Schehr posits that intentional communities should constitute social movements because of their persistence as loci of change in which resistance to oppression is fostered through alternative lifestyle choices at the base level of civil society with the potential to permeate on a broader scale through education and networking.

Intentional communities, defined by the Fellowship for Intentional Communities as "people living together with some shared resources on the basis of explicit common values," often arise out of people's discontent with the political, economic, or social conditions of their lifetime coupled with that fundamental desire for enrichment that comes from community life. Intentional communities take on many shapes and forms but typically have an explicit intention or goal for the community that is agreed upon to be upheld by all community members. These planned residential communities are often designed from the get-go to have a high degree of social cohesion that is held together by the shared worldviews and lifestyle choices of

community members, often proclaimed or perceived to be "alternative." These intentional communities tend to employ nonviolent conflict resolution and nonhierarchical decision making processes to counter hegemonic cultural trends towards violence and domination and instead foster stronger communal bonds.

Most scholarship on, and even just the notion of, "intentional communities" itself is situated in a very Western view of the world. You can find volumes about communitarianism throughout the entirety of the history of the United States, or about contemporary intentional communities throughout Western Europe, but there is disproportionately less research on intentional communities in the rest of the world. Thus, I turned to the two areas that comprised most of my undergraduate studies: China and Latin America. Additionally, I decided to focus my research on agricultural intentional communities because of food production's fundamental role in human society and culture, and because of the ever-increasing pressures that modern systems place on the environment. In the face of global issues regarding food security, land degradation caused by Green Revolution agriculture, and increased inequality for different socioeconomic groups, I sought out communities that were challenging the progressivist industrial growth model and found holistic solutions and alternatives to these issues. This thesis looks at two specific case studies: Four Seasons Share Organic CSA Farm in Huiyang, Guangdong, China and La Cooperativa Las Cañadas in Huatusco, Veracruz, Mexico and posits that intentional agricultural communities like these can be seen as comprising a New Social Movement.

In this thesis, I examine the critical role that grassroots communities cropping up worldwide play in finding solutions and alternatives to some of the pressing issues facing our global society through localized community building and education. I apply the theories in Schehr's *Dynamic Utopia* to my case studies in Southern China and Veracruz, Mexico in an

attempt to prove that intentional organic farming communities, although not explicitly or actively engaging legal or political institutions, are enacting social change at the primary lifeworld level. By creating intentional communities that autonomously practice Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), biodynamic farming, permaculture, and flexible co-operative models of social and economic organization, these communities are living out their vision of a healthier planet and a more equitable society. Their heavy emphasis on direct community outreach through educational and volunteer programs helps disseminate skillsets and information thus propagating the movement. Visitors and volunteers are also agents of this social movement in that they disseminate knowledge, information, tools, and techniques for alternative agriculture and community building into their own local communities and thereby contribute to this global trend. I adopt a critical lens for looking at the cultural and economic limitations to this social movement by examining the agents involved. Furthermore, I present a case for documentary film as a driver of social change because of its accessibility and effectiveness in compelling people to actively participate in social movements, again adopting a self-reflective critical lens on my own experiences as a filmmaker documenting these communities.

In chapter one, I begin my argument with a more in-depth discussion of Schehr's criticism of traditional social movement theory and his novel reconceptualization as it pertains to intentional communities, and I provide some context of the history of agrarian society in China and Mexico to aid our understanding of contemporary agricultural and social processes in these countries. In chapter two, the discussion turns to a more focalized explication of the two case studies, Four Seasons Share Organic CSA Farm in Guangdong, China and La Cooperativa Las Cañadas in Veracruz, Mexico, and how they are prime examples of the theoretical framework set forth by Schehr of intentional communities as a New Social Movement. I also provide an agentic

analysis that problematizes some aspects of this movement. Finally, in chapter three, I explore the potential of documentary film to promote social change through a contextual analysis of two cinematic movements, the New Latin American Cinema Movement of the 1960s and the New Chinese Documentary Movement which started in the late 1980s, and examine the role that intellectuals and academic institutions play in that, arguing for a participatory approach to documentary filmmaking that aims to breaks down hierarchical power dynamics. Then, I delve into a discussion of my own methodology and stylistic choices in my filmmaking process.

Chapter One: Theoretical and Historical Framework

Discussion of Schehr's Argument in *Dynamic Utopia*

In his 1997 book, *Dynamic Utopia: Establishing Intentional Communities as a New Social Movement,* Schehr elucidates how conventional literature on social movements follows the Enlightenment era inspired rationality of modernity with its progressivist belief in linear history including the Progress of political and social change. The scientific method applied to the human sciences produced a deterministic fallacy that human behavior could be predicted and thus an evolutionary theory of social movements was born. The collective behavior model (roots in Weber and Durkheim; Herbert Blumer, 1955; Turner and Killian, 1957; Neil Smelser, 1962; Talcott Parsons, 1971) and the resource mobilization model (roots in Weber and Marx; Roberto Michels, 1959; Mancur Olson, 1965; Manuel Castells, 1983) both attempt to map out a unifying theory that clearly delineates the birth, growth, and eventual decline of social movements.

Schehr explicates how both paradigms see social movements as inherently deviant and negative since they pose a threat to social order and stasis. The collective behavior model stresses the instability and eventual collapse of consensus perceived to be inevitable in collective action while the resource mobilization model prioritizes the processes of mobilizing and organizing capital and symbolic resources in the fight for political representation by rational actors acting collectively (Schehr 4). Schehr argues that neither "is able to effectively elucidate the complex interrelation between contemporary movement actors seeking holistic transformations in their relationship to each other, society, the environment, and themselves" (4). His main contention is that in order to be considered a social movement by the traditional models, actors and organizations need to express overt, state-directed conflict. This is limiting in

that subaltern resistance which is not explicitly state-directed but rather happens at the lifeworld level of civil society has been ignored from social movement theory literature.

Schehr turns to New Social Movement theory, or what he calls “the identity paradigm” (Touraine, 1971; Gordon, Edwards, and Reich, 1982; Offe, 1985; Melucci, 1988; Cohen and Arato, 1992; Paul Piccone, 1993) as a point of departure because of its application of postmodern and poststructuralist ideas and methodologies that embrace diversity, multiplicity, and flux. Perhaps most important for Schehr, “what makes New Social Movements unique … is that what they defend is the lifeworld, civil society, and the societal space required for the constitution of identity, creativity, vitality, and in the case of social movements, solidarity” (61). This is crucial to our discussion because it is within civil society, rather than in the political arena, that intentional agricultural communities are enacting social change.

However, new social movement theory reiterated the “one-dimensional” flaw of previous conceptualizations of social movements: that organizations under the umbrella of new social movements were still necessarily fighting in the political sphere to qualify as such. To move away from the notion that all social movements need to be in direct conflict with the political system they exist within, Schehr uses chaos theory to reconceptualize New Social Movement theory to include subaltern resistance that is enacting social change outside of the political arena. Chaos theory recognizes the normalcy of instability and therefore views resistance and alternatives to prescribed social norms as expected of any complex system of interacting agents (Schehr 15). Not concerned with deductive reasoning or the production of “facts,” Scherh’s conceptualization of social movement theory allows for more descriptive and comprehensive analyses than do the traditional prescriptive or deterministic paradigms.

Additionally, postmodernism and chaos theory value heterogeneity and spontaneity, a defining characteristic of intentional communities that crop up all over the globe. Schehr chooses intentional communities as his unit of analysis and argues that they should be granted social movement status because of their mutability, dynamism, and power to influence social relations with intention and consensus at the most fundamental level of the lifeworld. With the limitation of overt conflict with state agencies removed from the criteria, intentional communities do in fact qualify as a social movement under most of the criteria registered by new social movement theory. I have selected the characteristics that are the most relevant to my case studies of two agricultural intentional communities and will discuss them in further detail later.

- They are typically non-hierarchical and implement consensus decision-making models
- There is a strong philosophical dedication to community outreach, often pursued through slideshows, book publications, newsletters, and conferences
- There is a firm belief in economic self-sufficiency that is experienced in many ways, including innovative efforts at alternative farming cooperatives (concentrating on organic whole foods), food circles (organization of multiple community land trusts within a specific region to produce diversified food for circulation among the communities), production, and circulation of alternative money, and experimentation, production, and marketing of alternative energy devices.

(Schehr 46)

From my observations working closely with the farms that constitute my case studies, these three characteristics are paramount in transitioning from hegemonic, capital-intensive corporate-industrial agriculture towards more equitable agricultural societies that aim to remediate and conserve the environment, as well as empower farmers.

~

Historical Contextualization of Agrarian Society in Southern China and Veracruz, Mexico: Agricultural Practices, Social Organization, and Property Rights

Before delving into our discussion of contemporary worldwide intentional agricultural communities and how they are loci of social movement potential, I find it crucial to contextualize

the history, politics, economics, and culture surrounding food production and land tenure in China and Mexico. People have organized themselves around food production for millennia since the independent origins of agriculture in separate regions of the world including Mesopotamia, China, and Mesoamerica among others. Agrarian communities in Mesoamerica and China maintained nutritious and ecologically sustainable agricultural management that supported dense populations for centuries before colonization, revolution, and industrialization. Agrarian issues have historically been politically charged in these countries, a major driving force behind that being property rights. Both the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) and the Chinese Civil War (1927-1950) were fought for with the help of landless rural folk seeking a better future from the promise of extensive land reform. Agrarian reform policies of the 20th century had profound effects on agriculture, property rights, and rural social organization in these countries.

Additionally, the advent of Green Revolution industrial farming that started in the 1940s and proliferated to a global scale in the 1960s and 70s promised to feed the world with highly mechanized monocrop production of high yielding genetically modified grain crops and chemical fertilizers and pesticides. The deforestation, pollution, and diversion of natural water systems that accompanied it dramatically altered the rural landscape as well as the relationship between the land and the people who work it. It is becoming ever more apparent that this system is not sustainable. These effects have only been exacerbated by globalized neoliberal capitalist economics of the 1980s to the present. With reduced barriers to trade, privatization of once nationalized or communally owned land, and deregulation of industry, large multinational agribusiness corporations (most notably Monsanto, DuPont, and Dow Chemicals) have

established an oligopolistic market structure both in Mexico and China that has an emphasis on transgenic grain production for export into global markets.

With limited number of corporations dominating agricultural production and distribution, farmers become increasingly dependent on the implementation of ecologically degrading, capital-intensive industrialized agriculture. As a result, collective ownership and cooperative systems are dis-incentivized and the demand for labor is reduced, effectively creating social polarization and mass migration from rural to urban centers in addition to threatening food security for peasant farmers, reducing biodiversity of food crops, and rendering traditional or alternative methods of sustainable food production economically inviable. "Working towards sustainable futures in food and agriculture involves the construction and development of food networks that are locally contextualized, reliant on agro-ecological paradigms, the provision of dignified and decent livelihoods for food producers, democratically controlled provisioning for surrounding communities and regions as well as secure land rights for small-scale farmers. This is the vision of political ecology of rural development that moves beyond technical fixes and market regulation to considerations of justice and equity in resource access and control" (Jarosz).

The idea that we can feed the world by increasing yields with bioengineered transgenic crops, synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, and diversion of natural water systems for irrigation is indeed problematic since world hunger continues to be prevalent despite surplus global food production. Thus, as we will see in the following section, the core issues being tackled by localized grassroots agricultural intentional communities and the larger New Social Movement they comprise are ecological conservation for future generations of farmers, economic self-sustainability through Community Supported Agriculture and community outreach through

educational programs, and communitarian equity in decision making and distribution of resources.

China

Imperial China

As F. H. King notes in the introduction of *Farmers for Forty Centuries: Organic Farming in China Korea and Japan*, "... the people whose practices are to be considered [in this book] are toiling in fields tilled more than three thousand years and who have scarcely more than two acres per capita [of cultivable land]" (1). Astonishing as it is, agriculture in China has been able to feed dense populations and sustain soil fertility for centuries. The author highlights diversified crop fields and the practice of returning fertility back into the soil as two major keys of traditional Chinese agriculture's ability to maintain this level of productivity. "They have devised systems of agriculture whereby they grow two, three, and even four crops on the same piece of ground each year" (King 6). Nothing is wasted, and fertilizer is made out of everything from inedible plant biomass, to ashes from burnt lumber, to animal and human feces and bones.

The most important grain crops in China, rice and millet, coevolved with humans starting some 12,000 years ago. Rice has fed more people over the longest period of time than any other crop (Huggan). Skillful farmers in China irrigated the crop by building canals, water reservoirs, and most importantly, terracing mountainous terrain that would otherwise be uncultivable because of rainwater runoff. The labor-intensive nature of farming rice in China is responsible for the establishment and flourishment of sedentary agricultural civilizations capable of ensuring a supply of this basic staple crop for all. This largely communal endeavor of rice cultivation was complemented by diversified familial subsistence farming that often included animals that were used for both labor and as a source of protein. Millet is a crucial staple crop of particularly

special importance in China because humans have adapted it to be drought resistant and quick-yielding, allowing for multiple harvests in one year. It is revered for being reliably productive even in relatively infertile soils where irrigation is not possible. Other historically important crops in China include wheat, barley, sweet potato, soybeans, peanuts, cotton, and cabbage (King 6).

Sinologists debate whether "feudalism" (in the European sense of the term) existed in China. Before China became a unified nation-state under Emperor Qin in 221 BC, the emperor of the decentralized Zhou dynasty allotted large amounts of land to a few nobles who effectively ruled over those territories. Under the *fengjian* 封建 system, a hierarchical social class structure that was based on Confucian and Legalist ideology was established in which there were four social tiers: gentry scholars who owned land (士 *shi*), farmers who worked on land owned by the *shi* 士 (农 *nong*), artisans who made indispensable goods (*gong* 工), and lastly, merchants (*shang* 商) ("History"). Therefore, the role of the farmer was an important one and they were highly valued members of society. Under the *jingtian zhidu* 井田制度 system, a piece of land was typically divided into nine squares and families of farmers privately managed eight of those plots. The middle plot was worked by the eight families of farmers but the food produced on that plot was exclusively for the noble *shi* 士 landowners and for government tribute ("History"). This allowed the central government to store surplus food and distribute it in times of famine or bad harvests.

Although the Zhou dynasty came to an end with Qin unification, this "feudalistic" agricultural dynamic between landlords and farmers, as well as the overarching system of social classification remained prevalent in Chinese culture until modern times although they were certainly quite mutable over the course of history. Plots for familial subsistence farming

remained consistent, but agricultural production became increasingly centrally controlled by local, regional, and later national governments who were heavily invested in creating extensive hydraulic systems that could support exponentially increasing population sizes (Wittfogel).

Modernity, Revolution, and Reform

During the Chinese Civil War of the 20th century, the Communist Party of China and Mao Zedong relied on the grievances of peasant farmers against feudal landlords as a method of ideological and military recruitment with the promise of land reform. Following the Communist victory in 1949, an agrarian reform law calling for the redistribution of land soon came into effect. Article 1 of this law stated: “The land ownership system of feudal exploitation by the landlord class shall be abolished and the system of peasant land ownership shall be introduced in order to set free the rural productive forces, develop agricultural production and thus pave the way for New China’s industrialization.” (Prosterman et al 106). The land-reform program distributed 46.7 million hectares of land to about 300 million peasants; before this law was enacted, less than 10% of the rural population owned more than 70% of the total arable land in China (Prosterman et al 106). Although redistribution of land to peasants for private landownership was necessary for the Communist government to consolidate power among the large rural population, they eventually implemented country-wide collective agriculture inspired by the soviet model. In 1955, the first Five Year Plan was put in motion, under which the process of collectivization of farms was to happen through a series of gradual transitions from small “mutual aid teams” to “agricultural collectives” to large “people’s communes,” the difference between them being scale, the system of land ownership, and how compensation for workers was distributed (Prosterman et al 107).

The first step, mutual aid teams, was a formalization of the common practice among Chinese farmers of pooling labor and resources like equipment and animals. Mutual aid teams were typically made up of about ten families who negotiated the terms of compensation among themselves; the system made no changes to the farmers' newly gained private ownership of land (Prosterman et al 107,108). This shift towards top-down, state-regulated agriculture began in 1956. Early collectives were comprised of about thirty to forty farmers who pooled their land under the unified management of local authorities. Individual households still retained private ownership of their lands, although most of it was farmed collectively under government supervision. Several smaller collectives were then merged to create larger collectives or "people's communes." A collective could be as large as 300 households with the collective having official ownership of the land, although individual households were allowed to keep small private plots for use and sell surplus crops at local markets for personal profit (Prosterman et al 108). These large collectives were difficult to manage and many of them adopted egalitarian distribution of income among all members. This had a strong dis-incentivizing effect for farm laborers.

In 1958, Mao instituted the "Great Leap Forward" which was modelled after Soviet economic policies characterized by centrally planned industrialization. Besides supplying the nation with food, agriculture was to play an important role as a source of raw materials for industry. About 90% of the rural population became members of an agricultural collective in 1958. The average collective was about 4,000 hectares and had about 20,000 members or about 4,500 households. These agricultural collectives also took over social, educational, and military functions from the local government such as running banks, schools, and militia units and everything was regulated by the commune leaders. Members were provided common meals in a

communal dining hall free of charge and were given clothing, housing, haircuts, and other goods and services. In fact, 50-80% of compensation for labor consisted of subsistence supplies, fulfilling the communist principle of "to each according to his need." In this system, there was no private property. Instead the collective, and thereby the government, owned everything and farmworkers were turned into landless laborers. The Great Leap Forward's effect on agriculture led to the disastrous famine of 1959-1961. Grain production declined as a result of disenfranchised and dis-incentivized farmers having low impetus for high outputs. As a result, in 1961, the government reinstated private plots for each household on the basis of usership rather than ownership and allowed some rural free markets to reopen, resulting in a rebound in agricultural output. The 1966 Cultural Revolution threatened food security again with its resurgence of radical doctrine. Private plots, sideline activities, and private commerce at local markets were demonized as capitalistic and these practices were reduced or even eliminated in some regions. In 1975, private plots accounted for only 6.4% of total arable land (Prosterman et al 113).

Contemporary China and Neoliberalist Economic Restructuring

Following Mao Zedong's death in 1976, the leadership of the Communist Party during the Cultural Revolution was overthrown and arrested (Prosterman et al 113). In 1981, new leadership by a group of moderates who were strongly opposed to many of Mao's agricultural policies implemented the Household Responsibility System, the basic characteristics of which are described by Thomas Wiens of the World Bank as such:

> Management of collectively owned land was contracted to households, usually in proportion to household size or labor force. Other collective assets were divided up, sold, or contracted to individuals or groups willing to manage them. The household was obligated to pay taxes, make contributions to collective welfare funds, provide its share of state procurement requirements, and

> contribute labor to maintain or construct public infrastructure. All remaining output could be retained by the household. (Prosterman et al 115)

The Household Responsibility System called for the de-collectivization of farms; it was essentially a reversal of the progression towards agricultural collectives, this time with the goal of decentralization coupled with compensation that was more directly related to work input and product output and promoted usership (not ownership) of private plots and establishment of free markets. This effectively increased grain production as well as per capita net income of peasant households despite a sharp decrease in the level of state investment in agriculture (Prosterman et al 115).

The late 1980s marked the beginning of the global domination of neoliberalism in economic and political structures. China presents an interesting and almost contradictory case since they retained communism as the dominant political ideology, but liberalized their economy. Since China's domestic process of economic reform opened their previously state-controlled economy into the globalized capitalist free market in 1989, large multinational agribusiness corporations have introduced Green Revolution biotechnology such as genetic engineering as an industry in the country, resulting in higher yields that come with a huge cost to small farmers and the environment.

For example, in November of 2009, Monsanto opened a research center for biotechnology in Beijing in cooperation with Chinese domestic institutions, most notably, universities. Origin Agritech Ltd., a Chinese-American joint venture company, is the third largest seed company in China and has recently proudly presented itself as being the first company in China to have developed and patented a variation of genetically modified corn domestically (Hoering et al). In 1997, the Chinese government approved the commercial use of Bt-cotton which is manufactured with genes from bacteria that create insecticidal proteins with the

intention of controlling the bollworm pest. By 2008, Bt-cotton was grown by around 7 million farmers on 3.8 million hectares of land. One-third of those seeds had been sold to Chinese farmers by Monsanto (Hoering et al). Similarly, in 2009, two varieties of genetically modified rice were approved for commercial use in China but they alone held 11 foreign patents, meaning that the payments for these seeds go to the patent holders, among them Monsanto and Syngenta (Hoering et al). The cross-contamination of these transgenic crops with wild rice varieties is considered a breach of intellectual property rights under the contract to use patented seeds. Prosecution for this "crime" can result in heavy losses that are often unrecoverable for farmers. These examples serve to demonstrate how these multinational corporations keep farmers dependent on their patented products in order to be viable for the export-oriented market. They also threaten the natural genetic biodiversity of wild varieties of rice which are an indispensable gene pool for breeders.

Mass protests erupted in the 1990s over the "rural question". Farmers organized themselves spontaneously and informally into village groups that sought solutions to poverty and corruption at the local level and fought against an unfair agrarian tax at the state level. Another pivotal reason for the protests was massive environmental pollution that was being exacerbated by the chemical fertilizers and pesticides that come with the packages of genetically modified seeds from large agribusiness transnational corporations. Indeed, China's rural communities and agricultural sector in general are taking a hit. According to the 2011 census, China's urban population accounts for nearly half of the country's total population compared to 1982 when only one fifth of the population lived in urban areas (Hoering et al 2). This rapid urban migration coupled with urban development of former farmland puts pressure on food production. Therefore, the 12th and latest Five-Year Plan (2011-2015) puts a special emphasis on making

farmland reserves and improving public services, education, and health systems in rural areas (Hoering et al 2). It is mentioned that, to "build a harmonious society" and to "strengthen public security," it is necessary to mobilize community volunteers and strengthen grassroots autonomous organizations.

My case study of Four Seasons Share Farm illustrates the transitional nature of property rights in rural China and the effectiveness of small, grassroots networks in providing long-term solutions to the problem of environmental degradation and food insecurity.

Mexico

Pre-hispanic Times

There were four indigenous groups that occupied the region that is now the province of Veracruz in prehispanic times: the Olmec in the south, the Huastecos and the Otomis in the north near the coast, and the Totonacas in the center. These groups, some of the oldest cultures in all the Americas. Anthropological records indicate that the Olmec culturally dominated the region from 1300 BC to 400 BC, after which other groups in the region began adopting more Mexica, or Aztec, influenced cultural patterns. By the 1400s, the Mexica dominated the region that would become Veracruz, but previous cultural and linguistic groups remained and retained their traditions. These aforementioned civilizations were all settled horticulturalists who practiced swidden, or slash-and-burn, agriculture. In later years, they developed more complex and innovative systems like terracing and extensive irrigation. Terracing in mountainous highland regions prevented soil erosion and helped trap water that would naturally run off. In lowland regions near the coast where there was easy access to water, extensive irrigation systems of aqueducts and canals produced high grain yields that supported relatively dense populations (Delich).

Their main staples were maize, beans, and squash. These three crops are often referred to as the “Mesoamerican trinity” or the “Three Sisters” because when eaten together, beans and corn form complete amino acid chains, providing the people of Mesoamerica with vital protein in a terrain that lacked large domesticated animals. The tri-crop *milpa* system works so effectively because the nitrogen fixing legumes replenished the nitrogen in the soil that was used up by the corn, and they also use the tall corn stalks as trellises to climb on. Squash, which grows low to the ground, provides effective ground cover and protection from weeds. People also grew chilies, tomatoes, yams, gourds, avocados, amaranth, cotton, and a plethora of medicinal herbs. In non-irrigable lands, people also relied heavily on nopales, mesquite, and maguey which are endemic to those arid regions. They supplemented their mostly vegetarian diets with small domesticated dogs, hunted wild deer and other small mammals that inhabited the dense forests, and relied on fish, shellfish, and birds along the coast and near rivers and lakes (Delich). Lumber and firewood were also sustainably harvested for domestic uses like building and cooking. With these complex systems came the stratification of civil society in which some people had more than others. However, food production played a communitarian role in the lower strata of these early societies.

Spanish Colonialism

The Spaniards arrived in Veracruz in the early 16th century seeking gold and silver. The governmental tribute-collecting *encomienda* system promised colonizers free labor for resource extraction and the later implemented *hacienda* system granted colonizers private landownership (Lockhart). These royal decrees effectively led to the disenfranchisement and enslavement of the indigenous peoples of Mesoamerica. Besides resource extraction, the Spaniards also transplanted their own crops, animals, and diseases to the New World. They saw extensive forests, large grain

harvests, and dense populations and mistook the abundant productivity of intensive indigenous agricultural systems as a sign that the land was naturally very fertile. The reality was that they encountered incredibly fragile tropical ecosystems that had been sustainably managed for centuries by the Huastec, the Otomi, the Totonac, and the Mexica.

Most of the land that is now the province of Veracruz was carved out into *haciendas* that were either converted into gold and silver mines, Spanish-style agricultural fields, or grazing pastures for sheep and cattle. Indigenous peoples were displaced or forced to become miners or agro-pastoralists. These large *haciendas* were scarcely populated and extensively worked, contrary to the indigenous horticulturalist traditions of intensively working small agricultural plots. The high density of livestock on newly deforested lands and the diversion of water for agricultural irrigation greatly reduced the height and density of the natural vegetation, turning some forest biomes and traditionally agriculturally productive lands into grasslands dominated by mesquite and other desert scrub (Delich). As a result, both indigenous and Spanish-introduced modes of agriculture deteriorated rapidly in the region.

Modernity, Revolution, and Reform

In the 19th century, following the liberal *Reforma* and consequent expansion of *haciendas* under the *Porfiriato,* landlessness was a very serious issue in Mexico and a huge contributing factor to the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution in 1910. The *ejido* system, based on the Aztec *calpulli* system of communal land ownership and collective management, was implemented as a key component of the comprehensive agrarian land reform of the Constitution of 1917 (Grindle 183). Landless farmers and indentured servants who previously leased lands from *hacienderos* could petition the government for the creation of an *ejido*. Land was expropriated from the private ownership of *hacienderos* and was redistributed to landless

farmers. The government officially owns *ejido* land but plots are parcelled off to individual families and the *ejido* is collectively managed by the entire community.

Although the *ejido* system was an attempt at rectifying rural poverty for landless peasants by restoring an ancient tradition of working shared communal land, it was deeply flawed. It could take years, decades, or even lifetimes of petitioning government bureaucracies for land entitlements that were usually of low fertility and lacked adequate infrastructure like irrigation and roads. The system still denied farmers the right to own their own property and either denied them access to badly needed credit capital or left them severely indebted to the rural credit bank because of high interest rates. Exploitative relationships with political party bosses arose as people strived to make their petitions heard, and inequality among *ejidatarios* increased as uneven land was continually fragmented and reconcentrated (Grindle 182). People turned to subsistence farming, illegal sharecropping of *ejido* land, and searched for wage labor by participating in other activities of the rural economy or by migrating to cities. Reforming the *ejido* system has been advocated for on the premise that communal landholding is inefficient because it lacks the incentives that drive entrepreneurial innovation (Grindle 197) However, some studies show that the critical factor differentiating farms in terms of output is not tenure type but access to infrastructure and government services. One such study of *ejidos* found that with access to irrigation, technical assistance, and credit, *ejidos* can actually perform as well as private farms with the same endowments (Grindle 198).

Contemporary Mexico

With the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994, neoliberal restructuring went underway and weakened support for the already weak *ejidal* system. President Carlos Salinas de Gortari officially amended the constitution of 1917 to allow

the privatization and sale of *ejidal* land. Policies that encouraged the emergence of large-scale commercial agricultural units and gave little or no support to the beneficiaries of agrarian land reform left Mexico's countryside up for grabs by multinational corporations. There are currently about 22,000 *ejidos* in Mexico that account for almost 50% of agricultural land in the country; about 50% of those can be classified as sub-subsistence (not producing enough to feed their families), 20% as subsistence, and only about 30% are able to produce a marketable surplus (Grindle 184). The other 50% of agricultural land is privately owned with roughly 15% of it constituting parcels of five hectares or less; such parcels account for 65% of poor farm families (Grindle 184).

Overall, NAFTA has had a detrimental impact on Mexico's food self-sufficiency and on its labor sovereignty because of the country's growing dependency on U.S. grain imports and exploitation of cheap labor by large transnational corporations, resulting in ever-increasing socioeconomic polarization. Agricultural trade liberalization in Mexico resulted in a shift from production of mostly low-value grains like corn and wheat for the domestic market to production of high-value fruits and vegetables like tomatoes, green chilies, avocados, lemons, limes, and grapes for export, mainly into the United States (Otero). As a result, Mexico has become dependent on United States corn and meat imports, once staple subsistence agricultural products, because they simply cannot compete with the prices of the United States's heavily subsidized grain market in a neoliberal global economy.

NAFTA ensures that large transnational agribusiness corporations get to exploit cheap labor in Mexico, and skewed distribution of aid from the Mexican government has helped large corporations prosper and hindered small and subsistence farmers. Although there are 32,000 firms in Mexico's food industry, only 1,692 of those engage in exports, and only 300 of those

account for roughly 80% of all of Mexico's exports (Otero). Since the implementation of NAFTA, prices of foodstuffs in Mexico has actually increased and the minimum wage in Mexico has declined by 21% (Otero). Thus, Mexican farmers and consumers have not benefitted from trade liberalization, only capital-intensive agricultural entrepreneurs with access to credit, large transnational agribusiness corporations, and American companies and consumers have benefitted. As a result, there has been a rise of peasant protest and resistance movements that have been met with force by the government (Otero).

Because Veracruz has an average of 70 inches of rainfall a year and plenty of water in the form of estuaries and canals near the coasts, two-thirds of the original tropical rainforests of Veracruz have been cleared and burned for agriculture and pasture conversions. Cattle ranching and coffee production constitute the two major agricultural economic activities in the region. Cattle ranching has been growing steadily since the days of the Mexican Revolution when *caciques* who came to Veracruz seeking political power used cattle ranching as a means of taking control of land and labor. (Gonzalez-Montagut 101, 102). Most cattle ranching (about 65%) is practiced on large plots of privately owned land that is conducive for extensive grazing but the deforestation needed to make grasslands and pastures has profound environmental damage by contributing to global climate change and destroying local habitats. The case study at la Cooperativa las Cañadas in Veracruz provides an example of a break in the neoliberal mold by a cooperative pursuing environmental conservation, sustainable agriculture, and socioeconomic restructuring.

Conclusion

Although both of these nations have historical agricultural communitarian traditions, China's state-directed collectives and the bureaucratic *ejidal* system of Mexico are flawed. The Community Supported Agriculture and cooperative models adopted by Four Seasons Share Organic Farm and La Cooperativa Las Cañadas represent grassroots organizational models that are autonomously and dynamically building localized intentional communities. In the following chapter, I will analyze how these case studies fit into these historical frames, highlighting issues regarding sustainable food production, equitable property rights and socioeconomic organization, and education as a tool for community building. In doing so I hope to illustrate how these agricultural intentional communities are actively enacting social change at the level of the lifeworld.

Chapter Two: Four Seasons Share Organic CSA Farm & La Cooperativa Las Cañadas

Using Schehr's re-conceptualized theory of social movements as a framework, I hope to demonstrate that agricultural intentional communities, although sporadic, non-cohesive, and not explicitly anti-state or political, do indeed constitute a larger New Social Movement by enacting social change at the level of the lifeworld by finding alternatives to food production that oppose Green Revolution agriculture prescribed by neoliberal geopolitics with novel social organization models and by fostering strong communities around that. The agricultural and social systems of Four Seasons Share Organic CSA Farm and La Cooperativa Las Cañadas are actively remediating and protecting the environment for future generations of agriculturalists while also helping to enfranchise and empower rural farmers as well as fostering greater connection within their communities. Their notable emphasis on community outreach and education not only helps them become economically independent (not having to rely on credit), but also aids in the dissemination of information about these modes of resistance to outsiders.

These farms employ agroecology, the study of ecological processes applied to agricultural production systems, biodynamic farming, an organic method that emphasizes harmony among life forces and incorporates astronomy (Rudolf Steiner 1924), as well as permaculture, a system of agricultural and social design principles aimed at long-term sustainability (Bill Mollison and David Holmgren 1978), as alternatives to monocrop industrial agriculture. Additionally, their Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) and cooperative structures allow for dynamic problem-solving and social organization.

Let us now return to our effort to establish these case studies of intentional agricultural communities as a new social movement using the three most relevant criteria laid out in Schehr's *Dynamic Utopia* (1997), ignoring the limiting requisite of explicit state-directed conflict of new

social movement theory. The dynamic and mutable nature of these three points is a key factor in the farms' successes in problem-solving and fostering social change at the level of the lifeworld.

- They are typically **non-hierarchical** and implement **consensus decision-making models**
- There is a strong philosophical **dedication to community outreach**, often pursued through slideshows, book publications, newsletters, and conferences
- There is a firm belief in **economic self-sufficiency** that is experienced in many ways, including innovative efforts at alternative farming cooperatives (concentrating on organic whole foods), food circles (organization of multiple community land trusts within a specific region to produce diversified food for circulation among the communities), production, and circulation of alternative money, and experimentation, production, and marketing of alternative energy devices.

(Schehr 46)[1]

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Four Seasons Share Organic CSA Farm 四季分享有机CSA农场

Four Seasons Share Organic Farm is located in the outskirts of Huiyang in the southern province of Guangdong (commonly referred to as Canton) 广东惠州惠阳区秋长镇. Guangdong has a subtropical climate with long summers and warm winters, and averages 60 inches of annual rainfall making it an ideal place for food production. Only about 15% of the total land in Guangdong is under cultivation and therefore agriculture is extremely intensive there. The limited extent of land available for sewing is offset by repeated cultivation of the same plot of land in the same year. For example, two crops and harvests of rice can be grown on most cultivable land in the region, resulting in yields that exceed the national average (Guangdong). With plenty of water available for irrigation, rice is the leading crop in the region, occupying 76% of total cultivated land and accounting for over 80% of Guangdong's total food production (Guangdong). However, the effects of water runoff polluted by pesticides and chemical fertilizers used in large scale rice production are far reaching. In recent years, Guangdong's fertile, clayey soil has degraded and become sandy and compacted. It is for that reason that Four

[1] **Bolded** emphasis added by me

Seasons Share farm has chosen to go organic. Their motto is “Organic Life Starts Here” 有机生活这里开始.

Consensus decision-making model

Four Seasons Share Organic Farm is part of a cooperative network of nearby farms that all work together to provide organic produce to people living in nearby towns and cities. They follow a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model which has been around for about 25 years in the United States and is now gaining popularity in other industrialized countries. In CSA, farmers offer a certain number of “shares” to the public relative to how much the farm produces. These “shares” consist of shipments of fresh seasonal produce and other farm products, and are paid for on a membership or subscription basis. Four Seasons Share farm currently has 120 shareholders. This model is beneficial to farmers because they receive revenue early in the growing season instead of after harvest, which allows them to invest in and maintain high quality production. It also allows them the novelty of getting to know the people who purchase and consume the food they grow, cutting out the grocery store “middlemen.” CSA is also beneficial to consumers because they are getting the freshest food possible at a low cost with no need for extraneous preservation methods or expenses. They too get the novel experience of visiting the farm where their produce is grown and meeting the farmers who grow it, and they can express any questions, comments, or concerns directly with the growers themselves. Four Seasons Share gets members by attending local farmers’ markets and by spreading the word through online platforms. They also have a grocery store in the city of Shenzhen for people who cannot afford a membership but still want to buy organic produce and other farm products from them.

Tai Kang farm 泰康农场, one constituent of the Four Seasons Share cooperative, is located on an ancient Hakka village, parts of which are being restored by the local government 是广东非常有名的客家古村落之一，毗邻深圳龙岗. Zhang Heping 张和平, the founder of the farm, is also the landlord of this restored ancient village. Every year there is a big shareholder meeting where everyone who owns shares in the farm can go over the previous business year and make decisions about future farming operations together. They go far beyond just practicing organic agriculture and having a CSA structure in that they provide their workers with food and housing in addition to their regular payments. The farm workers live in traditional Hakka houses in the village and must only pay for the utilities that they use, namely water and electricity. They get a private plot of land for cultivating food for the household, and the rest is for the cooperative. The goal is to help peasant farmers in becoming economically self-sufficient by allowing them to make revenue capital and eventually be able to afford to rent or purchase the houses and become landowners, curbing the rapid depopulation or urbanization of rural China.

Dedication to Community Outreach

Looking to expand their community outreach, they hired 33 year-old Hu Weihe 胡伟和 in June of 2015 to run a comprehensive nature education center there. He grew up in the countryside in a village similar to the one where Tai Kang farm is located. His mother, Yuan Jinwang 袁锦旺 or better known as “aunty” *aiyi* 阿姨, raised crops and animals like pigs, ducks, and geese. She also made tofu and sold it to neighbors and locals. His father, Hu Zenku 胡振, was a carpenter. The family including Weihe’s older brother moved to a town so that the children could go to school. He recounts:

> I felt that I lost my childhood. When I was young living in the countryside I would often go to the forest and collect some leaves or harvest some fruits or hunt fish in the river. When I moved to town we didn’t have much fun. Go to school,

> then do homework, and then go to school. I realized when I went to high school, I was doing quite well but I didn't like going to school because it's boring. We study very hard but what we gain is just some mark. What we learn doesn't have much meaning in our lives. So, from that time on, I had a dream that when I grew up I would love to do some work being a farmer growing lots of fruits and vegetables and having lots of animals.

He witnessed urbanization first-hand and has made outreach to city-dwelling families a priority in his time with Four Seasons Share Organic Farm.

Hu Weihe went on to college where he was exposed to a new kind of schooling: Waldorf education. "I realized 'wow, you're learning life skills'. You learn a lot about living, about life. How to craft, art. Working with people, it's not just reading books, remembering them, and then taking tests." He dropped out of his four year academic program after only a year and a half at university, and moved to Chengdu in the southwestern province of Sichuan 四川成都 where he helped his schoolmates start up a Waldorf school. He worked as a gardening, carpentry and clay modelling teacher. It was there that he was exposed to biodynamic farming principles and he decided to go to Emerson college where he studied biodynamic farming from 2009 to 2011. In England, he worked directly with organic and biodynamic farms and thus gained formative practical experience in addition to his academic studies.

Upon his return to China in 2011, Weihe worked for the Hong Kong Community Partnership 香港社区伙伴 as their general secretary doing research, consultancy, and organizing workshops and trainings with local farms to help them convert from conventional to organic and biodynamic agriculture. Although he enjoyed his time there, Weihe still felt the drive to integrate farming practically into his quotidian lifestyle. As he explained to me, "... because my parents are getting old and they miss me and I also miss them and I thought 'well, I have been away from home for about 11 years now so maybe it's time to go back to my hometown and do

something there.'" In 2015, he returned to Huiyang and was elated to find a job working for Four Seasons Share Organic Farm alongside his family.

After working with Four Seasons Share for two months, Weihe negotiated a sort of private contract with them so he could gain more freedom in fully realizing his goals. "I realized that the farm has their own purpose of offering a service to their members and I found that that was not very open and that I didn't have the freedom to do the things that I wanted to do." In a demonstration of openness, Four Seasons Share agreed to let him run a nature education center that he would manage independently but would still be tied to the farm in an effort to get more involved with community outreach. In January of 2016, Weihe's childhood dream came true when he and his parents opened up Tian Yuan Bang Nature Education Center 田园邦耕读学苑 on Tai Kang farm. He got to pick out one of the houses in the village to start up this family venture. There is a food forest behind the house that takes full advantage of the natural irrigation that results from the downward slope of the hill. There are plenty of lychee, banana, papaya, grapefruit, and tea trees just to name a few. There is a river that runs through the entire village, and Tian Yuan Bang's two private fields are conveniently located alongside it. They also constructed a playground with swings and a sandpit for children to play on. During my time at Tian Yuan Bang, I helped in the construction of five wood-burning brick stoves and in the repair of two large stone mills that are both integral parts of the traditional Hakka cooking modules that the nature education center offers.

Tian Yuan Bang Nature Education Center advertises mostly to city-dwelling families since one of Weihe's goals is to offset the disconnect between children and nature that he experienced upon moving away from the countryside. They offer weekend long programs that are convenient for parents with day jobs. They also offer long-stay winter and summer camps

just for children so that they can spend their vacations from school learning about nature and culture while their parents lead busy lives. Both programs include modules in gardening, craft making with natural materials like wood, clay, and beeswax, cooking, recycling, composting, ecological construction, and outdoor survival. In this way, the urban community can learn about pastoral culture while financially supporting local farmers. In fact, these visitors provide the main source of revenue for Weihe and his family at Tian Yuan Bang and serve as a great example of how broad community outreach and education can be a helpful component for farmers hoping to become economically viable without having to opt in to corporate agriculture.

One method of attracting volunteers to the farm is through WWOOFing which stands for worldwide opportunities for organic farming. People WWOOF for many different reasons, but in my experience, they tend to want to be more involved in the larger social movement. During my field research in China, the WWOOFers were all dedicated to pursuing careers in organic agriculture and education. Four Seasons Share Organic Farm placed a listing on WWOOFChina.org and within one month, Tian Yuan Bang had their first three volunteers: Xiao Yu, a 22 year-old college student hoping to become a Waldorf school teacher with an emphasis on organic gardening; Ling Wei, a 23 year-old who had not yet attended college but hoped to start an organic farm of his own with his family; and myself, a 20-year old American liberal arts student with a concentration in Chinese Language and Culture hoping to gain hands-on experience with farming through cultural exchange in the hopes of someday running a permaculture farm of my own. One thing I came to realize is that this is something that cannot be done alone and requires coordinated cooperation from many people. As Weihe said to me, “It’s hard; a lot of work has to be done and everything is new and there are a lot of challenges but this is the life we chose. It’s wonderful that we got help from you guys, from volunteers, it really

helps a lot and I also get a lot of support from my friends… What we are doing here is small but I think this is the future."

More importantly for the movement at large, Tian Yuan Bang has recently started a Pastoral Life Tutor Program 田园生活导师养成计划暨"食农与乡土手艺"教育项目招募研修生. This one-year program (2016-2017) is training a group of 10 to 15 "thoughtful, enthusiastic, and motivated" people interested in learning about, participating in, and creating networks that support and promote sustainable agriculture and rural culture. These trainees start out as assistants or volunteers at Tian Yuan Bang, learning the ropes and enjoying free room and board. They are trained in 7 topics: organic agriculture covers biodynamic farming, permaculture, crop propagation, crop rotation, composting; animal agriculture teaches trainees how to breed and raise chickens, duck, geese, rabbits, pigs, cattle, sheep, fish, and bees; food processing and cooking shows trainees traditional methods of food processing and preservation like how to stone mill grains and legumes, and pickling and fermenting vegetables, along with other traditional recipes; natural crafts include clay modelling, ceramics, pottery, carpentry, wood dying, paper and candle making; nature education covers the basics of operating and managing a natural education center, planning curriculums, and organizing activities for children and families; ecological construction teaches trainees how to plan and design home gardens, food forests, and outdoor spaces in general, as well as how to build with bamboo, cook with rocket stoves, use composting toilets, collect rainwater, and use solar energy; lastly, trainees learn essential outdoor survival skills like how to make a fire, read a map, tie knots, and perform first aid during camping or backpacking excursions.

During their stay, trainees also have opportunities to carry out individualized projects in areas of personal exploration or expertise through access to various academic resources outside

of the everyday tasks of running the farm and the curriculum that is laid out for them. Gradually over the course of twelve months, through hands-on experience and attending workshops hosted by local experts in various fields, the trainees become equipped not only with practical skills but also with important community building tools like CSA and education centers that help them spearhead their own independent ventures elsewhere thus spreading the movement.

La Cooperativa Las Cañadas

Ricardo Romero inherited 306 hectares of former ranch land from his father who had ironically made a small fortune selling agrochemicals for commercial use in Mexico. The land is located in the interior of the state of Veracruz, near the state of Puebla, just a few towns away from the tallest mountain in Mexico's Sierra Madre Oriental, *el Pico de Orizaba*. This land was once a lush subtropical cloud forest, one of the rarest kind of forests in the world. The atmospheric conditions must be just right. There is relatively small range of altitudes, latitudes, and biomes suitable for persistent moisture from settling clouds in a subtropical climate. Ricardo recalls that in Mexico, from 1960 to 1970 there was a national commission for deforestation in the region to make room for productive land; "You had to work the land and produce food or raise cattle."[2] Unfortunately for Ricardo, this meant that the land he inherited was completely lifeless and barren.

In 1995, with the goal of restoring the native landscape, Ricardo sold off most of the cows on the property which were raised for meat, and bought just a few dairy cows to sustain himself while he underwent a huge undertaking. With the cows now concentrated on the flattest part of the mountainous terrain, Ricardo and a few other *campesinos* from the town of Huatusco whom he had grown up with, (Don Adan being the only one who remains as part of the

[2] *"Tenías que trabajar la tierra y producir comida o tener ganado."*

cooperative to this day) planted one thousand native trees that year. A decade later, there was a lush forest ecosystem on the once barren hills.

Restoring the cloud forest helped to conserve the water from the river so that it was clean and safe for people to drink from year-round. In fact, all of the water that Las Cañadas uses comes from the river and is brought up to the residences and buildings with an *ariete*, a mechanical pump that uses the natural pressure and propulsion of the river to propel the water upward. Rain collecting cisterns that take full advantage of the humid and rainy climate are used as well, and they provide much of the water for the garden. "Waste water" from the kitchen and from bathrooms is not wasted at all. Instead, the water from the kitchen flows downhill into a grease trap where unwanted particulates are removed, and then continues downward to provide water for an orchard of fruit trees. Similarly, the water runoff from showers and sinks in the bathrooms goes through a series of aquaponic beds that successively remove heavy metals and other harsh detergent chemicals from the water which, while not safe for drinking, can then be used to water plants.

When talking about the forest restoration project, Ricardo mentioned that "We searched for a way to self-regulate [the forest conservation project] without getting the government involved - we don't like the government too much - but that would still be legally binding. We divided the land into four zones with limitations to the use of each zone under a legally binding document."[3] There is a 36.40-hectare zone allotted to absolute conservation where nothing is altered, except for the maintenance of a hiking trail for visitors. There is also a 56.08-hectare zone where they practice sustainable forestry consisting mainly of bamboo production.

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[3] *"Buscamos una forma de autorregulación, sin involucrar al gobierno - no nos gusta mucho el gobierno - pero que fuera legal. Se llama 'conservationism.' Dividimos la tierra en zonas con limitantes de uso para cada zona en un documento legal."*

Surrounding this zone are 113.14 hectares that is still being bio-remediated and restored. The bulk of what the cooperative does happens on 101.12 hectares that is designated for multiple uses. Ricardo found that it was not only his cooperative that was concerned with conservation: "There are *campesino ejidos* that practice this form of conservationism in which they [legally] committed themselves to restoring and conserving parts of their land."[4]

The biodiversity of the restored cloud forest is astounding. Several biologists have visited Las Cañadas to study the rare cloud forest ecosystem and they have identified 106 species of ferns and found two new species of salamanders. They also found a magay, a small feline similar to an ocelot, and have encountered a family of coyotes on more than one occasion. Carnivores like these are good indicators that the ecosystem is being restored effectively because it means that there is plenty of food at the lower trophic levels to support their nutritional needs.

After removing the cattle and restoring parts of the cloud forest, Ricardo used up all the money his father had left him building ferrocement structures for an ecotourism lodge. In 1996, they had their first group of ecotourists:

> In the beginning we thought, very romantically, that it was going to be very positive and that people were going to suddenly change their worldviews, but people only wanted to get away for an 'ecological' weekend and they weren't going to change their lifestyles that are ruining the planet. So, after ten years of doing this, we sort of reached a limit of saying "we're not going to work with these people anymore." After ten years you say "what are we really doing?"[5]

[4] *"Hay tierras campesinas ejidales conservadas de esta forma que se comprometieron a restaurar y conservar una parte de su tierra."*

[5] *"Pensamos de manera muy romántica al inicio que iba a ser muy positivo y que la gente iba a cambiar de consciencia muy rápido, pero la gente solo quiere venir de fin de semana 'ecológico' y no va a cambiar su forma de vivir que está acabando con el mundo. Entonces después de diez años de hacer esto, como que llegamos a un límite de decir 'no voy a seguir trabajando con esta gente.' Después de diez años dices '¿que estamos haciendo?'"*

Looking back, he laughs at his naïveté of earlier years saying, "all of this construction has nothing to do with sustainability, I mean, this is ferrocement!"[6]

In 2007, with a deeper understanding of permaculture, they decided to end the ecotourism stint for a grander vision of sustainability. Since 1999 they had already been formally offering courses on biointensive gardening, bioconstruction, permaculture, and the like to the neighboring *campesinos*. One day, a group of ecotourists asked "why can't we attend one of these courses you give to the *campesinos*?"[7] This small "why not?" turned out to be the key to the Cooperativa Las Cañadas's success. "We ditched the dairy, ditched the ecotourism, but we grabbed onto something else to maintain the conservation project. We got excited again and everything got better in every sense, not only economically but it's also not the same to entertain guests for a weekend than it is to share and learn from people who come here, like you, looking for an alternative way to live. It's a very different energy… we would never make an ecotourist wash dishes! [laughter]"[8]

Decision making model

Ricardo knew he would need a lot of help to make his dream come true, so he adopted a cooperative model for him and his 22 *socios*. Every *socio* has equal say at decision-making meetings which are held regularly pending any decisions that need to be made. An interesting case of a tough decision that had to be made was over the question of whether they should keep the *milpa*. Ricardo explained that grains, and corn in particular, are very resource- and labor-

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[6] *"todas estas construcciones no tienen nada que ver con la sustentabilidad, o sea, esto es ferrocemento!"*

[7] *"¿porque no podemos ir nosotros a uno de esos cursos que dan con los campesinos?"*

[8] *"Dejamos los lácteos, dejamos al ecoturismo, pero nos agarramos de otra cosa para mantener el proyecto. Nos animamos y mejoró positivamente en todos los sentidos, no solo económicamente sino, no es lo mismo entretener a alguien de fin de semana que compartir y aprender de personas que vienen, asi como ustedes, a buscar otra forma de vivir. Es una energía muy diferente… jamás vamos a poner a un ecoturista a lavar sus trastes! [todos se ríen]"*

intensive, requiring a lot of water, weeding, and pest control. Additionally, corn doesn't grow so easily in their part of Veracruz. In Ricardo's opinion, their entire agroecological system could benefit from removing the *milpa* since the resources and labor being put into them could go elsewhere. He thinks that tubers like yucca and malanga, which fare better in that climate and require much less tending to, should be cultivated as the cooperative's main high-calorie starch food instead. However, the *socios* were simply unwilling to give up tortillas, a cultural staple present at almost every meal, and cited fond memories of the communal planting and harvesting of the *milpa* in its defense. Ricardo jokingly says, "this isn't 'Perma-disney,'" alluding to the fact that there are many cultural challenges in addition to technical ones on the road to sustainability.

Dedication to Community Outreach

As much as Ricardo would like for people to be content working in exchange for their nourishment and housing needs to be sufficiently met, the reality is that the cooperative still needs to operate like a business both to incentivize high production from the *socios* and to achieve more long-term goals of sustainability which require capital investments for ecological technologies. Crucial to attaining the cooperative's ultimate goal of self-sufficiency are ecological technologies like rainwater collection, solar panels, and detoxifying aquaponic plants. The cooperative's main sources of revenue are courses that they offer on a regular basis, sales from the seed bank, sales of live plants, sales from bamboo harvest, and sales of composting toilets.

People who take courses at the cooperative come from all walks of life. Most of them are from Mexico City and other parts of Mexico but the cooperative also receives many international guests. Courses are typically a week long and are specialized in one area like biointensive gardening or seed banking. Ricardo saw the limitations of these week-long stays and designed a

special month-long comprehensive course for people looking to learn skills that will go beyond just a fun ecological vacation. *Aprendices* live and work with all the *socios* and get to experience life in cooperative in more depth. After spending time with each *socio* in their respective modules during the first week of the program, *aprendices* then get to pick which modules to attend for the remainder of the program.

Each *socio* is responsible for managing their own projects on parts of land allotted to them. Jonas manages the agroforestry and his wife, Carla, manages the seed bank working closely with Miguel in the seed garden. The seed garden is reserved for growing food that is harvested past the point of ripeness for eating and is left to further mature for seed collection. The remaining biomass from the plants is composted. Jonas and Carla are one of four families that live in completely sustainable homes on the cooperativa, where they are raising their two young children, Jonasito and Clementina. When they are old enough, Jonasito and Clementina will join the older kids at the *escuelita* instead of going to public school in the city. Tania, Ricardo's wife, runs the *escuelita* which is located a short hike down from her and Ricardo's house where they live with their daughter who also received her primary education from the *escuelita.*

Don Adan and Don Goyo, two of the oldest members of the cooperative, work the *milpa.* Don Goyo and his family live in a house by the *milpa* that he and his family built together. Daniel, also a veteran at las Cañadas, operates the greenhouse where he germinates seeds, propagates plants, and experiments with new methods of propagation and fertilization like *acodos* and bioferments. His wife, Luzma, runs the kitchen, cooking daily communal lunches for everyone who wishes to join (Don Goyo, Don Adan, and Daniel usually have lunch together at Goyo's house while everyone else eats together in the main dining hall). The kitchen is

strategically placed right next to the biointensive garden where Luzma sources most of the ingredients for her meals. Luzma often brings her granddaughter, Luz, with her to las Cañadas when she is visiting her grandparents. Also in the kitchen is Doña Lucy who specializes in making cheese and yogurt from the milk that is brought in weekly from up the hill in the dairy farm where her husband Charo works.

Raul and his wife, Estefania, live in the last of the self-sustaining cooperative households with their daughter, Quiahuitl, Luz's best friend. Together, Luz and Quiahuitl act as little helpers in the kitchen and babysit Jonasito and Clementina. Raul helps Ricardo with administrative work. Above the office is a workshop where Don Dago makes composting toilets for sale to the public. Dago also heads the bioconstruction projects on the cooperative which usually require using bamboo, clay, and straw. Perhaps the most innovative of all the projects is the food forest, spearheaded by César. Food forests are designed to mimic young forests with different strata serving different functions. As a result, they are relatively self-regulating requiring less effort in their maintenance and are meant to produce a surplus of food that is available for year-round harvesting.

Ricardo stresses the importance of closed systems -- one of the tenets of permaculture. Our current systems rely on mining and synthesizing chemicals like phosphorus or insecticides to be used as fertilizer or pest control. The problem with these open systems is that agriculture takes nutrients out of the soil in the form of food and biomass which end up in sewer systems and landfills, then replenishes those nutrients by importing them from somewhere else like mines or factories, causing an unsustainable chain of supply and demand. So, each parcel of designated land is responsible for having their own composting set ups. Besides growing plants that are just for biomass in composting, cooperative members are also asked to produce 250 kilograms of

human compost which they get from composting toilets in their homes and around the Cooperative. Ricardo explains that "The *socios* use composting toilets and that's how they pay for what they receive in foodstuffs."[9] Every year, each cooperative member receives 450 kilograms of corn and 100 kilograms of beans from the communally planted and harvested *milpa*. They also receive 5 liters of milk, one kilogram of cheese, and one liter of yogurt each week. At the end of every week, the revenue made by the cooperative is split evenly between all of the *socios* who get paid in cash.

Conclusion

With a revised framework for establishing intentional communities as a New Social Movement, it is evident that these case studies of localized agricultural intentional communities are effectively enacting social change at the level of the lifeworld without any state-directed action or attempts at changing policies. These communities manifest in different forms for different reasons, but underlying them are sustainable food production systems and strong private property rights that offer rural farmers a chance for socioeconomic advancement. These communities have chosen to resist the dominant neoliberal paradigm and instead seek to remedy problems of food insecurity, rapid urbanization, and land degradation by also helping to alleviate poverty, indebtedness, and landlessness for rural farmers. With equitable decision making models and a heavy emphasis on community outreach through education, these farms are becoming economically self-sufficient without having to rely on credit or be dependent on large transnational agribusiness corporations to be viable. The movement is spread by people's visits to the farm, although this is done to varying degrees. Whether people are enjoying an ecological vacation and then telling their friends about it, or becoming trained to start similar ventures on

[9] "*Los socios usan sanitarios ecológicos y asi pagan por lo que reciben de comida.*"

their own, they are nonetheless an indispensable part of this New Social Movement. In the following section, I will present a criticism of this movement through an analysis of its agents.

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Criticism of this Social Movement: Agentic Analysis

Visionary entrepreneurs and equity among their community members

Despite the fact that Hu Weihe and Ricardo Romero have a vision of creating sustainable communities, thinking about and actually going about starting these ventures comes with a certain amount of privilege. Both of them were fortunate enough to have had the opportunity to attend higher education institutions where they were exposed to information about global affairs in an environment where they were not only able to, but also encouraged to, think critically about their roles on this planet and what they could do to enact social change in their own localities. These formative experiences shaped their worldviews and set them on a path towards sustainability and community building that heavily incorporates education as a part of sustaining and promoting their mission. Many of the farmers who live in Weihe's village working for Tai Kang farm, or the farmers from the nearby towns that work with Ricardo at Las Cañadas could not afford the privilege of going to school. Additionally, starting these ventures requires having initial capital investments or access to credit. Notably, these were private investments that allowed these agricultural communities a degree of independence, free from indebtedness to creditors.

No matter their efforts to promote equitable distribution among their workers, economic disparity remains apparent in both case studies. Weihe is undoubtedly better off than the other farmers living in the village at Tai Kang farm. While everyone simply works the fields, Weihe, because of his extensive education and start-up capital, runs Tian Yuan Bang Nature Education

Center and can afford to rent the house. Similarly, every three years the *socios* at Las Cañadas vote on who should be the director of the cooperative, and every year Ricardo gets chosen. Although he may try his best to make things equitable and give people the opportunity to have leadership positions, many *socios* still see him as the *jefe* and the landowner. One *socio* mentioned to me how they wish they could afford to take vacations to France with their families the way Ricardo does, and another even played with the idea of using the skills they learned at Las Cañadas to start their own for-profit business and leave the cooperative.

As Samuel Alexander notes in his 2012 essay, "Resilience through Simplification: Revisiting Tainter's Theory of Collapse,"

> ... the energy intensity of industrial civilisation is primarily a function of the values that produce or shape the perception of its problems. But the social movements just outlined embody values that contrast with the pro-growth, materialistic values upon which industrial civilisation is built, and this means that if those alternative values were ever mainstreamed they would tend to produce a different perception of what problems needed to be solved and in what ways. This shift in values would open up space for voluntary simplification. (14)

Indeed, the kind of lifestyle that this movement promotes is one of self-sacrifice for the sake of personal enrichment, ecologically-minded agriculture, and community. The disparity between the entrepreneurs who can afford to sacrifice what life has endowed them with and invest it towards a grander vision for social change, and the farmers who sacrifice making bigger financial earnings and instead receive food and shelter as part of their payment is a problem facing this social movement. In my opinion, besides the baseline economic inequality extant in society, this problem has a great deal to do with prescribed cultural norms of what a successful life should entail. Therefore, in my eyes, the solution lies in a cultural shift in which both agents, by choosing to create and take part in these communities, must be wholeheartedly dedicated to voluntarily simplifying their lives by yearning for and consuming less. My experience on these

farms is indicative of this shift in which people are prioritizing the sanctity of all life above profit starting with building strong communities of like-minded people who are actively transforming agricultural systems and social structures in their day to day lives, albeit outside of the realm of the state. Although self-sufficiency and sustainability are difficult ideals to try to attain, these agents are forward-thinking and are taking groundbreaking measures toward enacting this sociocultural change and making oppressive institutions obsolete.

Visitors and volunteers

Interestingly, the community outreach and educational component of Tian Yuan Bang and Las Cañadas are the main factor behind their economic successes. This brings up a paradox of the meaning of "community" in this age of globalization. Traditionally, we think of communities as localities of people, emphasizing geographic place, but these agricultural intentional communities have not only made outreach and education a key component of their intentions, but they are financially reliant on outside visitors and volunteers entering the community. The degree and nature of participation in these communities by outsiders is mutable, but even if they simply spread the word and attract more visitors to these farms, they are an indispensable part of the movement. I argue that volunteers seeking deeper opportunities for communitarian immersion and plan to employ the skills and tools they learned on the farms in starting up their own ventures, ultimately comprise a special kind of community member whose participation is flexible.

In both case studies, most of the visitors participating in educational programs are middle-class city dwellers. In the case of Four Seasons Share Organic CSA Farm, families may come for one weekend in the hopes of exposing their children to life outside of the city, but they probably won't change their wasteful habits when they return home, with the exception of maybe

eating organic and joining the CSA. In the case of Las Cañadas, visitors stay for intensive weeklong trainings and gain practical skills and tools in specific areas of the cooperative (e.g. food forest module, seed bank module, etc.) but they aren't fully immersed in the communitarian aspect of the cooperative. Hu Weihe and Ricardo Romero have mitigated this with WWOOFing, Four Seasons Share's Pastoral Life Tutor Program, and Las Cañadas's *Programa de Aprendices.*

These two programs are targeted towards people looking for more than just an ecological vacation. WWOOFing in particular is helpful for international and cross-cultural exchange. As previously mentioned, all the WWOOFers I met were on extended stays (minimum of one month) and had lifelong goals of starting their own agroecological ventures and incorporating education as a component of these. In this respect, they have more to gain from the movement than visitors do. Similarly, people enrolled in the Pastoral Life Tutor Program or the *programa de aprendices* are completely immersed in the community and get the opportunity of making real bonds with community members in addition to learning the inner-workings of these intentional communities. Although short-stay visitors do play a part in propagating the movement by supporting it economically and spreading the word about these farms to their social circles, it is really those who are looking for more transformative experiences and knowledge that can and should be considered agents of social change.

Nonetheless, getting to Four Seasons Share Organic CSA Farm and La Cooperativa Las Cañadas requires mobility that not many people have, namely having the economic means to take time off from work to travel and contribute time and money to these farms. Thus, even though visitors and volunteers have begun the transition towards the aforementioned cultural paradigm shift, this movement and its agents, as seen through the lens of these two agricultural intentional communities, remain rooted in some degree of socioeconomic privilege.

Conclusion

These visionary communitarians truly capture the essence of "think globally, act locally." Upon recognizing perhaps the most pressing issue facing our globalized society, agricultural systems that harm the environment and oppress farmers, the members of these communities have reprioritized what is truly important in life and are actively working to "decolonize the lifeworld"[10] in their respective localities. In creating alternative food production and distribution systems, these sporadic intentional communities have become a part of a larger worldwide cultural shift towards community building that is based in collectively and sustainably working the land, equity in decision-making and distribution of resources, and community outreach and education. By opening their doors to the larger global community, the movement spreads with varying degrees of impact. We must not, however, ignore the underlying socioeconomic privilege that is apparent in this movement. Instead, by being aware and critical of it, solutions to mitigate this problem can be reached. In the following chapter, I present a case for the role of documentary film as a driver of social change and I will analyze my own methodology, and its limitations, as a filmmaker representing these communities and this movement.

[10] Schehr's terminology

Chapter Three: Documentary Film as a Driver of Social Change

It can be argued that documentary film is the most powerful medium for propagating social change because of its accessibility in reaching wide and diverse audiences coupled with the effectiveness of audio-visual cues to create emotional appeals that can motivate audiences into action. The perceived inherent "truth" that comes with filming reality or actuality, as opposed to highly scripted and orchestrated on-set productions, has shaped the interactions between filmmaker, subject, and audience. In this chapter, I start with a general discussion of documentary filmmaking and problematize historical methodological and stylistic trends in the documentary tradition to illuminate some of its limitations. Then I shift the discussion to two cinematic movements, namely the New Latin American Cinema Movement starting in the 1960s and the New Chinese Documentary Film Movement starting in the 1980s, and analyze to what extent these movements adhere to or break away from the documentary style of *cinéma vérité.* In doing so, I aim to highlight the role of documentary film as a driver for social change. Finally, I adopt a critical self-reflexive lens for examining my own personal experiences as a participant in and representor of agricultural intentional communities as a New Social Movement.

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Methodological and Stylistic Trends in the Documentary Filmmaking Tradition

Cinéma Vérité and direct cinema: subjective erasure in the pursuit of "objectivity"

The advent of synchronized sound on film in the 1930s brought new possibilities to film as a whole, but posed a challenge for documentary location shooting. Because the equipment to synchronize sound with film was heavy and expensive, documentary and nonfiction films were dominated by music and voice-over-narration since it was easier for documentary filmmakers to add sound in post-production than it was to carry around this cumbersome machinery (Hampe

16). As a result, most documentary and nonfiction films took on the form of illustrated lectures and after-the-fact b-roll newsreel reporting well into the 1960s. It was then that new technological innovations in film and sound equipment allowed documentarians to get off set and go out into the field. Film stock was becoming increasingly sensitive allowing filmmakers more flexibility to shoot with dimmer, natural light. 16mm cameras made with plastic rather than metal parts made shoulder-mounted equipment lighter, quieter, and more ideal for shooting on-the-go. Lightweight battery-driven magnetic tape sound recorders were also developed around this time, and more importantly, the Bulova "Accutron" which utilized tuning forks for recording vibrations of acoustic waves allowed for synchronous sound recording that no longer required the camera to be connected to the sound recorder with a cable.

With these technologies came a new philosophy in documentary filmmaking, namely direct cinema and *cinéma vérité* (literally translated from French: truth cinema). Because the directness and immediacy of observational footage that was shot on location was seemingly "real," whereas earlier documentaries were not seen as "real" since they relied on scripts and actors, documentary filmmaking of this style became trapped in this notion that confused untampered "reality" as being synonymous with absolute, face-value "truth." "Cinema became *vérité,* the camera couldn't lie, and an entire generation of filmmakers went about trying to get reality to fit into a little box" (Berry et al 23). While this can be instrumental for filmmakers trying to represent culture and society from the bottom up, it raises the problem of subjective self-erasure and subject exploitation on the part of filmmakers hoping to attain complete objectivity.

Cinéma vérité and direct cinema have since received criticism for the fallacy that film can be an objective medium. In his critique of the quest of invisibility in direct, observational cinema

David MacDougall argues that “misconceived objectivity in much of ethnographic cinema results from ‘the fallacy of omniscient observation,’ which ignores the inevitability of subjective input in filmmaking” (Zhang 15). That is, documentary film is a process of subjective selection: the filmmaker chooses where to point the camera, whom to interview, and which footage is useful when editing the final film. Thus, the finished documentary is never neutral or objective in presenting reality. Instead, it is an analogous representation of reality that has been abstracted from its original context by the filmmaker and carefully (re)constructed in the editing process and abstracted and reconstructed again by the audience upon viewing it. Therefore, film can never be a truly “objective” medium.

Breaking down the “invisible wall”

In documentary filmmaking, there is the notion that when documenting human behavior the filmmaker should create the illusion of an “invisible wall.” That is, to make the subjects comfortable enough around a camera that their behavior is seemingly unaltered by its presence. Upon viewing the documentary, the intended effect is that the audience forgets that there is a camera present, or that there is even a filmmaker behind that camera. It is a fine line to walk between having subjects act “natural” in front of a camera crew and complete erasure of the filmmaking process posing as raw “reality” or “truth.” An extreme case of the “invisible wall” phenomenon is using a hidden camera, but this is highly unethical because it lends itself to subject exploitation. Ethical documentary filmmaking requires a negotiation with the subject and institutional formalities like informed consent forms are the norm.

In his critique of this aspiration towards objectivity and invisibility, MacDougall envisions a “participatory cinema” whereby the filmmaker should not only acknowledge their personal exchanges with the subjects, but also institute a process of collaboration in the

production and representation of knowledge (Zhang 15). Independent filmmaking, specifically one person with one camera, offers a novel opportunity for breaking down the facade of an invisible wall and instead promotes this notion of a participatory cinema. The filmmaker can enter the subject's environment and become more comfortable with them than an entire crew could, making for better, more productive interviews. Through the use of interviews and voice-over narration, which were to be avoided at all cost in the style of *cinéma vérité* and direct observational documentaries, the filmmaker can add a multitude of perspectives to an issue and (re)position their own subjective voice in order to more personally engage with the subjects and the content of their film. This subjectivity lies not at the large scope of attempting to illuminate social issues to the public, but rather emphasizes the filmmaker's personal connection with subjects and audiences. In this way, "participatory" documentary presents the novel opportunity for social bonding and community integration throughout the filmmaking process. By going beyond trying to (re)present any semblance of unadulterated "truth," filmmakers can engage in more meaningful dialogue with audiences and society at large about social issues.

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Documentary Film and Social Change in Historical Context

The New Latin American Cinema Movement

In 1969, Argentine filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino wrote a manifesto, "Towards a Third Cinema"[11] in which they criticize the escapist spectacle of commercialized Hollywood films, or "First Cinema," and reject the notion that cinema should solely be a vehicle for self-expression, typical of auteurist European art-house films, or "Second Cinema." They defined a genre and a movement that is born out of the "Third World" which emphasizes the

[11] "Tercer Cine"

interaction between film and audience, and aimed to instigate social activism from the audience. Other keystone theoretical works that comprise the New Latin American Cinema Movement include "The Aesthetics of Hunger"[12] (1965) by Brazilian filmmaker Glauber Rocha, "Toward an Imperfect Cinema"[13] (1969) by Cuban filmmaker Julio Garcia Espinosa, and *The Viewer's Dialectic*[14] (1988) by Cuban filmmaker Tomás Gutiérrez Alea. Although the New Latin American Cinema Movement employed almost every mode, genre, and style of cinematic production, documentary realism, with its ability to capture events occurring somewhere in real-life and broadcast them in unique public spaces or bring them directly into people's homes, played an important part in driving cinema into socio-political realm.

In one of the six essays featured in *The Viewer's Dialectic* (1988), Cuban filmmaker Tomás Gutiérrez Alea defines "popular" film as escapist entertainment that strives for pleasurable aesthetics. He argues, instead, for a "people's" film that is about the people, for the people. Despite the fact that this movement saw amateur filmmaking proliferate throughout the region with the help of cine clubs and 8mm equipment, film was still very labor- and capital-intensive and therefore relatively elitist during Alea's time. Thus, this "people's" film about the people and for the people was not necessarily *by* the people but rather by certain intellectuals and institutions like the ICAIC in the case of Cuba (*Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinemátograficos* or Cuban Institute for Cinematic Arts and Industry).

Nevertheless, this hyper-awareness of spectators as active participants in cinema, as opposed to passive consumers, and therefore as potential agents of social change is the main

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[12] "La estética del hambre"
[13] "Por un cine imperfecto"
[14] "Dialéctica del espectador"

argument of *The Viewer's Dialectic*. Regarding the question of the degree to which "reality" is "objectively" represented by documentary film, Alea favors a subjective stance noting that

> Certainly a film is one thing and reality is another. We cannot forget that those are the rules of the game. Of course, film and reality are not—cannot be—completely divorced from each other. A film forms part of reality. Like all man's works included in the field of art, film is a manifestation of social consciousness and also constitutes a reflection of reality… We cannot say, however, that it is an extension of (daily) reality but, rather, that it is always an extension of (the artists' and the viewers') subjective reality to the extent that it objectifies man's ideological and emotional content. (Alea 121-123)

Objectivity and subjectivity in film are thus dialectically linked. Alea posits that there are active spectators, in contrast to contemplative or passive spectators, who attempt to critically understand reality (film and cultural productions in general being a part of that reality) and spur into practical, transformative action. He contends that in "moments of rupture," that is historically significant and "extraordinary" moments when individuals in a society are faced with a social, political, or moral decision, the level of people's general societal participation grows.

In the case of Alea, this moment of rupture was the Cuban Revolution of 1959.

> "What this is about, then, is stimulating and channeling spectators to act in the direction of historical movement, along the path of society's development… Film will be more fruitful to the extent that it pushes spectators toward a more profound understanding of reality and consequently, to the extent that it helps viewers live more actively and incites them to stop being mere spectators in the face of reality. To do this, film ought to appeal not only to emotion and feeling but also to reason and intellect" (Alea 121-128).

His preferred stylistic mode of attempting to ignite this social action was by combining fiction (associated with emotion and entertainment) with documentary (appealing to reason and intellect).

In *Memories of Underdevelopment* (1968), Alea weaves documentary footage such as historical archives, TV broadcasts, photographs, and political speeches into a fictional narrative

plot. Many non-documentary scenes are shot in a very direct, hand-held style, while many documentary segments are narrated by a voice-over of Sergio, the story's protagonist who transitions from being a spectator of to a pseudo-participant in the Cuban Revolution, giving the fictional a semblance of authenticity and objectivity and the nonfictional a subjective voice and point of view. These disruptive documentary insertions do not merely serve as proof of "realness," but instead give authority to a subjective voice that lies at a historical crux.

A similar technique of layering "objective" images with a subjective perspective was employed a decade earlier by Carmen Moreno Toscano in her groundbreaking film, *Memories of a Mexican* (1950). The compilation of documentary footage used in the film spans from 1897 to 1950 and is organized chronologically. Famous for its impressive tracking shots of armed Mexican revolutionaries filmed from the tops of moving trains by her own father, Salvador Toscano, this film juxtaposes static newsreel footage typical of official historical productions with chaotic scenes of the Revolution on the ground to present an alternative visual narrative about a recent past and how that past bleeds into the present. Historical figures like Porfirio Díaz, Pancho Villa, and Emiliano Zapata are reduced to mere characters whose status as heroes or villains is constructed and mutable depending on the social and political climate. However, the narration we hear contradicts the images we see: an unnamed and unseen "Mexican" alluded to in the title tells of his family's history but we never meet these characters, we only see documentary images of the Mexican Revolution and Mexico's subsequent modern industrialization. The effect is a play on *historia,* the Spanish word for both story and history. The Mexican's personal story told through voice-over narration assumes authority and presents a re-articulation of Mexico's national history through a subjective lens. Again, we see the subversion of the notion of cinema as *vérité*.

In his book titled *Tomas Gutierrez Alea: The Dialectics of a Filmmaker,* Paul A. Schroeder notes that

> The New Latin American Cinema began as an unconnected web of politically engaged filmmakers and cooperatives working within the boundaries of their respective nations … Despite the independence of each of these groups from each other and of the very different circumstances in which they developed, all of them share the common belief that cinema was an effective weapon in combating the grave injustices that plagued their respective societies. (6)

Here we can draw an interesting parallel between our attempt at establishing sporadic intentional agricultural communities that are cropping up worldwide as a new social movement and the role of cinema in Latin America as a driver of social change and as a movement itself. The movement's commitment to artistic innovation, social transformation, and transnational solidarity along with more recent developments in digital film that have made it increasingly accessible to the public and independent filmmakers has helped transform the medium into a tool for social change.

The New Chinese Documentary Film Movement

China experienced both a technical and stylistic renaissance in documentary filmmaking when the Communist government underwent neoliberal economic restructuring in the 1980s and began loosening the tight grip of state-controlled production. Previously, all documentary was state-produced and took the form of illustrated lectures and newsreel reports (Berry et al 4). The era of reform from the late 1980s to today has helped pave the way for independent documentary filmmaking in China which was impossible when all studios were nationally owned and controlled. The advent of digital video in the same decade was an integral instrument of what has come to be called the New Chinese Documentary Film Movement which saw a wave of unprecedented independent filmmaking. The term "New Documentary Film Movement" first

appeared in 1992. This year is historically significant because the suppression of the Tiananmen student demonstrations in 1989 and the famous "Tour to the South" of 1992 in which the former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping (邓小平) called for increased development of the Chinese market economy really shaped the cultural and artistic practices that have developed outside of the new state-corporate culturally hegemonic film industry (Berry et al 6). With the state's violent suppression of dissenting public opinion and the advances toward the commercialization of culture, Chinese independent documentary filmmakers of the 1990s through today have sought out new methods of producing and exhibitioning films about previously unrepresented subjects.

Known as *jishi zhuyi* 纪实主义, or on-the-spot realism, this unprecedented spontaneous filmmaking style of the 1990s directly challenged *xianshi zhuyi* 现实主义, a type of highly orchestrated realism associated with socialist productions (Berry et al 4, 5). Chinese documentary filmmakers generally embraced *cinéma vérité* as alternative to the dogmatic "voice-of-the-Party" state-produced nonfiction films, but they also incorporated extensive "talking head" interviews in order to bring to light the multitude of voices and experiences that were so often ignored from official productions. However, in the quest to represent untampered "reality," the camera and the filmmaker act as passive observers of events and interviewees giving rise to a degree of subjective erasure of the filmmaker's own point of view. Independent documentary filmmakers in the new millennium have employed different methods of subjective self-repositioning in contemporary films be it through the use of voice-over narration or experimental and non-traditional style among others (Zhang 19).

The introduction of easily accessible and affordable portable digital video equipment was crucial to the proliferation of the independent documentary movement and its on-the-spot realist

style because films could now be made independently by one or a few individuals, whether they be amateurs or professionally trained. This informal manner of filmmaking with a hand-held camera also effectively helped reduce the negative hierarchical effects of state-produced documentary with its giant crews by breaking down technical barriers between filmmaker and subject and allowing for a more communal or participatory experience (Berry et al 8, 9). Independent documentary meant raising private money to fund projects that were filmed and edited by one or a few people, and thinking independently instead of regurgitating official ideology. Rather than top-down state productions, the New Documentary Film Movement offered activists, intellectuals, and middle-class people alike the opportunity to represent their own bottom-up, grassroots perspectives on underrepresented social groups and social issues in contemporary China without going through the state film apparatus to do so.

These independent documentary films could not be exhibited in the existing state venues and thus filmmakers have had to forge novel spaces in the public sphere for independent social commentary and critique. This is true not only in how the films were displayed and circulated in informal settings like art galleries, university classrooms, film clubs and festivals, private homes, and online but it is also apparent in the actual process of producing documentary films themselves. That is, filmmakers act more like anthropologists, investigative journalists, or political activists in maintaining a dialogue with their subjects as well as with society. However, the reality of independent documentary film in China as "underground" or alternative to the official state-run film industry, and sometimes even met with censorship, raises the question of how much traction these films actually get, who the audience of these films are, and how the films and the audiences can translate into social action.

Although many independent Chinese documentaries may never be widely distributed on the mainstream circuit, they are a powerful influence on the subcultures that they do reach. The question of how many views these films get is not as relevant for gauging their degree of social influence as questions about who the audience is and how they are consuming these films. Generally viewed alone or among small circles of people, the internet serves as a crucial avenue for spreading exposure and access to these films (Viviani). dGenerate Films "is the leading distributor of contemporary independent film from mainland China to audiences worldwide. We are dedicated to procuring and promoting visionary content, fueled by transformative social change and digital innovation." Even if a film is only accessible on the internet, it still breeds public discourse in a public space that has been used more and more by concerned Chinese citizens to raise awareness about social issues. Audiences who do attend screenings of independent documentaries are typically comprised of people with an interest in the content of the film including but certainly not limited to film students or professionals, journalists, NGO workers, and academics (Viviani). These audiences represent grassroots gatherings of citizens who wish to discuss social and community issues collectively in the hopes of achieving some form of social change. In so doing, they actively shape their civic identities to encompass activism, education, and dissemination of otherwise occulted information and they thus move from the private domain into the public realm. Again, this illustrates that audiences are not just passively consuming entertainment but are rather engaging with the dissemination of bottom-up information as what Margherita Viviani would call active "citizen-spectators."

In her article titled "Chinese Independent Documentary Films: Alternative Media, Public Spheres, and the Emergence of the Citizen Activist," Viviani defines the "public intellectual" as "a scholar located within a government-owned education and/or research institution who uses

his/her status to publicly support a particular social campaign or cause." In a society where opportunities for political participation are limited, these "public intellectuals" play an extremely important role in representing the interests of underrepresented members of society. With regards to socially minded independent filmmaking, academic institutions play a huge role in financing productions as activist filmmaker Ai Xiaoming notes, "We can't do much about distribution right now. We can't have any distribution within the country, which makes it impossible for us to cover production costs. Filmmaking is very difficult without grant support" (Tieh-Chih Chang & Ying Qian).

Ai Xiaoming 艾晓明 is perhaps the most well-known "public intellectual" and social activist filmmaker. She was born in Wuhan in 1953 and is now a feminist scholar, human rights activist, and professor in the department of Chinese language and literature at Zhongshan University in Guangzhou, Guangdong (Berry et al 237). In an interview, Ai Xiaoming states that documentary in China is an effective tool for "counter-propaganda," and that independent filmmaking is a claim to the right of free information and a means of informing citizens about underreported social issues (Viviani). She admits that she does not abide by any structural, stylistic, or aesthetic principles in her films, but rather that her main goal is to disseminate the most amount of content and information about her subject as possible to the audience - "'Our goal is to change things,' she said firmly which I took to mean she prefers to get stories into the public domain as quickly as possible in order to try and effect change or at least contribute to ongoing campaigns" (Edwards). From 2004 to 2011, less than ten years' time, she made seventeen documentary films. "I was impressed by how quickly Ai Xiaoming cut to the chase with her work, which seemingly relied on no preparation – she simply grabbed her camera and started rolling. It seems the camera for her is simply a tool – perhaps 'a weapon' to quote another

local filmmaker Ou Ning 欧宁 – which Ai Xiaoming uses to capture her subject's testimonies" (Edwards). Heavy use of interviews and this direct-access style of filmmaking are the hallmarks of her films.

Ai Xiaoming's most famous work is *The Epic of the Central Plains* (2006) which documents an HIV epidemic that plagues villages in the central province of Henan where poverty has driven people to sell their blood to exploitative and unscrupulous blood collectors (Tieh-Chih & Yang Qian). Another one of her films, *Care and Love* (2008), documents a similar situation further north in the province of Hebei. Between 2008 and 2011, Ai Xiaoming made five films related to the aftermath of the Sichuan earthquake, namely *Our Children* (2009), *Citizen's Investigation* (2009), *Why Are the Flowers So Red?* (2010), *River of Oblivion* (2011), and *Enemy of the State* (2011). She comments that the wave of documentary filmmaking that occurred in the aftershock of the earthquake disaster in Sichuan happened because of the many intersections of societal problems that it brought to light including environmental issues, the conflict between economic progress and human rights, children's rights, suppression of media coverage by the government, and citizen participation in the pursuit of social justice and civil rights.

Some independent documentary filmmakers in China have taken a more experimental approach to their socially aware filmmaking. One such filmmaker whose collaborative film *San Yuan Li* 三元里 (2008) really spoke to me is Ou Ning (mentioned above). Ou Ning spearheaded the academic project and armed a twelve-person crew of film students and activists with digital cameras. Through an exploration of space in San Yuan Li, a traditional village besieged by the bustling urban center of Guangzhou, Guangdong, the film illuminates conflicts and contradictions brought about by China's rapid urbanization. There is no narration or interviews as the clever juxtaposition of images is supposed to speak for itself. The only diegetic sound is

that of traditional instruments being played by villagers, but these songs are layered with high-tempo electronic music and a steady pulsating heartbeat. On screen we see quick-paced, non-continuous jump cuts, tilted angles, aerial views, and other unconventional shots and editing choices. The combined effect of these audio-visual cues is dizzying and anxiety-inducing which speaks to feelings that are a common reaction to living in a city of twelve million people.

Shots of modern women wearing “Western” clothes in city streets are juxtaposed with images of San Yuan Li’s traditional festivals which include dancing dragons and face painted women. Shots of airplanes flying alarmingly close to the rooftops overhead are juxtaposed with images of villagers cultivating rice paddies in abandoned city lots and raising chickens in makeshift rooftop coops. As the city grows, there is an ironic need for more food production but increasingly less space to grow it. By resourcefully reinventing their traditional lifestyles to fit the confines of their environment, the culture at San Yuan Li has thrived off subsistence farming and traditional arts, crafts, and cooking. Shots of workers in sewing factories and electronics repair are juxtaposed with images of smiling villagers going about their days, giving the film a very humanist spirit. In the final sequence, the filmmakers turn the cameras on themselves and we see a glimpse of this participatory cinema in action.

Conclusion

A common thread between these two cinematic movements and my own work as an amateur filmmaker is the participation of intellectuals and academic institutions in representing social issues through the medium of film. Documentary presents a novel opportunity for moving beyond conceptual and academic discourse and bringing the issues facing society into the public domain in a manner that is accessible and has the emotional appeal potential to inspire collective action. Furthermore, by challenging hierarchies and power structures associated with filmmaking

through the practice of participatory cinema and with the help of digital video-audio equipment, filmmakers in academia can effectively challenge the traditional function of these institutions by putting them at the service of marginalized or underrepresented social groups in an interactive way that makes their voices heard. Again, there is always a degree of privilege and elitism tied to film and higher education in general, but in this day and age, documentary is truly becoming a global tool of democratization. As we have seen, the internet is a also a major democratizing force as it provides the space for public discourse and wider access to information.

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Self-Reflexive Lens

Four Seasons Share

I found Four Seasons Share Organic CSA Farm on WWOOFChina.org and they were also recommended to me through a friend of Zhang Jing, my advisor and associate professor of Chinese Language and Culture at New College of Florida. I was corresponding with my host, Hu Weihe, about four months prior to my expected arrival in January of 2016. After getting Internal Review Board (IRB) approval to conduct research on human subjects, a process that included translating informed consent forms, and securing funding for travel through our Student Research and Travel Grant and Council of Academic Affairs funds, I prepared to shoot the documentary. I rented equipment from our library’s Educational Technology Services: a Sanyo XACTI 1080p full-HD camcorder, a tripod, a Go-Pro (very small and weatherproof camera often used by outdoor adventure videographers), and an interviewing microphone. I wrote up interview questions and a film treatment which is akin to a script or screenplay. Because in this type of behavioral documentary filmmaking (in contrast to a highly orchestrated historical reenactment, for example) people's actions on camera or responses during interviews are for the most part

unexpected, a film treatment lays out the purpose of and approach to the film as well as different filming situations and shot types to illustrate that purpose.

Purpose of the film

1. To present alternatives to modern industrial monocrop agriculture as a viable option. To demonstrate that the permaculture movement is a growing worldwide phenomenon. To show how one specific farm in Huiyang, Guangdong, China practices permaculture and biodynamic farming.
2. To show how this farm participates in community outreach through educational programs that connect people to the land and each other while also benefiting the community. To illustrate that anyone can get involved in the permaculture movement, learn important community building skills, and promote cultural exchange through programs like WWOOFing.

Approach to the film

A series of interviews will be conducted to hear first-hand from the farmers what it is that they do. Other than the more formal interviews, it will be open and documentary in style, documenting daily activities like working in the fields, crafting, cooking and sharing meals, etc. No intentional attempt will be made to direct people's activity.

Content of the film

Filming situations will include but are not limited to:

1. Establishing shots including wide-angles, pans, close-ups, shallow-focus shots, and time-lapses.
2. Indoor and outdoor interviews.
3. Host and guests gardening, i.e. tilling, planting, weeding, etc. Crafting, painting, singing, and playing games. Cooking together and sharing meals.
4. Cutaways of the exterior and interior of buildings, signs, pets, workstations, anything you can find.
5. Stock footage of modern industrial monocrop agriculture presented as a counter argument.

Upon arriving at Four Seasons Share Organic CSA Farm, Weihe and I sat down for lunch. He wanted to get to know each other a little better and help both of us be successful working together. He asked me about my goals and intentions in coming to the farm, and I told him about my studies of Chinese language and culture, about my plans to someday start my own

farm in the future, and about my intentions with shooting the film as part of my undergraduate thesis. He suggested that for the first week of my three week stay, I should just observe and try to integrate with the rhythm of life on the farm and get to know people before pointing a camera at them. He seemed to think this would help my filmmaking but instead this worried me since I was eager to film everything I could. However, I took his advice and only shot some timelapses as well as establishing shots of the house and the fields on my off time in the first week.

It was my expectation as a WWOOFer that I would mostly be farming out in the fields. However, since Tian Yuan Bang Nature Education Center had just opened in January of 2016, a lot of the work that we volunteers were asked to do on weekdays when family visits weren't scheduled was "beautification" which included making signs, constructing outdoor brick stoves, finding natural materials from our surroundings to use as decorations, and making promotional posters. None of these activities really reflected the first point of the purpose for my film which I had laid out in my film treatment. However, the first weekend came and the second point about community outreach through education and volunteer opportunity really shined through. I was still heeding Weihe's advice of trying to integrate and not worry about filming, but I couldn't help myself from picking up the camera at this first sight of truly exciting footage - weekend family visits were the golden moments.

However, balancing being a volunteer and filming did turn out to be challenging. I would often spot prime shooting opportunities but could not abandon what I was doing to capture it on camera. Conversely, when I would get free time to go around and shoot, it was when there wasn't as much action going on, which was helpful for getting establishing shots, b-roll, and cutaways, but did not produce the most interesting footage. As time went on, I did get better at fine-tuning a balance and knowing when it was appropriate to pick up the camera on a busy

weekend. The fact that it was overcast and rainy for most of my three week stay posed an additional challenge, but we did experience some sporadic blue skied days when Wei He was kind enough to let me have extra free time for filming.

During my second week there, I was also assigned to go to the Four Season Share CSA Organic Farm offices to help them with translating their subscription forms. I got to see and film where the food grown on the cooperative of farms, including Tai Kang, gets packaged for distribution to the members of the CSA. On the same visit, I accompanied two very friendly workers to a farmer's market in the nearby coastal city of Shenzhen to do some on-the-spot translation for them to foreigners who strolled past their booth. On that visit to Shenzhen, my translation skills were not needed but I did make friends with a local girl who wanted to practice her English. On the third week, they asked me to accompany them to Shenzhen again. This time, we went to an international school's field day celebration. We set up our booth among other food vendors and this time I got to interact with people from all over the world, many of whom spoke English. I managed to get two families to subscribe to join and be a part of the CSA. They were thrilled to find certifiably organic produce at a reasonable cost in such a convenient manner.

We touched base again about my goals for my film at the next weekly meeting with all of us volunteers present and we set up a day for conducting interviews. Only Weihe and Xiao Yu agreed to do an interview. Weihe's parents were too busy, and Ling Wei said he was too shy to be on camera. Even during our daily activities, he would avoid being within the camera's view but eventually as we became better friends, worked more closely together, and learned more about each other, he opened up to the camera but still did not want to do an interview. The day we had agreed to set aside some time for the interviews was a stormy one. I had originally hoped to film the interviews in an outdoor setting, but had to resort to filming them indoors with

fluorescent lighting in the common room on the second floor where we had our weekly meetings. Weihe insisted on doing his interview in English, since he knew my targeted audience were Americans, and more specifically university students.

Las Cañadas

My original plan was just to document my time WWOOFing in China, but after coming home I decided that I really wanted to showcase how organic farming and permaculture are becoming a worldwide trend. It made the most sense to me to go somewhere in Latin America because I had studied modern Latin American history and literature and, of course, because I am Colombian and Spanish is my first language. I found La Cooperativa Las Cañadas through a friend of mine who had heard about all of the great work that they were doing in trying to achieve self-sustainability. They don't take volunteers or WWOOFers, which I later learned was a part of their larger mission of spreading sustainability through more explicit education and training rather than from just volunteering. I had to apply to be a part of their "programa de aprendices" for July 2016 and after getting accepted and paying the fee, I again sought out funding from New College's Council of Academic Affairs, and rented out the same audio-visual equipment from our library. I was in contact with the host, Ricardo, and some other *aprendices* looking to carpool from Mexico City to the farm in Huatusco about four months prior to my visit. Ricardo welcomed me to bring along my filming equipment, and a few of my fellow *aprendices* and I ended up coordinating to take the same bus together from Mexico City to Las Cañadas which was nice for someone like me travelling from so far away.

My first trip to China helped me better plan for this trip in that I knew what kinds of complementary shots to look for and felt better equipped to manage balancing working with filming. I kept the same open-ended and flexible approach to my filmmaking and I also decided

that it would probably be best to first acclimate into the new setting and get to know my fellow *aprendices* and *socios,* before starting to film because that proved to be a really effective way of having people be more comfortable around me with a camera. The first week of the program consisted of our entire group of seven *aprendices*, including our fearless leader, Mariana Sanchez, who had gone through the program twice before, attending each module as a group. This was the perfect time for bonding with my *compadres* and for preparing a more definitive list of things I wanted to shoot, instead of trying to film everything I could and getting useless or redundant footage like I had in China. The second and third weeks we got to choose which modules we wanted to explore more in depth. It was then that I really got to know the *socios* and got the majority of my most interesting footage, apart from the establishing shots and cutaways which I filmed on my own time off.

In contrast to my field research in China where the only person who spoke fluent English was the farm host, Weihe, and most of my time was spent with him, his family, and the other WWOOFers at Tian Yuan Bang, I saw very little of Ricardo and spent most of my time out in the fields with the *socios* and my fellow *aprendices*. Additionally, since Spanish is my second language and I was born in Colombia and raised to embrace my heritage, the language and cultural barrier was greatly reduced at Las Cañadas. Instead of having to ask people to speak slowly and repeat themselves often, the *aprendices* thoroughly enjoyed teaching me all the Mexican slang words and colloquialisms and learning Colombian sayings.

This trip posed its own challenges to sticking to my film treatment, however. When I asked Ricardo for an interview, he said he was too busy and would be out of town for an entire week of the three weeks we were there. He suggested that I simply film the three lectures he was presenting to all of us *aprendices* (the history and general overview of Las Cañadas, food forest

design and management, and ecotechnologies) and ask any relevant questions I had then. Most the 22 *socios* did not live on the cooperative and thus there was no time to interview them either since they would arrive at the farm at 9 am, break for an hour during lunch time, and head back to town at 6 pm. With the *aprendices,* we would wake up at 8am to tend to the animals and have breakfast, then we would spend time in our respective modules breaking for lunch, and we would finish the work day at 6pm. At that time, we would usually head to our living quarters to chop wood to use for heating the wood-fueled water boiler for showering and make dinner before the sun went down, leaving no natural light to do interviews with. Plus, we were all so exhausted that we usually went to bed right after dinner which was ultimately always served after sunset and lit with candles and our headlamps. This posed a stylistic problem of cohesion in the editing process: I had gathered formal interviews from one case study but not from the other.

Saying goodbye to all the wonderful people I had met in both locations was extremely bittersweet, but I was proud of myself for making the journeys. Thanks to this era of globalization and communication technology, I have been able to stay in touch with many of the people I met through social media. I left my personal mark behind, like the signs I hand painted and the ovens I help built at Tian Yuan Bang, and the trees I helped plant and seeds I helped sow at Las Cañadas. With me I brought back indispensable skills to achieve my long-term goals of one day starting my own permaculture farming venture. I also brought back more than mere memories; I brought back footage that I hope inspires people to think about where they source their food from, and encourages them to WWOOF or get involved in the permaculture movement in their own communities.

Conclusion

Although I make no claim that my amateur film is at all on par with the cinematic examples I lay out above, or that my film fits into either of those geographic or cultural contexts, it is a product of my privileged position as an academic and my belief in documentary film's potential to ignite action from viewers in a way that academic discourse cannot. I chose to illustrate this through documentary film because, besides the fact that it's a passion of mine, I wanted to break away from the sometimes convoluted and often inaccessible language and theories of academia and attempt to inspire a wider audience to spark a paradigmatic shift of how we see food production, and to encourage the audience to participate in the global permaculture movement with audio-visual emotional appeals. Being flexible in my filmmaking and simultaneously being an active member of these communities in my time here, my methodology exemplifies the participatory cinema I describe above. To use Alea's notion of historical "moments of rupture," in my film, I present the notion that we as a global society are currently facing such a moment in regard to sustainability in food production. The Green Revolution model is no longer enough to feed our overpopulated world indefinitely. I make the case for why we need to break away from the Green Revolution model and move towards sustainable food production systems like Four Seasons Share Organic CSA Farm and La Cooperativa Las Cañadas.

Conclusion

This interdisciplinary study demonstrates how topics of seemingly disciplinary nature can be incredibly interconnected. This thesis is an amalgamation of my exposure to different languages and cultures, of my knowledge about environmental and social issues facing our globalized society and my desire to do something to ameliorate them, and of my passion for documentary film as a means for disseminating information and as a medium for self-expression. After coming home from WWOOFing at Four Seasons Share and Tian Yuan Bang, and being an *aprendiz* at Las Cañadas, I had the retrospective realization that there was something larger happening than just world wide opportunities for organic farming.

My main takeaway was a feeling of community that was fostered through international solidarity about issues regarding food production, work exchange, and education about agriculture and agrarian lifestyle. This got me thinking about the larger sociological implications of these sporadic worldwide intentional communities. I got to see first hand how these farms are actively engaged in alleviating social problems starting in their own agrarian communities. The future of our species really depends on global cooperation in finding dynamic solutions, and by educating people on the skills and tools to create sustainable agroecological systems and equitable communities across cultures, these sporadic worldwide agricultural intentional communities are more than just a global trend -- they represent a New Social Movement of grassroot communitarianism that marks a paradigmatic shift towards prioritizing the sanctity of all life above profits without discounting the fact that we exist in a world dominated by capitalist economics.

The differences in the intentions of my two case studies are a reflection of cultural differences in each context. As a part of the governmental ancient village restoration project at

Tai Kang farming community, a major intention of Weihe and his family at Tian Yuan Bang Nature Education Center is to preserve and promote rural culture. They mostly reach out to city dwelling families for weekend stays in an attempt to reconnect urban residents with the land where their food is grown. However, the Pastoral Life Tutor Program and WWOOFing are at the heart of Four Seasons Share Organic CSA Farm's intention to spread the CSA organizational model as well as organic, agroecological, biodynamic, and permaculture-oriented food production to other rural communities in southern China and around the world. La Cooperativa Las Cañadas has more ambitious goals of eventually being completely off the grid and attaining full self-sustainability with clean energy and food security for members of the cooperative. While they rely on the courses they teach to people outside of the cooperative to remain financially afloat, they have adapted to mitigate cultural blocks to spreading permaculture and sustainability by moving from ecotourism, to WWOOFing, to their *programa de aprendices.* Instead of welcoming people who are simply looking for an ecological vacation, the application process for the program selects for people who are looking for full communitarian immersion and are dedicated to using the skills they learn at Las Cañadas long after the program is over.

After college, I plan to convert my grandfather's decades-old cattle ranch in Mariquita, Colombia into a sustainable agroecological permaculture farm, and eventually into a cooperative community. There is finally an end in sight to the destabilizing armed conflict that has ravaged Colombia for half a century, and I truly feel as though I have found my calling to return to the country where I was born and work to restore my family's ranch into a fertile and productive off-the-grid self-sustaining farm. I hope to employ the help of *campesinos* in the area who face insecurity every day.

The paradox of community and globalization arises again - even when I was far from home, I felt incredibly connected to the people I was living and working with in these communities. Although I no longer consider myself a member of either of these agricultural intentional communities, I certainly felt as though I was during my respective stays there. My field research has inspired me to return to my own roots in Colombia. However, neither myself, nor this movement, nor documentary film is exempt from critical analysis. I discovered that the key to success lies in finding dynamic solutions to problems that arise from taking critical stances. In my novel position as a both a participant in and a reproducer of this New Social Movement, I had to be flexible in my methodology while filming and mutable in my stylistic choices while editing because of the unknown nature of behavioral documentary, similar to the way the agricultural intentional communities I documented in my writing and in my film have had to adapt to their historical, political, cultural, and environmental climates. As we have seen, a participatory approach to independent documentary filmmaking that challenges hierarchies in traditional methodologies has a huge potential for igniting social change in the age of technology. I hope that my film can be instrumental in promoting this movement to a wide and diverse audience in ways that this written thesis cannot.

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