

Farming after Occupy

Institutional politics, activism, and the future of agricultural science

by

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Farming after Occupy: Institutional politics, activism, and the future of agricultural science

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Abstract

This Master's thesis examines political activism centered at the Gill Tract Community Farm (GTCF) in Berkeley, California. The Gill Tract is roughly 14-acres of University of California, Berkeley (UCB) research land at the boundary of Berkeley and Albany, in the San Francisco Bay Area (SFBA). The GTCF is a community-led agro-ecological farm which emerged out of a protracted land occupation in 2012, and situates itself as a site of opposition to capitalism and colonialism. In 2020, I conducted 17 semi-structured interviews with community farmers and university administrators about the relationship between UCB and the GTCF. Drawing on the interviews, written media, and auto-ethnographic reflections of my own time living in the SFBA and volunteering at the GTCF, I examine three distinct questions. 1) I discuss how the theory of boundary objects helps to understand why the Gill Tract was a site of contestation in 2012, and how the theory of boundary objects can be deepened by viewing them not only as sites of cross-disciplinary collaboration, but also dispute. 2) I explore the uneven ways in which the university and the community farm are legible to each other and are changing each other, read through social scientists engaging with activist movements. 3) I engage in a partially auto-ethnographic reflection on the political potential of the GTCF, using anthropological work on narrative and the alter-globalization movement to frame activism at the community farm. This thesis contributes to a deeper understanding of boundary objects, as well as understandings of the potential for local activist movements to effect political change, both locally and within global activist networks.

Lay Summary

This thesis is about the Gill Tract Community Farm (GTCF), a community-led agro-ecological farm located on University of California, Berkeley (UCB) land in Berkeley, CA. The project focuses on how the farmers make themselves legible to the university, how the farm interacts with the institutional politics of the university, and how the farm fits into broader urban geographies of the San Francisco Bay Area (SFBA). This thesis incorporates the perspectives of, and insights from, 17 semi-structured interviews with those whose work directly relates to the farm: professionals in UC Berkeley's College of Natural Resources, Capital Strategies Office, and Chancellor's Office, as well as volunteers and activists associated with the farm from its inception up to the present. It also incorporates archival and local media sources, as well as personal, auto-ethnographic reflections of my own time living in the SFBA.

Preface

This dissertation is an original intellectual product of the author, M. Pinkard. The fieldwork reported in this dissertation was covered by UBC Ethics Certificate number H20-01935. The author was a co-investigator on the proposal, along with M. Kuus (principal investigator) and L. Bergmann (co-investigator). All interviews and fieldwork were conducted by the author.

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A true act creates the conditions of its own possibility.

Slavoj Žižek, quoted in Žižek and Goodman (2008)

Chapter 1

Introduction

Placing scientific dissent *or* Occupy, Agroecology, and Genetics, a peopled study

“Whose farm? Our farm! Whose farm? OUR Farm!”

The chants rang out across the field, between the tents and over the tender young crops. With police watching over them, activist farmers spent weeks planting and tending starts at the Gill Tract, 14-acres of agricultural research land belonging to the University of California, Berkeley, and – at the time activists occupied the land in 2012 – firmly on the university’s roadmap for development.

They snuck onto the field in broad daylight. They took boltcutters to the padlock on the gate and erected an improvised encampment to protest the university’s plan to develop the ‘last best farmland in the East Bay’ (Darling and Greither 2014). They stayed for three weeks.

Tension mounted as the university took gradual steps to reclaim the land. First the water was shut off. Then a lawsuit was filed against the main organizers, seeking monetary damages. They offered to dialogue about urban agriculture and the fate of the Gill Tract – if only the protesters packed up their camp. Finally, they sent in the riot cops.

Activists awoke one morning to confront lines of police in riot gear, organized and aggressive. Some were arrested in the street. Some were arrested farming.

In a little over a decade leading up to the Occupation, events at the University of California Berkeley and nationally set the broader terms for the confrontation. In 1998, Berkeley's College of Natural Resources (CNR) inked a \$25 million deal with the Swiss biotechnology corporation Novartis to provide a third of the department's funding over a five-year period. The contract, hotly contested within CNR and without, afforded Novartis priority to negotiate licenses on approximately one-third of the department's new technologies, granted Novartis two of five seats on the department's research committee, and allowed Novartis to delay publishing on affiliated research for up to four months (Press and Washburn 2000). The professor who had negotiated the deal quietly left soon after to take a position in Zurich, near Novartis' headquarters (Gruissem n.d.). By 2000, at least one academic had broken off their relationship with Novartis's successor corporation, Syngenta¹, after Syngenta attempted to suppress research demonstrating that their herbicide Atrazine caused negative health effects in frogs, including hermaphroditism (Aviv 2014).

Yet there was a deeper history to the land as well. Beginning in the 1940s, the Gill Tract housed the Division of Biological Control, a research department at UC Berkeley that focused on finding biological, rather than chemical, solutions to pest control problems². From a pest control perspective, the division pioneered many pest control methods with resounding success for a variety of crops, including: citrus fruits, walnuts, grapes, olives, and ornamental flowers (Jennings 1997).

Before the Division of Biological Control occupied the Gill Tract, the University bought the land from the Gill family for athletic fields for students (Underhill 1936). The Gill family had farmed the tract since 1889, when Edward Gill bought the land from Jose Domingo, the son of Spanish soldier Luis Maria Peralta, who had been granted 43,000 acres in 1820 by the Spanish crown for his service. When California passed to the Americans after the Mexican-American War in 1848, the grant was respected by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Relatively little is known

¹In 1999, Novartis and AstraZeneca merged their agricultural businesses and spun them off into a new corporation, Syngenta AG (Pomager 1999).

²While the Division of Biological Control clearly represents a modernist outlook (c.f. Norgaard 2006), in that it views pest control as possible largely through the instrumental application of biological organisms, the Occupiers portray the researchers of the Division of Biological Control as largely acting in accordance with the Occupiers' own socio-ecological visions. This was expressed to me through the course of my interviews and also through the GTCF website, which presents the Division of Biological Control as a precursor to the present-day community farm (Gill Tract Farm 2020).

of the indigenous residents of what is now called the San Francisco Bay Area prior to the Spanish arrival. The Ohlone were forcibly relocated to Mission San Francisco in the late 18th and early 19th century, and their descendants continue to live in the San Francisco Bay Area (SEAL 2015). Though previously federally recognized, the tribe has been engaged in a decades-long process to regain federal recognition, after a Bureau of Indian Affairs official in Sacramento in 1927 neglected his responsibility to find land for the tribe and removed them from the federal register (Denetclaw 2018).

The Division of Biological Control used the Gill Tract as a research site up until the 1990s, when a new dean in the College of Natural Resources imposed a fee-for-use model on university agricultural research lands, closed the Division of Biological Control, and began to seek funding from private corporations. Biotechnology researchers, primarily molecular biologists, who were able to receive larger grants began to use the Gill Tract mainly for genetics research, with corn a special focus.

In the background to mounting tensions at the University of California over the use of the Gill Tract and corporate-university partnerships, 2008 saw the United States enter the Great Recession, the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression³ (Chappelow 2020). University students, saddled with debt, entered job markets with few prospects. Unemployment for those ages 16-24 hovered at 18.4% in 2010, worse than for the entire 60 years prior for which data was kept (Shierholz and Edwards 2011). A trend of shrinking funding for universities and research accelerated (Press and Washburn 2000). In 2017, adjusting for inflation, state funding for public colleges was \$9 billion less than in 2008 (Mitchel et al. 2017). Per pupil funding to state colleges and universities decreased in every state in the United States between 2008 and 2016, with a median decrease of 21%, when the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities published a report on the state of higher education funding (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities 2016). Time spent teaching is negatively correlated with faculty salary at public universities (Youn and Price 2009).

None of this is surprising for those who live their lives within the four walls

³Now surpassed by the downturn caused by COVID-19 (Wheelock 2020).

of the ivory tower. However, the shocking normalcy of this massive divestment from public education serves to highlight the very dire fortunes of universities in the twenty-first century, and to provide subtext for the activist demands that follow.

In the fall of 2011, the lingering effects of the economic downturn mixed with the remnants of the Global Justice Movement and the excitement and tactics of the revolutions of the Arab Spring earlier in the year to produce Occupy Wall Street (de Vries-Jordan 2014; Hatem 2012). Beginning with an encampment in Zucotti Square Park in New York City, just opposite the New York Stock Exchange, protest encampments appeared across the United States in the weeks that followed. Although derided in both the popular press and the less anarchist portions of the US left for having difficulty communicating its message (Kroll 2011), the movement was largely successful in foregrounding increasing income inequality and corporate control of political processes, most famously popularizing the phrase “We are the 99%” later adopted by the Bernie Sanders presidential campaign (Levitin 2015). In some parts of the country, the protests took a decidedly more radical form. Many of the activists who would occupy the Gill Tract, participated in the Occupy encampment in Oakland, California, which dubbed itself the “Oakland Commune”, confronted the police multiple times, shut down the port of Oakland, called attention to police brutality, and at one point took over an abandoned local building (Brissette 2013). In other parts of California as well, the protests were decidedly confrontational. Video surfaced of UC Davis police officers pepper spraying activists point blank in the face, and UC Berkeley called in the local police department to suppress a student encampment (Augusto and Setele 2013; Darling and Greither 2014). As Augusto and Setele explain, the militarization of the US police combined with “the privatization of once public goods and services” was becoming increasingly apparent to student activists and the broader public. Student advocates were left with the question: “who is responsible for the privatization and marketization of the university, and what can advocates of public higher education do to stop it” (Augusto and Setele 2013, p. 165)?

In this political climate in the spring of 2012, a small group of former UC Berkeley student activists calling themselves “Occupy the Farm” coordinated with local food justice organizations to stage a march to the Gill Tract on Via Campesina’s International Day of Peasant Resistance. The activists planned to occupy the Gill

Tract to raise awareness for an ongoing dispute with the university over proposed development of the site (Darling and Greither 2014; Tarlau 2012). The events of the Occupation are detailed in the documentary film *Occupy the Farm*, which follows the Occupation⁴ and its immediate aftermath up until the point at which the university transferred management of the land to the College of Natural Resources (CNR) for a period of 10 years. The film ends with various participants giving their final thoughts as the Occupiers begin to engage with the community-based research project that CNR is permitting to put down roots at the Gill Tract (Darling and Greither 2014).

In the rest of this chapter, I intend to accomplish a number of disparate tasks: I will locate the Gill Tract more specifically in its Euclidean coordinates in the San Francisco Bay Area; I will set up the theoretical material necessary for chapters to come; I will discuss the methods, pitfalls, and pragmatics of my fieldwork; and I will give a brief overview of the rest of the thesis to come.

1.1 Placing the Gill Tract

The Gill Tract (Fig. 1.1) is identified locally by the streets it borders. In 2012, those borders were: San Pablo Avenue to the east, Buchanan St. to the north, Monroe St. to the south, and Jackson St. to the east. Although at one time it encompassed 104-acres, 16 were-transferred to the USDA to establish the Western Regional Research Center, 19 acres were used to construct wartime housing during World War II, and 55 were developed into what is now known as University Village, which continues university family housing and recreational facilities. In 2012, 17 acres of land were left, which included some of the WWII era housing.

Additionally, the Gill Tract is divided up into North and South Sides, separated by Village Creek. In 2012, a portion of the 7-acre South Side was slated for development. This section comprised roughly 3 acres, with the remaining 4 acres holding old university and WWII-era buildings. The 10 acres of the North Side are additionally divided. 2 acres on the eastern side of the North Side are set aside for the Gill Tract Community Farm, the community-university partnership which

⁴I intend to capitalize the word “occupation” in this text to make note of the fact that it was a political occupation with ties to a political movement of the same, “Occupy”.

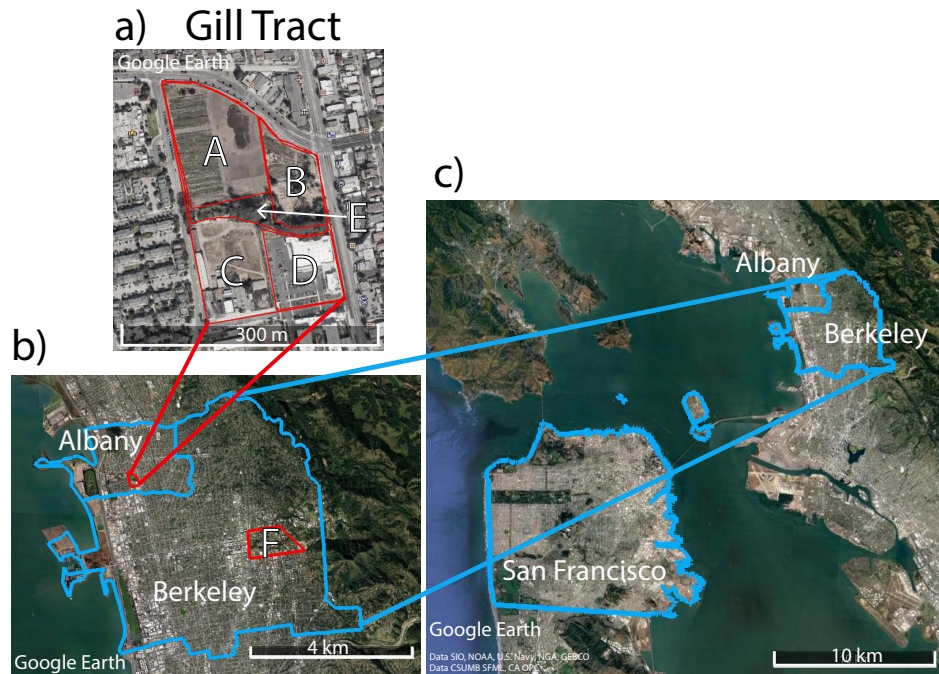


Figure 1.1: (a) The area that composed the Gill Tract in 2012 comprised 17 acres and can be divided into five sections: (A) research fields primarily used by corn geneticists; (B) location of the Gill Tract Community Farm and 2012 Occupation; (C) unused space containing several derelict buildings and empty lot; (D) development area under contention during 2012 Occupation and now site of a Sprouts Farmers Market grocery store, assisted living facility, and several chain restaurants and retail stores; (E) undeveloped area with a number of large trees immediately surrounding Village Creek, which exits a pipe and passes into daylight at the Eastern border of the Gill Tract and crosses the site before entering another pipe. (b) The Gill Tract is located in Albany, close to the municipal border with Berkeley, about 3.2 km (2 mi) as the crow flies (a 5 km (3.2 mi) walk through city streets) from the Department of Plant and Microbial Biology on the Northwest corner of (F) the UC Berkeley campus. (c) Berkeley and Albany sit across the San Francisco Bay from the city of San Francisco, and are connected to the San Francisco Peninsula by the Bay Bridge.

emerged out of the Occupation, while 6 acres on the west portion of the North Side are used for corn genetics research, and an additional 2 acres function as green space around the creek.

The location of the Gill Tract is helpful for situating its status as a boundary object. Literally, it sits on a boundary, the Berkeley-Albany border; and functions as a porous interface between UC Berkeley and the USDA Western Regional Research Center. It has been used for Biological Control field studies as well as molecular biology research. The tract is also peripheral to the UC Berkeley campus, as walking between the two takes over an hour. When the university originally set out to purchase the Gill Tract for student athletic fields in the 1920s, students expressed disinterest in a site so far-removed from the main campus (Agriculture Committee 1950; Underhill 1936). Yet ecologists know that the boundaries between ecosystems are often the most (bio)-diverse and interesting (Odum and Barrett 1971). The Gill Tract is no exception. As I discuss in Chapter 2, its complicated history on disciplinary boundaries provided the political importance for the 2012 Occupation.

1.2 A broad overview

This thesis makes use of three main literatures. I draw on the literature of knowledge conflicts and boundary objects to understand why the Gill Tract was Occupied in 2012. Scholarship about activism and ideology informs my analysis of the relationship between the Gill Tract Community Farm and UC Berkeley. Auto-ethnography and theory on value, narrative and place structure my reflections on my own time volunteering at the Gill Tract and the potentials of such political practices.

I undertook the field research for this project in the summer and fall of 2020, between the months of July and October, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of the pandemic, the University of British Columbia issued a moratorium on international travel for research. While I am a United States citizen and would have been legally able to travel to Berkeley, California, because of the moratorium, I could not have received ethics approval for the project to go ahead. Instead, to understand the atmosphere and place that I was investigating, I had to content myself with my on-the-ground knowledge obtained while living and working in Berkeley

between 2016 and 2019, as well as written resources I could get access to online and through the UBC library.

Over the course of my research, I conducted 17 semi-structured, one-hour interviews over Zoom with unique individuals currently associated with the Gill Tract Community Farm. I recorded and transcribed the audio from these interviews to produce the quotes that appear in this text. Participants in the interviews were either volunteers and activists with the community farm, employees of UC Berkeley whose jobs, research projects, or personal interest put them into contact with the community farm, or students at UC Berkeley affiliated with on-campus programs that interacted with the community farm. All interviews were conducted on condition of anonymity for the participants involved, and my choice of quotes and details reflects my commitment to that promise.

My goal in the interviews was to better understand the evolving relationship between the Gill Tract Community Farm and UC Berkeley. While using the term ethnography is certainly precluded by my inability to access the Gill Tract physically, I (hope I have) read my interview materials with an ethnographer's eye. I asked participants many questions about their work, about the Gill Tract, and how they envisioned the future of the community farm.

Much of my access came from emails sent to interview participants whom I had never met before. I then used a 'snowball' process, following leads suggested by interview subjects to reach other interviewees. Responses to my emails were sometimes cold, sometimes non-existent, but for the most part friendly and willing to participate. Even higher-level administrators with busy schedules were willing to speak with me, which is a testimony to them as well as the critical, reflective, and engaged institutional culture at UC Berkeley.

My other data sources were a mixture of media materials. I mostly referred to news articles and historical documents available online, but there were older historical studies of biological control that proved to be of great value. I also referred to the documentary *Occupy the Farm* (Darling and Greither 2014), filmed during and immediately after the 2012 Occupation of the Gill Tract, as well as public interviews with the organizers of Occupy the Farm, published publicly on social media. Finally, while I could not access the archives at Berkeley, one of my interlocutors emailed me some archive materials from the archives of the Chancellor at

UC Berkeley.

Finally, I drew on my own experience as a volunteer at the Gill Tract. This experience is woven throughout the text but is especially strong in Chapter 4, which uses an auto-ethnographic reflection as a jumping off point to discuss the farm's politics and urban geography in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Throughout this study, I was forced to confront my positionality, sometimes very openly by my interlocutors:

[The community farm] is an eyesore. It looks like an empty lot. I mean, the community garden is wonderful as it is. And you're a former volunteer there so I might piss you off by saying this, but sometimes it resembles a homeless encampment.

Although their comments did not 'piss me off', this interlocutor is absolutely correct in subtly suggesting emotional attachment or conflicts of interest in my research about the Gill Tract. While I had been a volunteer at the community farm between 2017 and 2019, volunteering once or twice weekly over the course of about a year-and-a-half, depending on my schedule, I found my positionality in relation to the activists and the farm changing before, during, and after the research and the writing of my thesis.

In a Postscript to *Nuclear Rites*, Hugh Gusterson's seminal ethnography of nuclear weapons scientists, he describes how his personal relationship to nuclear weapons evolved over the course of his two years of fieldwork. Before beginning graduate school as an anthropologist, Gusterson had been an anti-nuclear activist with the peace movement. He had recurring nightmares of nuclear holocaust. Yet over the course of his fieldwork, nuclear weapons came to seem normal to him, and his nightmares vanished. The magnitude of this change strikes him at a remarkably quotidian moment, as he eats lunch with an activist friend who he has invited to the cafeteria at Los Alamos National Laboratory, in New Mexico:

Nuclear weapons scientists had long since ceased to seem strange to me, and I felt as much at ease there as in any university cafeteria. I was well into my burrito when I realized that my friend was barely eating and was, in fact, looking faintly nauseated. She felt deeply troubled by the pervasive air of normality in a place dedicated to the design of

weapons of mass destruction. Unable not to think of Auschwitz, she found it difficult just to be there (Gusterson 1996, p. 233).

While I was never confronted so directly with my personal changes on account of my research, speaking with administrators at UC Berkeley brought me into contact with those I had formerly spurned as more-or-less spineless apparatchiks within a (partially) corrupt institution, strongly intertwined with local developers. This, at least, is the view I had after volunteering at the farm and viewing the documentary film *Occupy the Farm*. My time volunteering never forced me to challenge this view, nor did I have to articulate it openly, as the farm ideology is one of implicit opposition to UC Berkeley and its administrators.

What I found, of course, were extremely thoughtful people who needed to make difficult decisions about university priorities, but who were nevertheless generally supportive of the community farm's goals and desires, at least insofar as those goals were articulated as: 1) a desire to remain at the Gill Tract, and 2) a desire to maintain the current governance structure. I explore the administrators' relationship to the farm in Chapter 3, and I also interrogate my relationship to my interlocutors alongside Gusterson's (2004) essay, "Becoming a Weapons Scientist". In the essay, Gusterson charts his own journey to becoming an anthropologist as one of his interlocutors completes her 'nuclear rites' of passage and participates in a nuclear weapons test as lead designer for the first time. Gusterson relies on Donna Haraway's (1988) notion of 'situated knowledges' to problematize the notion that any knowledge can be objective, while also noting how his own past as an anti-nuclear activist "gave me an angle, a set of questions, a terrain of engagement in my encounter with the weapons scientists" (Gusterson 2004, p. 19). I believe that my own volunteer work with the farm provided me similarly with a set of questions and a 'terrain of engagement' from which to carry out this study. My 'situated' perspective allows me to understand the description of the community farm as a 'homeless encampment' in a very particular way, not necessarily the way in which my interlocutors expect. My goal with this whole thesis is to make more apparent my own 'situated knowledge' of the Gill Tract, its past, present, and future.

My 'situated knowledge' begins, in the theoretical literature, in Science and

Technology Studies (STS). Specifically, the literature on boundary objects, scientific conflicts, and scientific dissent. It extends through geographers' theories of place and social movements, draws from Althusser's understandings of ideology, and builds heavily on the body of work produced by anthropologist David Graeber.

1.3 Boundary Objects: Scientific conflicts extend to a research site

A focus of STS has been understanding how scientists and experts collaborate when no common disciplinary language exists. Often termed *interactional expertise* (Collins, Evans, and Gorman 2007), there are examples of successes, such as Galison et al.'s (1997) study of experimental and theoretical physicists collaborating to test and propose fundamental physical theories, but there are also failures, such as Wynne's (1989) iconic study of Cambrian sheepfarmers' inability to have their expertise recognized by UK governmental scientists and bureaucrats in the wake of nuclear contamination from fallout from the Chernobyl disaster. One way that experts locked in incommensurable paradigms can communicate is through reference to common objects. Such *boundary objects* are "both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites" (Star and Griesemer 1989, p. 393). Elaborating on the concept, (Leigh Star 2010) highlights four main components to boundary objects: (1) interpretive flexibility, the ability for multiple groups to view the same object in different ways; (2) material/organizational structure and (3) scale/granularity, both of which "allow different groups to work together without consensus"; and (4) "'information and work requirements,' as perceived locally and by groups who wish to cooperate" [602].

For Star and Griesemer (1989), as well as Collins, Evans, and Gorman (2007) the importance of boundary objects is that they allow for cross-disciplinary collaboration without the need to achieve *consensus* on the meaning of objects. There is no reason to pre-suppose that nature constrains knowledge and forces all participants in a project to understand in the same manner the material entities with which they work. Star and Griesemer use as an example a university administrator "in charge of grants and contracts", who "answers to a different set of audiences

and pursues a different set of tasks than does an amateur field naturalist collecting specimens for a natural history museum” (Star and Griesemer 1989, p. 388).

Although boundary objects are usually viewed as sites of collaboration, what happens when the goals, aims, and understandings of social groups working with the same material entities come to be at odds with each other? In the case of the Gill Tract, a long-held consensus about the use of the land broke down as factions competed over the future of university budgets and the nature of the science being practiced at the Gill Tract. The Gill Tract became a boundary object through which different narratives about agricultural science conflicted and interacted. In particular, agro-ecologists and scientists in the Division of Biological Control found themselves at odds with molecular biologists, geneticists, and agricultural economists in favor of gene editing advances in bio-technology. This conflict emerged into the public light in many ways throughout the 1990s and 2000s, but it deepened beyond budgetary and tenure conflicts to a dispute over university property with the Occupation of the Gill Tract in 2012.

1.4 Scientific Dissent and Knowledge Conflicts: A history of dissent led to the Occupation of the Gill Tract

A second focus of STS is knowledge conflicts. Collins and Evans (2002) place the study of knowledge controversies within the domain of Wave Two of science studies, as part of posing the research question: ‘How is scientific consensus formed?’ (241). The answer to this question broadly laid out the legitimacy for ‘social constructivism’, as researchers demonstrated that ‘extra-scientific factors’ (i.e. sociological factors) are necessary ‘to bring about the closure of scientific and technical debates’ (239), and that expertise belonged not only with scientists and bureaucrats (or technocrats), but also with certain scientific laypeople. For one prominent example, Wynne’s (1989) classic study of sheepfarmers in Northern England living in the shadow of a nuclear plant while also navigating the effects of Chernobyl – and the British government’s response to Chernobyl – demonstrated that certain non-scientist communities have important and necessary lived expertise, often tied to the landscapes communities inhabit.

While many scholars engage scientific controversies⁵, Delborne (2008) points out that little attention has been paid to scientific dissenters and the political tactics adopted to express scientific dissent. Delborne's case study focuses on the disputed research and tenure case of Ignacio Chapela, a UC Berkeley professor in Plant and Microbial Biology who was one of the principal opponents of the Novartis deal mentioned above. Delborne argues that contrarian science can pass into open dissidence. He explores how Chapela walked a line between projecting legitimacy by maintaining links with the scientific community while simultaneously deploying tactics usually associated with social movements, drawing the conclusion that the agonistic terrain of science can at times encompass dissident political behaviors.

The rise of gene-editing technologies in the 70s led to a widespread dispute over the ethics and politics of employing biotechnology within the agricultural system⁶. For decades, this debate has inflamed the passions of scientists and the lay public, as a significant portion of the lay public continues to view genetic engineering with skepticism⁷. At Berkeley in the 1990s, faculty in the College of Natural Resources dissented in the pages of national newspapers over a proposed partnership with biotechnology company Novartis (now Syngenta) (Press and Washburn 2000) and over the health effects of herbicides used on herbicide-resistant crops (Aviv 2014). Behind the scenes, according to some of my interlocutors, the Division of Biological Control was being shut down and moved to Davis, while research into GM technologies brought in more research funding and the Department of Plant and Molecular Biology expanded.

At the Gill Tract, long-standing intra-faculty disputes over the future of agricultural science and the apportionment of agricultural research fields influenced

⁵For recent reviews about knowledge controversies by geographers, see Whatmore (2009) and Barry (2012). For examples of scholarly writing on scientific controversies, see: Collins (1981), Wynne (1989), Nelkin (1992), Clarke and Montini (1993), and Shapin and Schaffer (2011).

⁶The first genetically modified organism was created in 1973 (Cohen et al. 1973). Because the debate is very polarized, an accurate retelling of the history of debate is quite difficult to find (one is sorely tempted to refer to the very thorough Wikipedia entry, brimming with citations: *Genetically modified food controversies* (Wikipedia 2021)). Some recent treatments of GM technologies and the GM debate include: Ronald and Adamchak (2018), Doezenia (2019), Biddle (2018), Daubenmire (2019), and Hilbeck et al. (2015). An archive has opened in the UK comprising the ongoing UK debates over GM technologies (Moses 2016).

⁷A 2016 Pew Research study found that 39% of Americans believe that GM foods are “worse for one's health” (Funk and Kennedy 2016).

the 2012 Occupation. Students with sympathies for agroecology heard lectures extolling the Division of Biological Control and questioning the use of the Gill Tract by the Division of Plant and Microbial Biology. When the Gill Tract was Occupied, a significant public relations concern for UC Berkeley and debate in the local media became about whether genetic technologies and genetically modified plants were being grown and researched at the Gill Tract. The decision to Occupy the Gill Tract can be understood as a political action in the ongoing conflict between biotechnology and agroecology, but only if the Occupiers of the Gill Tract can be afforded a certain expertise in the face of genetic science. Otherwise, they become mere Luddites afraid of technological advancement.

Wynne (2001) stresses that, in relation to biotechnology, “sceptical public reactions are not reactions to (supposedly misperceived) risks as such, or to media representations of these, but rather are public judgements of dominant scientific and policy institutions and their behaviours, including their representations of the public” (445). The Occupiers are thus afforded an epistemic position from which to contest the research use of the Gill Tract. Wynne (2003) argues further that the political importance of science in society is not, as Collins and Evans (2002) suggest, merely propositional, meaning that the public is only involved in saying yes or no to decisions presented them objectively by scientific communities. Rather, science is implicated in the production of the meaning, significance, and framing by which choices come into being, as well the production of ignorance (Funtowicz and Ravetz 2001; Ravetz 1987; Stocking and Holstein 1993; Wynne 1992).

The response of research scientists to the Occupation of the Gill Tract was public and angry (Darling and Greither 2014; Freeling 2012). Scientists argued in the press that the Occupiers were confused and anti-intellectual, having mixed up their facts while participating in ‘the food movement’. Without understanding the political imbrication of scientific practice, it is difficult to understand the overtly political response of scientists to the Occupation of the Gill Tract. Although the scientists repeatedly referred to the Occupiers “blocking” their access to their research fields, the Occupiers repeatedly stressed their willingness—both in comments to the local press and to at least one scientist in person—to work with scientists at the Gill Tract to preserve and share the land (BondGraham 2012; Darling and Greither 2014). The scientists’ critiques routinely stepped beyond concern about access to

their research fields and into either attacks on the Occupiers' politics or defenses of their own research agendas (BondGraham 2012; Darling and Greither 2014; Freeling 2012).

Barry (2013) writes, "Part of the value of the idea of the political situation is to point to the existence of dynamics that are not apparent in public but which are nonetheless critical to the evolution of the public knowledge controversery" [11]. Viewing the Occupation of the Gill Tract through the lens of the political situation, we begin to see the underlying forces shaping the debate over its future, and we see why an Occupation ostensibly against development aroused heated passions over agricultural research. As Barry elaborates, "Rather than assume that public knowledge controversies are necessarily directed towards the institutions of the state, or that they must revolve around issues that are conventionally understood as political, the analyst of such controversies needs to attend to the historically and geographically contingent ways in which diverse events and materials come to be matters of public dispute" [8].

At the Gill Tract, as we shall see in Chapter 2, a particular history of land use shaped and led to the Occupation, and continues to resonate through the community farm today. One way to understand how particular histories meet, inspire, and are made anew at the Gill Tract is through geographic understandings of place, space, and social movements.

1.5 Place and Social Movements: Narratives shape the places we inhabit, and vice-versa

Social movements, such as Occupy the Farm, are intimately tied to their locales:

Movements act from space, politically mobilizing from the material conditions of their (local) spaces; movements act on space, appropriating it with a group identity; movements act in space, such as taking to the streets for protests, or occupying land; and movements make space, creating conditions to expand public political involvement (Routledge 2013, p. 1)

Mobilizing notions of the local, the global, and place, social movements create

place as a dynamic assortment of exclusions and inclusions (Routledge 2000). Urban movements manifest against 'structural sociospatial exclusion', seeking alternative spatializations (Dikeç 2001).

Understanding place and space, and how social movements interact with and mobilize place and space, is thus important for understanding social movements. Geographers have long lavished attention on place and space. Marxist geographer David Harvey and feminist geographer Doreen Massey, amongst others, have focused extensively on the relationships between space, time, and place to capitalist economic processes (Harvey 2006; Massey 2005). Place proves to be just the kind of concept that can be understood intuitively, yet simultaneously yield astonishing ambiguities with wide-ranging political consequences. As Massey explains, a place is an intersection of relationships, a joining up of (hi)stories. Place can be understood "as open ('a global sense of place'), as woven together out of ongoing stories, as a moment within power geometries, as a particular constellation within wider topographies of space, and as in process, as unfinished business" (Massey 2005, p. 131). When trying to articulate the place we currently occupy, Massey writes, "'Here' is where spatial narratives meet up or form configurations, conjunctures of trajectories which have their own temporalities" (ibid., p. 139). Are we in Vancouver or UBC? UBC or Musqueam Ancestral Land? Musqueam Ancestral Land or the Department of Geography? My home or cyberspace when we are on a Zoom call? Notions of place move across scale and time, yet specific places evoke specific feelings, specific values, and specific narratives. Underlining the essentially transitory nature of a place, Doreen Massey produced compelling elaborations of the political nature of space and place, and place's inherent Becoming, arguing that a place was not a site where differing social processes coalesced into a permanently comprehensible, stable whole, but rather a moment, the event of place, which is the coming together of the "previously unrelated, a constellation of processes rather than a thing" (ibid., p. 141) through which human and non-human relations temporarily meet at different temporalities and scales. For Massey, place is always contingent and may or may not stabilize, depending on the relationalities and (hi)stories involved. For example, during Occupy Wall Street in 2011, Zuccotti Park in New York City was a vastly different place than at any time before or since. It was an event, with societal relations coalescing from different temporalities and

scales.

Drawing on Marx, Harvey (2006) highlights how space and place are related to value, arguing that there are multiple notions of space – absolute, relative and relational – corresponding to the Marxian categories of use-value, exchange-value, and value as socially necessary labor time. Absolute space, or Euclidean space, corresponds roughly to the built environment. Relative space corresponds to how we move through space to minimize or maximize various quantities, such as travel time, cost, or travel distance. Relational space is where we locate political ideas, or what we invoke when we ask questions such as “Where is an idea?” or “Where is knowledge?”. Highlighting the difficulty of actually locating place, indigenous statistical scientists Maggie Walter and Chris Andersen write “‘place’ is itself always contextual and always a matter of scale – for example, we might take a local indigenous settlement as an example of place that holds deep ceremonial meaning to those who live or are from there. However, Indigenous places are also, in many cases, ‘large’” (Walter and Andersen 2013, p. 19). Using Harvey’s notions of space, we can see why any definition of place or of a specific place will be necessarily contingent and subjective. Walter and Andersen’s work questions which place we are speaking about when we use the word “place”. It forces us to pay attention to not only others’ relationship to the same place, but to which notions of space we are invoking in defining a place. A place is made up of relations, which are constantly unfolding, developing, deepening.

The Gill Tract Community Farm enables and channels certain narratives and values that otherwise go rootless. Values of anti-capitalism, agro-ecological sustainability, and interconnectedness are emphasized on the land, while in the wider Bay Area, start-up capitalism dominates. While spatially co-extant, these two places feel to volunteers, farmers, Occupiers, and participants at the Community Farm like worlds apart, yet the human ability to inhabit multiple narratives allows volunteers to come and go as they please, picking up and dropping the community farm’s narrative as they enter and leave. As (Graeber 2013) writes,

It is value, then, that brings universes into being. Whether anyone believes in the reality of these universes is usually inconsequential. This, in turn, is what makes it so easy, in contexts characterized by complex

and overlapping arenas of values, for so many actors to simply stroll back and forth between one universe and another without feeling any profound sense of contradiction or even unease.

The ‘place’ that is the Gill Tract, or the Gill Tract Community Farm, is brought into being, sustained, and remade by the values it signifies to participants as they enter the space to perform their role as anti-capitalist farmers.

1.6 Ideology and Legibility: What I gleaned from my interviews

Some of the values that the Gill Tract Community Farm conditions in its participants are democracy, horizontalism, and a respect for Indigenous knowledge and cosmologies. One goal of the more activist sections of the volunteers is to see the land at the Gill Tract ceded — in some shape or form — to Indigenous leadership or Indigenous-led groups. These goals are difficult for administrators and employees at UC Berkeley to acknowledge or treat as serious. Even sympathetic employees tended to either ignore such demands or talk about their infeasibility. A sympathetic employee, who had spent considerable organizational energy facilitating the community farm’s presence at the Gill Tract, told me,

Perhaps it’s a particular moment in time when when that argument [that the Gill Tract should be ceded to indigenous communities] is going to be able to be heard more clearly, kind of like we’re experiencing now with Black Lives Matter. These are not new demands and challenges and injustices. A lot of people have been working on [racial justice] for a very long time. They are puzzled. Why now?

Maybe that’s a similar thing with the desire for securing some kind of memorandum of understanding to prevent development [of the Gill Tract] or acknowledging that [the Gill Tract is] Indigenous land, that it needs to be given back to indigenous communities and some form of land trust. I just don’t know whether we’re at that moment right now.

This employee expresses that what could be called the historical conjuncture is not yet ready for the Gill Tract to be returned to Indigenous hands. As one administra-

tor remarked, in a less circumspect way, “[The activists] don’t own [the Gill Tract]. And, for better or worse, that is the nature of American land use law and property rights [that UC Berkeley has ultimate control over the land].”

Althusser⁸ once remarked that “an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices. This existence is material” (Althusser et al. 2001, p. 112). Bound up with the relationship between the community farm and the university are large differences in what Althusser calls the *material ideological apparatus*. What is permissible and possible through the material-ideological lens of the community farm is different to what is permissible and possible through the lens of the university. While many things are possible to achieve through both lenses, such as running a community farm with a horizontal governance structure, distributing free food to local food banks, or partnering with Afro-Indigenous and Indigenous organizations, certain actions are only possible through one or the other lens. The Occupiers can not imagine the university beneficently acting towards the community farm, and thus seek to maintain current governance structures and lack of formality, such as not forming a 501(c)3. Employees of the university, even the most supportive of the community farm, cannot entertain turning the land over to indigenous stewardship.

Rather than thinking of these disputes as political disputes between a centrist university and radical farmers, it is better to think of the intractability of certain issues (and their non-uptake by either side) as fundamentally issues of clashing ideologies, rooted in the differing materialities of the community farm and the university.

1.7 Clashing Ideologies: A note on my use of David Graeber

Readers of this thesis will not find a typical coterie (one might better say, potpourri) of theorists. For better or for worse, I draw heavily in many places throughout this

⁸I am aware that citing Althusser is somewhat problematic because he murdered his wife, Hélène Rytman, and was subsequently exculpated by recourse to his mental illness, effectively silencing his wife (Dupuis-Déri 2015). Let me just point, then, to the vast scholarship that exists around Althusser, his uptake by academics, and the significant patriarchal tendencies this demonstrates within the philosophical world. See, for example: Dupuis-Déri (2015), Lewis (2019), and Seymour (2017).

thesis on the work of recently deceased anthropologist David Graeber.

Hopefully it would have been amusing to Graeber – someone who spent much of his written work critiquing the academy and its ideological interests – that one of my advisors suggested I was conducting a ‘Graeberian’ analysis:

Pierre Bourdieu once noted that, if the academic field is a game in which scholars strive for dominance, then you know you have won when other scholars start wondering how to make an adjective out of your name (Graeber 2004).

This thesis is thus a statement of one of two seemingly opposing possibilities: a) Graeber’s methods, ethics, and theories are coming to dominate; or b) I am making an unorthodox choice of theorists. There are probably reasons to believe both propositions, although Graeber’s name has been appearing more and more widely (at least in the more mainstream news sources) up until his untimely death in the summer of 2020, suggesting that his intellectual star is rising.

Even before I arrived in graduate school, I had been an avid reader of Graeber’s work, and engaging with his thinking was one of the principal inspirations for me to pursue (quasi-)ethnographic methods. Shadows of Graeber’s writing style, philosophical interlocutors, anthropological theory, and ethnographic approaches hang over this work.

Yet, even had I not drawn on Graeber’s theoretical oeuvre, I would have needed to engage with his ethnography of the alter-globalization movement (Graeber 2009), a seminal longform ethnographic work on activist practices, as well as his theoretical reflections in relation to Occupy. While how much one can speak of the theoretical leader of a movement that proclaimed itself leaderless is debatable, Graeber’s political theoretic corpus has nevertheless been highly influential in the milieu that spawned Occupy and led to Occupy the Farm. While I never saw any of Graeber’s work hanging around the farm, the *Fifth Estate*—an anarchist publication based in Vancouver, British Columbia—appeared at least once on the pamphlet shelves, as

well as materials about the MST⁹. An EZLN¹⁰ poster hung in the toolshed.

Graeber's (2009) ethnography of the alter-globalization movement closely analyzes the political practices of anarchist (or direct democracy) activists, both for the political end of self-understanding as well as the academic purpose of knowledge production. Graeber outlines the sacred elements of activist practices, comparing the structures of meetings to the religiosity and ritual of political decision-making in Madagascar, the site of his PhD fieldwork (Graeber 2007).

However, there is a clear problem with deploying one theorist so heavily (and relatively uncritically) in a work like this. The problem becomes especially acute given that Graeber's voice serves for me at different times as participant, theorist, documentarian, and ethnographer of North American anarchist activism in the 1990s and 2000s. This activism was very influential, consciously or not, on the practices of group of students that Occupied the Gill Tract in 2012, as well as on the community farm that emerged out of that conflict.

One of Graeber's central goals was understanding activism for activists, so that activists can understand and potentially change their own practices. In his own words, "What sort of social theory would actually be of interest to those who are trying to help bring about a world in which people are free to govern their own affairs [his own preferred understanding of anarchism]?" (Graeber 2004, p. 9). He outlines his own vision of where such a theory would need to begin:

For starters, I would say any such theory would have to begin with some initial assumptions. Not many. Probably just two. First, it would have to proceed from the assumption that, as the Brazilian folk song puts it, "another world is possible." That institutions like the state, capitalism, racism and male dominance are not inevitable; that it would be possible to have a world in which these things would not exist, and that we'd all be better off as a result. To commit oneself to such a principle

⁹The MST (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra – Landless Workers' Movement) are a Brazilian peasant's movement known for occupying and planting agricultural land. They exerted a strong influence on Occupy the Farm, with some representatives from Occupy the Farm attending a gathering of the MST.

¹⁰EZLN (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional – Zapatista Army of National Liberation) is a social movement in the state of Chiapas in Mexico, which emerged in the 1990s demanding autonomy and agrarian reform. The EZLN were very influential on the alter-globalization movement (c.f.).

is almost an act of faith, since how can one have certain knowledge of such matters...

The second, I'd say, is that any anarchist social theory would have to reject self-consciously any trace of vanguardism. The role of intellectuals is most definitively not to form an elite that can arrive at the correct strategic analyses and then lead the masses to follow. But if not that, what? This is one reason I'm calling this essay "Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology"—because this is one area where I think anthropology is particularly well positioned to help. And not only because most actually-existing self-governing communities, and actually-existing non-market economies in the world have been investigated by anthropologists rather than sociologists or historians. It is also because the practice of ethnography provides at least something of a model, if a very rough, incipient model, of how non-vanguardist revolutionary intellectual practice might work. When one carries out an ethnography, one observes what people do, and then tries to tease out the hidden symbolic, moral, or pragmatic logics that underlie their actions; one tries to get at the way people's habits and actions makes sense in ways that they are not themselves completely aware of. One obvious role for a radical intellectual is to do precisely that: to look at those who are creating viable alternatives, try to figure out what might be the larger implications of what they are (already) doing, and then offer those ideas back, not as prescriptions, but as contributions, possibilities—as gifts. (Graeber 2004, pp. 9–12).

This vision of ethnography, as an embedded, reflexive praxis, echoes writers such as Ingold (2014), who prefer to see ethnography as a kind of education, rather than a privileged technique.

In its own way, this thesis sets out to achieve similar goals to Graeber's. While situated in the discipline of geography, rather than anthropology, this is a work rooted in quasi-ethnographic methods, is partially embedded in the communities it examines, and is as reflexive as it can be, with the limited skills of its author.

Finally, Graeber's theories of narrative and value fit extremely well into ge-

ography's own understandings of place and space. Massey (2005) conceptualizes place as interlocking narratives; geographic investigations of activism often relate heavily to local spaces and places. Bringing Graeber into the picture adds human desires to the narratives on the landscape. For what are people doing as they move between 'overlapping arenas of value'? They are grasping at the narratives of the places they inhabit.

1.8 Who inhabits the landscape: What to call my interlocutors?

Back in the day of the – whatever, those people who took over the farm, what do you call it? The Occupation? Yeah. Sure.

Interviewee

The names we call things can have power, meaning, and repercussions. Deciding how to refer to the farmer-activist-volunteer-occupiers at the Gill Tract was a question I came back to repeatedly throughout the process of writing. I realized that, in my mind, people filled multiple roles in dynamic ways. Some were Occupiers. Some were Farmers. Some were Activists. Some were Volunteers. Some were Land Defenders. Many fit into multiple categories, themselves not easy to delimit and fuzzy in my head.

My lack of clarity suggested a certain amount of intellectual confusion, but also highlighted the multiplicity of the Gill Tract and my own imbrication in the project. I, of course, had worked as a Volunteer, and had now 'returned' (virtually) as a Researcher. How then to refer to those working on the land, giving their unpaid time to the land, while also preserving the different relationships that different people had to the land?

In the end, I decided to let the context govern the words. Sometimes I use Occupier, sometimes Farmer, sometimes Volunteer. While not chosen rigorously before the writing process, I believe that letting the words come where they felt most appropriate gives the most accurate picture of the people I was referring to, of the relationship they had with the land that I was writing about, and of their own relationships to each other. Hopefully that lends clarity to the reading, rather

than detracting from it, as well as painting a broader picture of how the Gill Tract appears to someone (relatively) intimately familiar with it.

In the case of those employed by UC Berkeley, I have opted to use several terms, again somewhat interchangeably. ‘Administrator’ refers to anyone in an organizational role in the university. They could be an assistant dean, a member of the Provost’s or Chancellor’s Office, or supervisor of one of the many institutes on Berkeley’s campus. ‘Researcher’ refers to someone whose primary role is research-oriented, while ‘Professor’ refers to someone who both teaches, mentors graduate students, and researches. Given the way universities employ professors, researchers, former professors and former researchers in administrative positions, there is some overlap between these three categories. When I need to refer in general to anyone who works at the university, I use the broad term ‘Employee’, which could signify any of the previous categories. Unfortunately, the categories also tend to flatten what is in actuality a very hierarchical and atomized institution (for example: the College of Natural Resources houses a number of departments, including Plant and Microbial Biology, as well as Environmental Science, Policy and Management, which are independent from each other but dependent on and subordinate to the College of Natural Resources).

Yet, flattening identities also affords the voices of my speakers the potential to emerge from their contexts to give a more ‘peopled’ account of the politics surrounding the Gill Tract. As Kuus (2020) writes, “constructing homogenous groups of ‘elite’ or ‘powerful’ subjects oversimplifies authority and hampers our efforts to first understand, and then change, relations and hierarchies of power” (2). The administrators, professors, and researchers interacting with the Gill Tract do not carry out a standardized university mission. They are themselves embedded in the process of defining, negotiating, and renegotiating the terms under which ‘the university’ functions today and tomorrow. I attempt to understand the relationship between the Gill Tract Community Farm and UC Berkeley not as an us/them political contestation, but rather a dynamic and ongoing negotiation between two ideologically distinct institutions, albeit with asymmetric power in the relationship.

All of my interview subjects were promised anonymity, and I have done my utmost in these pages to preserve identities. Kuus (2018), in her study of European Union diplomats, avoids providing information on “professional specializa-

tion, rank, nationality, gender, work experience” because even a person’s gender can give them away in the upper echelons of EU bureaucracy (161). I thus delink gender from my interlocutor’s profiles and flatten otherwise important hierarchies. However, some of the sources I employ are quotations from local news media, as well as online articles, rather than anonymous interviews that I conducted. For these individuals, I follow Gusterson’s (1996) convention in his work on nuclear warhead designers: I will use names when people are in the public record, but will anonymize identities when quotes and reflections are from interviews.

Additionally, I faced the task of anonymizing language. Some people speak in more personal ways, ways which would surely identify their words to those who know them. For example, some of my interlocutors were second language speakers, whose particularities in their use of English would mark them out to those who know them. Some employ distinct vulgarities or figures of speech that a colleague or acquaintance would be similarly certain to recognize. Accurately representing my interlocutors, while also protecting their identities, was a key concern of my portrayals in these pages. No one would want their boss reading that they had referred to their workplace using certain choice words usually excluded from polite discourse. In these cases, I have elected to change wordings or break up quotes in order to protect the identities of my sources while simultaneously preserving the meaning of their words. Where I change wordings, I have noted in a footnote. For my interviews with them, I was their guest, even if only over Zoom, and I owe it to them not to violate their hospitality.

Finally, there is the use of the term ‘agroecology’, which I need to clarify. The Oxford English Dictionary defines ‘agroecology’ as, “The application of ecological principles to agricultural systems and practices; the branch of science concerned with this”, with usage dating back to at least 1928 (OED 2020a). However, agroecology has come to be much more than just the ecology or science. It has come to be a (varyingly applied) science, a political movement, and a set of landscape design practices (Wezel et al. 2009). In some parts of the United States and Latin America, including at UC Berkeley, agroecology practitioners seek “the development of an ‘appropriate technology’ capable of translating productive potentials into sustainable livelihood for all” by combining bio-physical and socio-economic analyses of production in a holistic, or systems, framework (Altieri 1989). The in-

ternational peasants' network *La Vía Campesina* has used agroecology as a framing for political action against corporate control of agriculture and biotechnology, making agroecology into both a scientific practice as well as a political movement (Holt-Giménez and Altieri 2013; Val et al. 2019). Meanwhile, some investigators conceive of agroecology as the foundation for the design of 'adapted agricultural systems' that can better withstand climate change (Altieri et al. 2015). It is with these disparate meanings in mind that I cautiously, but nevertheless insistently, use the term agroecology throughout this thesis to refer at times to the science and practice, at times to the political movement, recognizing that in many ways the two cannot be justifiably or reliably separated. Certainly, for my interlocutors, the term encompasses both meanings.

1.9 Meanings or A Theory-laden Space: Coming to terms with the dialogic nature of ethnography

The deployment of academic terms, including 'agroecology' but also many others, with their (partially) understood academic meanings was a consistent feature of the interview landscape, which made interviews particularly fraught for the university-embedded researcher. I need to separate my interlocutor's use of terms from my own understandings of those terms, because not everyone deploys them in the same way that I might expect. Doing ethnographic work within a university (and adjacent to the university, in the case of the community farm) thus means that the ethnographer is working in what we might call a *theory-laden space*. Although all subjects bring with them pre-conceived notions of the world, it is particularly acute when working with subjects trained in the western academic tradition, often doing their own intellectual work within that tradition. Subjects bring with them into interviews a number of partial- or even fully-formed theories of the situations in which they are engaging. They also extemporaneously theorize when confronted with questions.

Interview subjects would interrogate my positionality as I interviewed them. They would question my analytical categories. They would provide – consciously and explicitly or not – theories of their own and other participants' behaviors. As Kuus (2020) highlights in her own quasi-ethnographic studies of European diplo-

mats: “Background research about the actual settings of the fieldwork is, of course, essential for any research. It may be more important in bureaucratic settings because these settings may seem deceptively familiar”. Having prior knowledge of the situation I was entering, in order to be able to filter my interlocutor’s own attempts, consciously or not, to move my categories and control the conversation, was paramount when entering an environment hardly different from the one I had left to enter the field.

The Gill Tract Community Farm presents special difficulties for an ethnographer beyond the difficulty of elite interview subjects within the university. As an activist project coming out of the anarchist tradition, the Community Farm is itself something of a pre-theorized object, or at least its governance structure is. There are notions of what the meaning of the project is, what the purpose of practices are, and what the goals of the project are. Graeber (2002) describes anarchist activism as “less about seizing state power than about exposing, delegitimizing and dismantling mechanisms of rule while winning ever-larger spaces of autonomy from it... In North America especially, this is a movement about reinventing democracy. It is not opposed to organization. It is about creating new forms of organization. It is not lacking in ideology. *Those new forms of organization are its ideology* [emphasis added]”.

This means that the Gill Tract is itself both a theoretical and a practical project. It is at once the governance and the farming. The two blend together and reinforce each other, but they also radiate outwards. Everyone interacting with the Gill Tract is affected by both the practice and theory of the space, so that entering into the space as a researcher, one comes into contact with pre-theorized entities. This poses special risks for the researcher attempting to read practices anew or differently. How to abrogate or elide the theoretical pull of a space that is itself founded on theory? Again, background research and preparation are essential to avoid entrapment.

1.10 Avoiding Entrapment or Methodological and Analytical Reflexivity: ‘The natives’ tell me what to study

The following is an excerpt from my field notes from September, 2020:

It is difficult to describe exactly how or to quantify how much, but some amount of body language and non-verbal communication is inevitably lost when speaking through the screen. Although obvious, this has been compounded by the fact that a few people have spoken with me from shared office spaces in which they are required to wear masks. With video chat, the only non-verbal cues that I can pick up on are facial expressions, head movements, and some small amount of shoulder movements or hand movements, depending on the placement of the camera. Oftentimes, eye contact is prohibited because one or another person is looking at the picture on the screen rather than on the camera. I continually remind myself to smile, nod, and stare straight into the camera when people are talking with me. I have been continually surprised by how much more uncomfortable it feels to be speaking over Zoom, to be asking questions over Zoom. I assume that if it is difficult for me to feel comfortable in the atmosphere, it must also be difficult for the folks I am interviewing, although my discomfort could be compounded by the fact that I am trying to maintain a warm atmosphere while also thinking about questions and people’s responses. There is probably some literature that I should draw on to make this point more explicit.

That being said, many of us are living our lives over Zoom now, and only a few people have suggested that they would prefer a phone call to video chat. Generally, internet connections have been fast enough not to present any issues for understanding or clarity, although every slight delay in video or audio probably increases the discomfort of the situation; I know it does for me. There is clearly a gap between those folks (all administrators or professors) who are extremely comfortable with speaking, including speaking over video call, and those folks whose job does not involve speaking in meetings all day long. I am not sure if video calls exacerbate this disparity, but I have found that the easiest interview subjects are administrators. With them, I can more or less sit back and allow them to make associative connections, guiding the conversation only lightly with my questions.

This raises questions, of course, about how to trust subjects, how to weigh different subjects' responses, and about the dangers of "going native".

Subjects repeatedly suggested analytical categories, claimed that my project was important, or attempted to steer my project in one way or another. It was clear that by doing this work, I was viewed by different groups as someone who could either intervene in the ongoing relationship between university and farm, uncover valuable information useful to one group or another, or publish work that would increase the overall legibility of the farm to the university as a space of research. Conversations such as the following were not uncommon:

This is where I'm going to change tunes a tiny bit. And put on my cap as a fellow student and fellow researcher. Because I am also a student at Berkeley interested in agroecology and I want to just present that for you, Michael. Personally, I think it's interesting to think about how even the questions that you're asking sort of implicate you and place you in a conversation that's ongoing, right? Which is to say that we ourselves at Gill Tract haven't even had this level of depth of conversation about it, right? Because of so many different reasons. I mean, a global pandemic is one, entrenched ideas about how to run a farm are another, white-dominated practice and space is another.

If you were to have this conversation with a dozen people at the farm about: What is the meaning of this land? What is happening here? And how do you conceive of it? And how does it relate to the ecological and to the more-than-human and to the all of these things...

We haven't even had those conversations ourselves. You need to recognize how your role as a researcher, as an "outsider", is crucial and vital to the interior, and how we would benefit as a community so greatly, by helping us have these types of conversations and by learning and integrating what you're bringing, and what you're asking, into our own internal dialogues. We've been calling for this more and more. And so I think it would be really interesting for you, as you move forward with this project, to think about, 'Well, what is my role in helping the Gill Tract convene – and frame – but maybe more than

anything, just convene these conversations?’ Because we need help, and it would be immensely instructive to have a summary or a form or an outcome to give the thesis back to the community.

Here, my interlocutor highlights that the Gill Tract Community Farm would “benefit as a community” from the interviews that I conducted. Deploying academic jargon such as the ‘more-than-human’ and racial justice terms such as ‘white-dominated practice and space’, this interlocutor attempts to engage me on the level of project conceptualization and formation. Speaking as a “fellow researcher” and adopting an academic tone, they speak outside of the conversation that I am having with them, to what they identify as the “exterior” – a place of a kind of objectivity – and discuss how it relates to the rest of the conversation and the community farm, the “interior”. This move, of attempting to speak an aside, turn to the camera as it were, or break the fourth wall of research, happened frequently when interlocutors thought that their position afforded them a place to suggest how I complete this project.

As Ingold (2014) argues, ‘ethnography’ and ‘education’ are largely synonymous; anthropology is the ‘practice of education’. Thus, the folks I encountered in the (digital) field had every right to question my assumptions, to question the project, to try to use the project, to educate me on their life-worlds. As Simpson (2014) highlights, and as many scholars who work with indigenous groups practice (Angelbeck and Grier 2014), for turning one’s project over to the community so the community can pursue their own goals with the project can be an ethical imperative for decolonization.

In the end, I choose to highlight and partially resist these implorations because the Community Farm, even as it exists in a power asymmetry with UC Berkeley and attempts to put into practice its own decolonial and social justice visions, is “even more leftist-academia-centric than most urban ag spaces, which already gravitate in that direction”, as one participant told me. Of course, accepting that vision of the farm is itself an acceptance of my own and at least one farmer’s own pre-theorized notions of the space. Yet, as Gusterson (1996) emphasizes, gone are the days when the subjects of ethnography did not, or could not, read the ethnographer’s writings. Informants are able to critique theoretical interpretations—in Gusterson’s

case, informants questioned his readings of Foucault and quizzed him about the interpretive turn in anthropology—and understand, at least partially, how the data they are providing might be used.

Participants were frequently critical of my references to “the university” as anything approaching a coherent unit. One subject, frustrated by my use of the term “university” to refer to the assemblage of people, ideas, and decisions that emanate from different departments at UC Berkeley, spoke to me condescendingly, seeming frustrated, about my analytical categories:

Again, when you say the university, it’s problematic because there’s so many layers to the university, right? So that might be something to unpack a little bit. Maybe in your analysis you can think about categories of us at the university. I’m thinking like at the university, there’s, you know, there’s the faculty who are engaged at the farm, there is the college and the dean’s office and the dean who sort of oversees they Gill Tract. There’s Capital Projects, the folks that are in charge of the land assets and how they view things.

Stepping from interlocutor to advisor/mentor/teacher mode, they emphasize that I should “unpack” the “layers to the university”. While this enunciation of the different departments in the university and how different people fit in them is undoubtedly helpful to an outsider, it also presents real questions about who I was to this interlocutor. It appears that in this conversation, I became a naive student, needing a lesson, while in the previous conversation, I was a political accomplice. Some of this appears ironic reading over transcripts. For example, the previous interlocutor, after describing the different parts of the university to me and inveigling me to do analytical work to separate them, slips back into a mode of characterizing “university people”:

I would say there hasn’t been a coordinated communication to any of those constituents in a way that could potentially reach them in a way that could be meaningful. And maybe I’m just not part of those conversations. But I think, again, coming up with some kind of idea of: What do University people like? You know, they want to see data, they want to see stories, they want to see evidence.

Here, my research subject emphasizes how people within the university are potentially distinct or unique, at least in their official capacities.

This tension, between viewing the university as somehow unique - a special space of knowledge production where certain knowledge is valued above other ways of knowing - while also seeing the differentiation and fragmentation - across departments, between professors and administrators, within hierarchies - characterized many of my discussions. Interlocutors emphasized, often without provocation, multiple times that the university is a complicated assortment of competing ideas, factions, and people. One interlocutor described interacting with people who asked them to comment from their official position within the university:

When people ask me, ‘What does Berkeley think of something?’ It’s like: ‘What do you mean? What is Berkeley?’

Berkeley doesn’t think. There are people in Berkeley who think, and some of those people can have official positions. But that doesn’t mean all the other people have to agree with those positions. I mean, it’s a university, right?

My interlocutor states as obvious that organizations do not think. As Mary Douglas, writing in the Durkheimian sociological tradition, once wrote, “If this is true, it is implicitly denied by much of social thought” (Douglas 1986, p. 9). In her book, *How Institutions Think*, Douglas lays out an anthropological theory for how social forces can constrain the thoughts and actions of the individual, describing just how it is that Berkeley might be said to think.

My interlocutor also emphasizes a curious phrase, “It’s a university, right?” As if that were a straightforward explanation for causes, events, actions, and thoughts. Frequently in my work, I stumbled upon this very question: What is, in fact, a university? And what is its role in society? I do not attempt here to theorize completely a university or its role, but this question hovers over and around my analysis as I sought to unpack the ways in which my interlocutors conceived of ‘the university’.

For the moment, I want to highlight the sophisticated nature of my interlocutors. They are university students and academics. Many are pursuing PhDs or

have long held PhDs while working within the academy. A few possess other post-graduate degrees. This is a special intellectual climate to step into, one at once decidedly familiar to the student, and yet, through conversations with folks at “the university”, still a glimpse of institutional politics that does not often filter out to the general public. As Kuus writes about fieldwork with elite subjects, “Going native—that is, becoming so habituated to research settings as to lose the ability to critically evaluate them—is always a danger. Becoming trapped in the echo-chamber of policy talk is an ever-present risk too... One should not underestimate the ability of strong institutions and skilled individuals to subtly guide the researcher toward the ideological and intellectual parameters of the settings she studies, often through the use of intricate technical language” (Kuus 2020, p. 5). This kind of guiding was ever present. Sometimes it was transparent, sometimes only visible when reading through transcripts and reflecting on theory. I am certain in many instances, I have missed the signposts that were handed to me.

Multiple interlocutors highlighted the kinds of material or data that they thought I should be collecting in the course of my research. One, somewhat antagonistic to the Community Farm and skeptical of its political vision and the politics of the Occupation movement, told me:

So I have a feeling the people who go there I see children, their families, and I imagine it's people who live close by. So I'd be curious to know, you know, if you end up finding out well, who are the biggest users and what draws them? I think that would be interesting.

The implication, for me, was that collecting such statistics would help this employee or the university decide the value of the space.

Another interlocutor, frustrated by the university's continued intransigence and insistence on developing part of the Gill Tract land, despite years of counter-proposals, asked me about certain internal documents:

Have you seen those reports? Those letters, those memos that were written back in the 40s and 50s, when there was an attempt to close the the Oxford Tract and the Gill Tract and there were some legal issues

that came up and they were mentioned in those memos by deans and presidents of that time.

That's very important for you to try to find. If I find something I'll send it to you. Because there was a letter from the president of the University at that time. I don't remember the year, 45 or something. Where [it] said that it was [a] fundamental part of the mission of the land grant university to preserve those lands. And there were some legal obligations that the university maintain that land. And it was brought up to the chancellor, it was brought up to the dean, and they said that they all did the research and everything is fine. Obviously, they get their lawyers and the lawyers twist things around or whatever they do, because they have lawyers that can do that. And they probably buried or burned whatever evidence there was. Because my understanding from others at Berkeley was that the Gill family sold the Gill Tract quite cheaply with the condition that it will remain for agricultural research. So there's some documents somewhere that nobody ever found. Or maybe they burned it or whatever they did with it.

Of course, during COVID-19, a trip to Berkeley to search through the archives of the Chancellor was out of the question. However, this interlocutor did provide a few documents taken from a Berkeley archive. They highlight the importance of using those documents to paint an accurate picture of the university's behavior, and have an extremely cynical attitude to the workings of the upper echelons of the university, suggesting that evidence of nefarious behavior might have been "burned".

Finally, the value of my thesis to the community, and even as a source of legitimacy to the university, was repeated multiple times in comments like the following:

I appreciate you're taking a continued interest in the garden. I'm sure that I'm sure the community will be very interested in your thesis. And to the extent that a thesis is research, if you publish it, and it goes beyond the thesis online to the peer reviewed domain, that will

be another example like we've just been saying that the garden itself is something that can be studied in a way that benefits people even beyond the garden. And that's wonderful.

Placing a great deal of responsibility upon my work, the necessity of going beyond the Master's thesis level to the "peer reviewed domain", this interlocutor hints that my thesis will be another data point for the university in determining the value of the community farm ("garden") to the university.

When dealing with my elite subjects, it became clear that I was in dangerous territory, at least as far as research goes. Trying to avoid guiding hands while also uncovering the relations behind the words proved difficult, as all my interlocutors intelligently guided me in directions they thought I should go in or thought I wanted to go in. I was left to puzzle out in just what kind of a setting I was actually undertaking research.

1.11 Overview of the Thesis

The following three chapters make up the body of my thesis. I have decided to tell the story of my research in three parts for several reasons. One reason is that breaking the material up in this way broadly corresponds to past, present, and future at the Gill Tract. Chapter 2 treats the time period up to and a little after the Occupation in 2012. Chapter 3 treats the years after the Occupation up to the present moment. Chapter 4 uses my own experience as a volunteer at the Gill Tract in 2017 and 2018 to reflect on the potential of the politics practiced at the Gill Tract. Thus, the future.

Another reason to divide the material this way is that it approximately corresponds to my three main empirical materials. Chapter 2 is mainly written using media materials; Chapter 3 focuses mainly on the interviews I conducted in summer and fall of 2020; and Chapter 4 uses auto-ethnography to reflect on urban geographic theory. While some parts of each appear in other chapters, there is a general division of the material. While this could be seen as not properly combining my empirical data, I see this as reflective more of how the different sets of data allowed me to interrogate different time periods and different questions. Thus, Chapter 2 is very historical, Chapter 3 very ethnographic, and Chapter 4

more theoretical.

Chapter 2 tells the history of the Gill Tract, especially as a boundary object in an ongoing conflict over the future of agricultural science at UC Berkeley. Purchased in 1928, the Gill Tract was used for many years as a research site for the Division of Biological Control. Some of the most prominent members of this division spoke out openly, harshly, and critically about the agricultural industry and pesticide use in particular. They advocated instead for restrained chemical inputs alongside biological mechanisms as a preferable, more cost-effective solution for agriculture and ecologies. In the mid-90s, this division was shut down amidst the beginnings of privatization within academia. In place of the Division of Biological Control, corn geneticists began using the Gill Tract on a fee for use basis, which continues up to the present day. These geneticists have ties to the new biotechnological revolutions in agriculture, and their work was a flashpoint in the 2012 Occupation of the Gill Tract. It is my contention that a decades-long dispute over the future of agricultural research at UC Berkeley led to the 2012 Occupation of the Tract.

Boundary objects are usually viewed as sites of cross-disciplinary collaboration. However, what happens to objects when collaboration becomes conflict? Are the objects forgotten or do they remain important to the new conflict in which they are embroiled? Chapter 2 extends the theory of boundary objects to account for why certain sites become the site of political conflicts brewing from knowledge conflicts. To illustrate this possibility, this chapter presents a case study of the history of the Gill Tract, land in Berkeley, California that transitioned from agricultural and entomological field site to community-led urban farm. The chapter will explore how a political conflict that emerged over the future of the Gill Tract was deeply imbricated in a larger political fight over the nature of the modern university, the relationship between science and industry, and extremely local disputes over bio-technology research at the University of California Berkeley.

Chapter 3 discusses the legibility of the Community Farm to the university as well as the legibility of the university to the community farmers. My claim is that university administrators, professors, and researchers actually demonstrate a great deal of understanding of the community farm, although they may not recognize the most radical claims put forward by the farmers. Conversely, the farmers regularly

reify what is in fact a complicated assemblage of materials, people, and concerns into a single, powerful entity, while denying that their project forms a part of that assemblage. I discuss as well the materials around which the relationship functions for, in the end, what matters to administrators is who is paying for what item on the farm and who holds the keys. This chapter makes extensive use of my interview material and I attempt to allow interviewees to speak for themselves, and for the chorus and cacophony of voices to create narrative and theory on their own terms.

Chapter 4 takes an auto-ethnographic, urban geographic perspective on the San Francisco Bay Area, discussing the many contradictions and fault lines I moved through as both software developer and farm volunteer, and the implications for the theory of the farm and anti-capitalist organizing more generally. The chapter helps situate me within this study, clarifying my positionality and interests in the Gill Tract, as well as my evolving relationship with those I studied. In this chapter, I also seek to place the Gill Tract within the wider San Francisco Bay Area and amongst contemporary, place-based protest movements. Using my own time working in a gig-economy start-up targeting the restaurant industry as a backdrop, I connect the Gill Tract to changes in food and labor geographies currently occurring within the San Francisco Bay Area. I then discuss how my own desire to volunteer at the Gill Tract reflects broader feelings of alienation and longing buried in urban spaces.

Chapter 5 is a conclusion, reflecting on the results of the study as well as the political lessons to be learned from the Gill Tract Community Farm. I locate the Gill Tract as a node in wider networks of place-based activism which Naomi Klein has called *Blockadia*. I connect the Gill Tract to land-based movements in France and discuss further possible directions for research. Finally, I justify the work *a posteriori* based on a desire to understand activism ‘after the dust settles’ from a dynamic, provocative, intense event, when activism becomes more mundane. Studying after the fact allows us to better understand the long-term trajectories and effects of activist movements.

Chapter 2

Biological Control, Molecular Biology, and Agroecology

The Gill Tract as boundary object

2.1 Introduction

When activists broke the locks surrounding the Gill Tract on April 22, 2012, to honor La Via Campesina's International Day of Peasant Struggles (La Via Campesina 2019; Tarlau 2012), decades of public disputes over the land reached a head¹. During the ensuing Occupation, the Occupiers spoke publicly about the various influences on the movement, including: food justice, land reform, opposing the university, and spreading the word about organic agriculture². Though they mentioned that the fate of the land had been the subject of community debate and petitions for over a decade, they neglected to discuss accompanying debates that had raged in

¹Interestingly, other authors also use this exact same imagery when beginning texts on the Gill Tract, beginning their own narratives with the cutting of the locks (Roman-Alcalá 2017), emphasizing the importance of narratives to the construction of place. This echoes Massey's (2005) elaboration of the *event of place*.

²For example, in a public interview in 2020, Gopal Dayaneni said, "I've said it a lot over the years, some people were in it for the farming, and some people were in it for the organic agriculture, and some people were in it for fighting the university, and I was in it for the land reform" (Occupy the Farm Film 2020, April 22).

Berkeley about the nature of the university and the relationship between industry and science (Aviv 2014; BACUA 1997; Gerdes 2002; Press and Washburn 2000). To an outsider, the Gill Tract appears to be much like any other piece of land. The fact the Occupation provoked heated responses from Berkeley faculty, principally geneticists, and galvanized fervent support for an alternative use for the site, speaks to more than just an opportune protest inspired by Occupy Wall Street. My contention is that the Gill Tract's historical use as a scientific research site, as well as ongoing debates and conflicts over the future of agricultural research, are the best ways to explain why activists targeted the land. There are other conflict-ridden open spaces in Berkeley. People's Park is the most famous³. What makes the Gill Tract special is the history of scientific use of the space, and its role as a boundary object. Massey's (2005) description of the 'event of place' is particularly apt to describe the ongoing political situation at the Gill Tract, which saw radical demands from Occupy grafted on to a continuing and unfinished conflict over the future of agriculture.

This chapter is intended as an exploration of the diverse debates about the role of public universities, the wisdom of public-private partnerships, and the future of education that are related to the Gill Tract. My intention is to uncover multiple narratives influencing the occupation and to show that the Gill Tract is a *boundary object* in a debate with multiple modes. I hope by clarifying the Gill Tract's role as boundary object in these scientific-political debates, or knowledge conflicts, that the attraction, inevitability, or even necessity of the Occupation will become clear. I also hope to enliven the literature on scientific dissent by discussing how political actions which Collins and Evans (2008) and Collins and Evans (2002) would view as propositional debates over the democratic usage and control of technologies can actually be forms of scientific dissent which directly contribute to and develop knowledge and meaning. I draw on Wynne's (2001; 2003) discussion of the role of science in producing the meaning of policy debates. For me, the imbrication of science and politics precludes the separation of dissident political actions from their scientific content and vice versa. My contention is that without the debates over biotechnology in agriculture at UC Berkeley, coupled with the historical use

³See: Mitchel et al. (2017) and Mitchell (1992, 1995) for discussions of People's Park and public space.

of the land as a scientific field site, the Gill Tract would have never been a political target. Vice versa, the Gill Tract is a political target because whoever controls the future of agricultural research at Berkeley controls the tract, and thus gets to set the terms for scientific research on the land. The narratives of food justice and land reform were brought into an ongoing political event – namely, a debate over the future of the land – which was itself heavily embroiled in ongoing conflicts over the future of the university and the role of agricultural science.

2.2 Boundary Objects

Star and Griesemer (1989) lay out a theory of *boundary objects*, objects that serve as common reference points for cross-disciplinary collaboration that may be differently understood by collaborators from separate disciplines. Science does not require actors to establish consensus – whether about meaning, symbols, or interpretations – to successfully complete scientific work⁴. Instead, “actors trying to solve scientific problems come from different social worlds and establish a mutual *modus operandi*” (ibid., p. 388). Actors from different disciplines must solve the problem of translation⁵ to bring enough coherence and cooperation into being that scientific work can be accomplished. Boundary objects are “those scientific objects which both inhabit several intersecting worlds”, such as a research site like the Gill Tract which is shared by multiple disciplines, “and satisfy the informational requirements of each of them,” since “they have different meanings in different social worlds but their structure is common enough to more than one world to make them recognizable, a means of translation” (ibid., p. 393).

This original formulation of boundary objects points to the potential for dissonance between actors from different social worlds. Yet, it holds out the possibility that through translation, discussion, and dispute, enough shared ways of living will develop in order to work together on a common project. At the Gill Tract, however, the common projects—the continuation of scientific research and the continued use of the land—broke down as the Division of Biological Control was shuttered

⁴Some fundamental studies demonstrating that consensus is not necessary in order to carry out successful science, see: Latour (1987), Latour and Woolgar ([1979] 2013), and Star (1986).

⁵The problem of translation has been treated by (among others): Latour (1987), Latour (1988), and Callon (1984).

and geneticists began to use the Gill Tract and receive significantly more research funding. The Gill Tract became a boundary object in the dispute over agricultural research directions at UC Berkeley.

2.3 Naive Entomologists

*“These were just a bunch of naive entomologists, but they were radicalized because, if you read the book of Van den Bosch, *The Pesticide Conspiracy*, they started cutting down the use of pesticides on cotton in California from 18 to 12 to zero and that obviously hurt the interest of the agro-chemical industry. And since the agro-chemical industry was funding the University at that time, they called the Dean and said, ‘What’s going on? You have these radicals going around here. We need to get rid of them.’ And that’s why in 1995 when Gordon Rausser became dean—Rausser is a completely pro-biotech, pro-industry academic—he closed the Division of Biological Control”.*

Interview, 11 Sept. 2020⁶

“Examples of successful biological control of serious pests by importing their natural enemies are to be found in some 40 countries distributed over much of the world. The advantages of such control over chemicals are obvious: it is relatively inexpensive, it is permanent, it leaves no poisonous residues. Yet biological control has suffered from lack of support. California is virtually alone among the states in having a formal program in biological control, and many have not even one entomologist who devotes full time to it.”

(Carson [1962] 2002, p. 292)

Before the Spaniards arrived in the late 1700s, Ohlone peoples comprising about 50 tribes and eight language groups lived in the San Francisco Bay Area, extending south towards Monterey and East into the Central Valley. Soon after their arrival in 1769, the Spanish forced the Ohlone into missions, where they were forcibly converted to Catholicism and Baptized. Most of the possibility of learning

⁶Note: This interview text was lightly edited for anonymity and clarity.

about the cultures of the Bay Area were lost through this process, although anthropologists in the 20th century attempted to collect information as they could through surviving members of tribal groups (Jackson 1996).

The history of the land since reflects the politics of the Bay Area since settlers began arriving in what is now California. A large tract, some 43,000 acres, were awarded to a Spanish soldier, Luis Maria Peralta, by the Spanish crown. The northern portion of the land, which included present-day Berkeley and Albany, passed to his son Jose Domingo. Eventually, Edward Gill acquired 104 acres of this land to homestead and the land became known as the Gill Tract. During Gill's time the land contained a working farm, an aboretum, and a nursery (SEAL 2015). After Gill's death, the Gill family sold the tract to the University of California in 1928 for \$400,000 (approximately \$5,941,600 in today's terms) (Dollar Times 2020; Taylor 2012). 36 acres were set aside for agricultural research, while the rest was gradually developed as Berkeley continued to urbanize and suburbanize (Gill Tract Farm 2020). For 50 years, the agricultural research station was used for natural pest management research, which prioritized functioning ecological dynamics over synthetic pesticides for maintaining productive farms. The scientists who oversaw the research were at times outspoken against the use of agro-chemicals ("In Memoriam: Donald Lee Dahlsten" 2020; "Kenneth Sverre Hagen, Entomological Sciences: Berkeley" 2020; Sawyer 2002; Van den Bosch 1989). In the 1990s, with the University of California's turn towards neoliberalism foisted on it by diminishing state budgets and prioritization of public-private partnerships in the university's research agenda, the agricultural research station at the Gill Tract began to be used primarily for corn research, with questionable ties to large agricultural companies, ethanol production, and GMO technologies (BondGraham 2012; Darling and Greither 2014; Press and Washburn 2000).

During its 51 year existence as an agricultural field site, between 1944 and 1995, the Gill Tract housed the Division of Biological Control, part of UC Berkeley's College of Natural Resources (Altieri 2018). The Division of Biological Control focused on resolving pest issues through the use of natural predators and parasites as opposed to synthetic agricultural chemicals such as pesticides and herbicides. The successes of the division are estimated to have contributed \$2 billion in savings to farmers as well as hundreds of millions of dollars in savings to citizens

and the state through minimizing externalities associated with pesticide use such as health and environmental problems (Altieri 2018). Researchers made “substantial contributions to the non-chemical control of pests in grapes, tomatoes, olives, and ornamentals as well as weed” (Jennings 1997). Although some researchers were amenable to combining natural pest control techniques with agro-chemicals, others became strident opponents of the agro-chemical industry and the connection between universities and corporate agriculture (Sawyer 2002).

Robert van den Bosch, an entomologist with the Division of Biological Control, wrote a book titled *The Pesticide Conspiracy*, which popularized the term “pesticide treadmill”. To van den Bosch, the *pesticide treadmill* was the increasing reliance on agro-chemicals caused by the overuse and misuse of agro-chemicals. Van den Bosch argued that the overuse of agro-chemicals undermined natural biological controls, which then required the use of further chemicals to handle the ensuing pest breakouts. Paul Ehrlich wrote in his preface to *The Pesticide Conspiracy* that, to van den Bosch, pesticides are “like heroin, they promise paradise and deliver addiction” (Ehrlich 1989, p. vii). Van den Bosch was open about his belief that the university and researchers within the College of Natural Resources were too cozy with agro-chemical companies, setting the stage for controversies that would bubble over into large political conflict at the end of the 20th century.

Interestingly in light of climate scientists’ hesitancy to speak out on climate issues for fear of undermining their credibility (Hansen 2016; Hansen 2007; Risbey 2008), van den Bosch spoke about his realization that the production of knowledge alone was not enough to win the political debate over the use of agricultural chemicals. Van den Bosch attacked the influence of corporations on ecological politics, highlighting that the dawning ecology movement was up against:

A powerful coalition of individuals, corporations, and agencies that profit from the prevailing chemical control strategy and brook no interference with the status quo (Van den Bosch 1989, p. 7).

Van den Bosch felt compelled to speak precisely because the question of agro-chemicals was more than just a scientific question, yet he also felt that it was on account of the science that he needed to act politically:

It simply became clear to me that our current ideas about insect control

were heading the world toward both ecological and economic disaster, and that political action was the only way we were ever going to get off our global pesticide treadmill (Wuliger 1979).

Van den Bosch was not the only scientist in the Division of Biological Control who felt compelled because of their research to work with lawmakers. Donald Lee Dahlsten was an entomologist with the Division, who “led an effort to reduce widespread aerial applications of DDT for forest insect pest control”. Prompted by his research, he opposed “the general use of toxic chemicals to reduce insect-caused damage in both forest and urban environments” Instead, he sought “alternative pest control strategies using the pest’s natural control agents” (“In Memoriam: Donald Lee Dahlsten” 2020).

While Collins and Evans (2002) argue that decision-making about science and technology can be reduced to ‘propositional’ questions targeted to specific issues. In this case: are pesticides safe or when is pesticide use appropriate? However, as Wynne (2003) demonstrates, powerful governmental and private entities impose meanings and identities to create publics and public domains where such propositional questions are framed. That is to say, questions are never asked on an objective cultural background, but are instead permitted, suggested, and determined by cultural assumptions created by powerful interested parties.

In the case of pesticide use, the dominant frame of reference was cost as well as safety. Van den Bosch and other scientists couched their arguments in economic terms, arguing that biological control was neglected because it would save society money, thereby denying the pesticide industry profits. A secondary concern was farmworker safety, as Van den Bosch collaborated with Cesar Chavez to reduce pesticide poisoning in California (Wuliger 1979). However, as we shall see, as the Gill Tract passed from the Division of Biological Control into other hands, new publics were being created for the adjudication of new agricultural technologies.

The last remaining professor at UC Berkeley from the Division of Biological Control, Miguel Altieri, is a direct link between the Biological Pest Control researchers and the future Occupiers. Altieri was hired in 1980 as an entomologist and has an international profile amongst agro-ecologists and food researchers (Altieri 2020, June 22). He conducted agro-ecological field research at the Gill Tract

and taught many of the eventual Occupiers.

Yet, by 1990, the Division of Biological Control was under serious threat. Under the direction of Gordon Rausser, an agricultural economist who had served in government under Ronald Reagan, the College of Natural Resources pivoted to a fee-for-use model for the Gill Tract. Rausser dissolved the Division of Biological Control and offered researchers the option to either move to UC Davis or remain on in a newly created department of Environmental Science, Policy and Management. For entomologists with small budgets, the fees were too large to continue using the Gill Tract, and the research fields were turned over to molecular biologists and geneticists who were able to obtain larger grants from the federal government and private industry, interested in developing new applications and exploring the basic science around plant gene expression in the highly profitable and growing field of genetic engineering. The majority of the crops grown at the Gill Tract from then on were corn plants, used in the study of corn genetics.

2.4 Privatization of Public Goods

In 1997, debate raged at Berkeley over a proposed financing deal for the College of Natural Resources. Pharmaceutical giant Novartis, interested in developing its pesticide and seed divisions, was offering \$25 million over three years in exchange for exclusive access to research within the Department of Plant and Microbial Biology, one of the four departments that make up the College of Natural Resources.

In exchange for the \$25 million, Berkeley grants Novartis first right to negotiate licenses on roughly a third of the department's discoveries—including the results of research funded by state and federal sources as well as by Novartis. It also grants the company unprecedented representation—two of five seats—on the department's research committee, which determines how the money is spent (Press and Washburn 2000).

Professors within the College of Natural Resources came out for and against the proposal, many viewing it as an attack on academic freedom. One survey from the period was reported in the press:

While 41 percent of the faculty respondents supported the Novartis agreement as signed, more than 50 percent believed that it would have a "negative" or "strongly negative" effect on academic freedom. Roughly half believed that the agreement would erode Berkeley's commitment to "public good research," and 60 percent feared that it would impede the free exchange of ideas among scientists within the college (Press and Washburn 2000).

Recently hired professor and molecular biologist Ignacio Chapela led the faculty in opposing the deal. Chapela's opposition to the Novartis deal proved to be costly for his career. In 2001, after publishing a paper in *Nature* with his graduate student, David Quist, demonstrating the incursion of transgenic maize gene into Mexican maize varieties widely thought to be free of contamination, Chapela and Quist were attacked publicly, and Chapela was initially denied tenure (Delborne 2008).

Highlighting the growing divides among UC Berkeley agricultural researchers, the majority of the scientific attacks against Chapela and Quist stemmed from colleagues at UC Berkeley in Plant and Molecular Biology. One publicly critical scientist sat on Chapela's tenure review case and referred to Chapela's paper in an undergraduate classroom as an example of poor science (Dalton 2004b). Another, Damon Lisch, who used the Gill Tract for corn genetics research, was an author on a response published by *Nature* accusing of Chapela and Quist of misreading their own results (Kaplinsky et al. 2002). A number of other UC Berkeley faculty piled on to critique the paper in *Nature* as well (Christou 2002; Delborne 2008; Metz and Fütterer 2002). *Nature* issued a partial retraction of the paper after Chapela and Quist refused to retract their results, but subsequent studies confirmed the authenticity of their findings (Delborne 2008).

As a counter to the Novartis partnership, Altieri and Chapela joined with 32 Bay Area community groups and NGOs under the heading of the Bay Area Coalition for Urban Agriculture (BACUA) to propose an 'university/community partnership', an alternative to the corporate/university partnerships⁷ that were being proposed all across the United States. The proposal stressed the growing importance of urban agriculture with a changing climate and an urbanizing world population,

⁷Sometimes called public-private partnerships or, less charitably, the 'academic-industrial complex' (Press and Washburn 2000).

and highlighted the potential for diverse funding opportunities. BACUA proposed to transform the Gill Tract into a permanent hub for urban agriculture research, focusing on sustainable, agro-ecological solutions to world hunger (BACUA 1997). As acrimony between knowledge-producing coalitions within the university increased, the Gill Tract became a boundary object in the scientific conflict over GM agriculture and the future of university funding. It retained its importance thanks to its history as a research site.

Although BACUA had the backing of a wealthy philanthropist, the proposal was ignored by the university. The Gill Tract continued to be used for corn genetics research and the deal with Novartis was signed and implemented. In 2004, Berkeley published a new University Village Master Plan, which included a proposal to develop all the remaining land of the Gill Tract, using the south side for a new, upscale grocery store and an ‘affordable’ assisted living facility and the north side for Little League sports fields (Facilities Services 2004). The divide between the geneticists and the agro-ecologists continued to deepen, to the point where multiple interlocutors in 2020 told me that they effectively have no communication or interaction with their colleagues. They admitted to sensing underlying animosity even when wordlessly encountering each other in the hallways.

Privatization continued to be big business for UC Berkeley, and the public continued to contest the process. In 2007, UC Berkeley signed a \$500 million deal with BP to conduct biofuels research (Democracy Now 2007). Biofuels are made from genetically modified corn, the same kind of corn for which researchers at the Gill Tract are conducting research. As Press and Washburn write:

What is ultimately most striking about today’s academic-industrial complex is not that large amounts of private capital are flowing into universities. It is that universities themselves are beginning to look and behave like for-profit companies (Press and Washburn 2000).

Indeed, the UC system has earned over \$500 million from technology patents, including biotechnology patents like the genes for the Camarosa strawberry (Gordon 2015). The University of California is currently fighting a lengthy and costly dispute over the patent rights to CRISPR gene-editing technology, a potentially

billion-dollar market (Cohen 2020). University privatization in general goes so far that some have argued that universities no longer deserve their tax-exempt status:

If these activities appear to be out of keeping with the university's nonprofit educational mission, that's because they are. In a provocative 1996 article in the *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, Peter Blumberg, then a law student, argued that technology-transfer activity at universities is so far removed from the university's public mission that it "could be treated as unrelated business income for tax purposes." Universities, Blumberg writes, "enjoy their tax exemption because of a belief that they are producing research that no other market actor would produce absent a public subsidy; basic research, publishable research, research that educates students and ... is usable by the whole society." (Press and Washburn 2000)

Favoring biotechnology over agro-ecology at UC Berkeley makes sound financial sense in an agricultural market dominated by patents:

"You can't patent the natural organisms and ecological understanding used in biological control," Andy Gutierrez, a Berkeley entomologist, explains. "However, if you look at public benefit, that division provided billions of dollars annually to the state of California and the world." In one project Gutierrez worked on, he helped to halt the spread of a pest that threatened to destroy the cassava crop, a food staple for 200 million people in West Africa. (ibid.)

Professors such as Altieri and Chapela continued to speak about the deleterious effects of corporate money on university intellectual climate (ibid.), the potential for genetic engineering to continue propelling humanity along the 'pesticide treadmill' (Democracy Now 2007), and the possibility for agro-ecology to offer a sustainable solution for world food systems (Altieri 1989, 2002). Yet, money spoke louder than words at UC Berkeley, where agro-ecology continued to languish while biotechnology flourished.

2.5 The Occupation

In 2012, the Gill Tract remained undeveloped, although slated for imminent development with a Whole Foods grocery store as the anchor tenant in the commercial development of the south side. Yet, the twin research histories of biological control and corn genetics meant that the Gill Tract was one of the few boundary objects about which those engaged in the long-standing dispute over genetic engineering could actually speak. When activists in 2012 occupied the Gill Tract in the name of food justice, land reform, opposition to the university, and support of sustainable, organic agriculture (Occupy the Farm Film 2020, April 22), they sparked tensions that had been simmering within the College of Natural Resources for decades.

While a full comparative analysis of conflicts over public land in the Bay Area is not possible, it is worthwhile to note that People's Park in Berkeley has a half-century's history of confrontation between Berkeley residents and the university. The land on which the park sits is also owned by the university, and activists and police have fought over the park in massive riots in 1969 and 1991 as the university has been repeatedly rebuffed in attempts to develop portions of the land (Mitchell 1995). A dominant theme in the narrative of People's Park is its status as a haven for the alienated and dispossessed, those 'evicted' from society (Deutsche 1990; Mitchell 1995). The maintenance of People's Park as a park, as opposed to a university development project, is about asserting a kind of public in the face of bureaucratic university decision-making and the militarization of public space⁸ (Mitchell 2017). There is even a history of community gardening in People's Park (Cash 2010). Yet People's Park does not have a history of agricultural science like the Gill Tract. The narrative of People's Park does not so readily fit a narrative of agricultural transformation, even if the land is open and has been used for growing produce in the past.

Planning an action to coincide with *La Via Campesina's* International Day of Peasant's Struggle, organizers of Occupy the Farm broke the locks on the Gill Tract and set up an Occupy Wall Street-influenced encampment, complete with tents, spokescouncils, and non-hierarchical organizational structure. The university was hesitant to remove the activists after receiving extensive negative publicity across

⁸See Davis ([1990] 2006) for discussions of the militarization of public space.

the US for the militarized police response to student Occupy encampments the previous fall. Instead, the university allowed the encampment to remain for several weeks, although water was cut off and lawsuits were filed against the organizers of the action (Darling and Greither 2014).

As the protest wore on, the university felt compelled to issue a number of public statements about the Gill Tract, the planning process for development, and the research that was ongoing at the Gill Tract. They emphasized that the research at the Gill Tract “encompasses basic plant biology, alternative cropping systems, plant-insect interactions and tree pests and pathogens. These endeavors are part of the larger quest to provide a hungry planet with more abundant food, and will be impeded if the protest continues. And, they are categorically not growing genetically modified crops”. The Public Affairs Office stressed that “the university has been actively participating in a collaborative, five-year long community engagement process about our proposed development project with hundreds of hours of meetings, hearings and dialogue”. They acknowledged that many community members were “studying the details of the [Gill Tract development] project for the first time as the result of media interest in the protest”. They claimed that they “are passionate advocates of metropolitan agriculture projects that are well planned, sustainable and considerate of all members of our community” and stated that they were open “explore the future use” of the north side of the Gill Tract, where the Little League baseball fields were planned. They highlighted that their researchers felt unable to begin planting their research crops in the fields, and they proclaimed, “We take issue with the protesters’ approach to property rights. By their logic they should be able to seize what they want if, in their minds, they have a better idea of how to use it” (Public Affairs, UC Berkeley 2012).

Clearly the university was responding to a number of narratives simultaneously. They offer themselves as open to discussion around some of the development plans, specifically involving the research fields, the “prime farm land” that the Occupiers were invested in saving. As one researcher who used the Gill Tract told me, referring to the potential for developing the research fields,

For 40 years, they would say things to me like, ‘Oh, well, this might be your last year to grow corn at the Gill Tract.’ So at some point, it

was just like, ‘This is not gonna happen.’

There has always been this looming threat, more so decades ago than more recently. And the reason that Gill Tract existed and it stayed wasn’t the Occupation, it’s that we all had federal grants, or we have federal grants, that feed into the university.

After the Occupation was removed by riot police, activists continued to challenge the development of the land, demanding that the Albany City Council not approve the re-zoning of the site, and filing a lawsuit challenging the Environmental Impact Assessment conducted by the university. At the same time, just as the university suggested that they were open to dialogue about metropolitan agriculture, back channels were opening to find a peaceful resolution to the dispute:

[The Occupation] was confrontational and different people at the university were saying, ‘Throw the bums out.’ But there were others who wanted to take a less confrontational approach. And while the occupiers got evicted by the police, after three weeks, lines of communication with the university stayed open because of these people who were acting for different reasons. There were even people who are very University-centric, and not necessarily politically progressive who still wanted to have that discussion. And it took two years of negotiation to lead to a verbal agreement. I mean, there’s no written authorization for us to be on the land.

Yet, returning to the university’s statement, it is clear that the research use of the Gill Tract was considered controversial, even though the Occupiers made it a point to try to make overtures to the researchers who used the site (BondGraham 2012). The university specifically mentions genetically modified crops, claiming that they were not being grown by researchers at the Gill Tract. In fact, although the Occupiers themselves were trying to dialogue with researchers, an aggressive article appeared in the East Bay Express, detailing that corn researchers at the Gill Tract have their work cited in multiple bio-tech industry patents, and discussing the university’s more-than-150 GM plant patents (ibid.).

A significant amount of anger and frustration was apparent on the side of the genetics researchers as well. Speaking in 2020 and recalling the Occupation, one interviewee told me:

[The Occupiers] were saying to the geneticists, ‘Oh, you’ve got GMOs.’
Well, no, these are not GMOs.

And then it’s like, ‘Well, [the geneticists] are funded by industry.’
Well, [the geneticists are] not funded by industry. And then it was down to, [the Occupiers] accused [the geneticists] that publications [the geneticists] had done were used in somebody’s patent.

So because [the geneticists] published work that was then used by seed companies, that was evil. And then, at that point, I was like, ‘Well, how about libraries?’ And they’re like, ‘Burn them down.’

So it was just this sort of anti-intellectual endeavor that made me really dislike them.

Damon Lisch, a geneticist with the Michael Freeling’s lab at the USDA Agricultural Extension, claimed that his work on corn at the Gill Tract was “basic research” and expressed indignation that the Occupiers “spent a lot of time explaining how I was really actually a corporate stooge. If you look back through all of the interchanges there’s lots of suggestions of that, which I found deeply offensive. I’m publicly funded and I do basic research” (Darling and Greither 2014).

In another interview, Lisch said, “Basic research using corn as a model is different than making GMO corn to improve profits for Monsanto” (BondGraham 2012). Sarah Hake, another researcher using the Gill Tract, told a reporter from the Albany Patch that ‘her research “is not to create new products (such as in genetic engineering,’ but rather, ‘to understand basic processes in plant biology”’ (ibid.). Yet, Lisch was critiqued in the local press as “co-inventor of a patent that is directly applicable to GMO research” whose “‘applications’ are relevant to the ‘genetic engineering of corn”’ (ibid.).

Meanwhile, geneticist Michael Freeling published a long op-ed in the Daily Californian using his opposition to the Gill Tract Occupation as a springboard to attack the “food movement”. Rather than discussing the politics of the Occupation or the potential uses for the Gill Tract, Freeling critiqued Berkeley journalism

professor and food writer Michael Pollan, compared tomatoes and steak to oil, claimed that the only crops efficient enough for modern food systems were corn and industrially-farmed chicken, and stated that he had “studied the food movement for nine years” and that any concerns about biotechnology in agriculture were actually a “distrust and hate (or fear?) of corporations”. Freeling concluded, rather far from the question of the use of the Gill Tract, that in his opinion, “crops will either be genetically upgraded or they will fail to produce in our hotter, drier, degraded future (with economic collapse possible)” (Freeling 2012). Freeling spoke from a place of expertise (“These are facts, not opinions”), and mobilized a number of sociological assertions beyond his own field of expertise in order to conflate the Occupation with a ‘wrong-headed’ ‘food movement’⁹, in opposition to the scientific and necessary implementation of genetic modification technologies in agricultural fields.

While industry-friendly journalists and scientists continue to claim that there is scientific consensus around the safety of genetically modified food crops, wider consensus outside this group of individuals and experts has not emerged (Hilbeck et al. 2015). There are two consensuses that are lacking. A meta-consensus about the existence of scientific consensus on the issue, and actual consensus on the issue. While there appears to be a consensus among molecular biologists who believe that genetically modified food crops are safe, their expertise, as determined by Collins and Evans (2002), is not human and environmental health but genetics. On the question of human and environmental health, some alarming though controversial studies exists and many questions have yet to be adjudicated by scientists (Hilbeck et al. 2015). Sometimes, proponents of genetic engineering claim that, because genetically modified crops have been present in the food supply for several decades now with no known health consequences, they must be safe (Ronald and Adamchak

⁹Freeling appealed to his ‘study’ of the food movement:

I’ve studied the food movement for nine years now and discuss this topic every year with my Plant and Microbial Biology 13 students here at UC Berkeley. I think I’ve found the real need that drives the food movement, and it’s primarily not about food at all but distrust and fear (or hate?) of corporations (Freeling 2012).

However, Freeling was primarily a (well-regarded) plant geneticist. He mentored a large number of students and was a member of the US National Academy of Sciences, according to his personal website (“Michael Freeling” 2021).

2018). Yet no longitudinal studies have been conducted to address this question in the general population. In this case, the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.

But, my point is not to insert myself into the genetically modified food debate. My point is rather to demonstrate that there does not exist a consensus on genetically modified food crops amongst the wider expert community. As (Wynne 2001) argues,

Sceptical public reactions [to GMOs] are not reactions to (supposedly misperceived) risks as such, or to media representations of these, but rather are public judgements of dominant scientific and policy institutions and their behaviours, including their representations of the public. This alternative understanding of the basic forces and responsibilities underlying public responses recognizes that they have intellectual substance, which of course is always fallible and arguable, yet their intellectual substance does not correspond with institutional expert categories, since it goes much deeper than simply ‘disagreeing with’ or ‘rejecting’ expert views [445].

Because there is no scientific consensus on GMOs, yet there exists a consensus amongst molecular biologists, we can begin to understand why the Occupation of the Gill Tract provoked such angry reaction around a topic that was at best tangentially related to the Occupiers’ public demands to use the land for farming. The Gill Tract has long been a boundary object in an ongoing conflict over the future of agricultural research. Although molecular biologists won the conflict at UC Berkeley, the public’s own intellectual categories around GMOs do not reflect the ‘expert categories’ of the molecular biologists themselves. There is an ontological conflict about the nature of risk and an epistemological conflict about what knowledge determines safety. The clear frustration and indignation of the geneticists is reflective of their inability to perceive that their worldview is partial, rather than universal. The fact that these emotions surged to the fore over debates about how the Gill Tract should be used demonstrates that the Gill Tract is a boundary object in the ongoing conflict over GMOs, between GMOs and agro-ecology, and over the principles and research projects of land grant universities.

2.6 The Land Grant University: Private vs. Public Good

The issue of privatization surged to the fore during the Occupation. One of the core claims of the Occupiers was that UC Berkeley, as a land grant university, should be pursuing research for the ‘public good’. By this, they meant urban agro-ecological research and not bio-technology research with vast market potentials. To the Occupiers, the Gill Tract was clearly being mis-used:

If you look at the Gill Tract now, a public institution was going against its charter. Are we as a community going to allow the university to basically privatize the last public research land that Berkeley has in an urban environment? (Ashoka Finley, quoted in Darling and Greither 2014)

The implication was that developing the Gill Tract was a legal violation, at least in principle, of the legislation that created the land grant universities. As Miguel Altieri wrote in an op-ed in the Albany Patch during the Occupation:

To many people, the actions taken by the [Occupiers] are consistent with the University’s education and public mission as a Land Grant institution with a Cooperative Extension function, (the latter established in the Smith-Lever Act of 1914), to promote community involvement and initiatives in agriculture. Their actions are also consistent with California public policy as set forth in section 815, to preserve and protect open space, particularly agricultural land that has historical significance—such as the Gill Tract (Altieri 2012).

And, in fact, Section 815 of California’s Civil Code does “encourage the voluntary conveyance of conservation easements to qualified nonprofit organizations” (Legislature 1979). Yet, the non-binding nature of the legislation means that the university and the state possess wide room to maneuver. As universities behave more and more like for-profit companies, the public good begins to be reinterpreted to mean private interest for select corporations. But because the status of land-grant university played such a large rhetorical role for the Occupiers, it bears asking: just what is a land-grant university, and what legal restrictions does that place on the actions of universities?

There were two acts that created the land-grant universities: The Morrill Land Grant College Act of 1862, usually referred to as the Morrill Act, and a successor bill of 1890, known as the Morrill Act of 1890. Under the terms of the act, approximately 10.7 million acres were expropriated from roughly 250 indigenous groups, mostly west of the Mississippi. After forcing indigenous tribes to sign treaties ceding their land, usually for free, the US government gave that land to the states, divided up into 80,000 parcels. In all, indigenous tribes received less than \$400,000 for their land, while by the beginning of the 20th century, \$17.7 million had been raised by the grants (Robert Lee 2020).

After receiving the land, most states sold a majority of it to speculators in order to raise funds for their universities, although 12 states continue to hold land and mineral rights obtained through the Morrill Act. The money earned, as well as the interest it generated, continue to benefit the universities and local communities. In very real ways, this expropriation was an example of the federal government's "approach to property rights. By their logic they should be able to seize what they want if, in their minds, they have a better idea of how to use it" (Public Affairs, UC Berkeley 2012). "Dispossession was fundamental to the existence of these institutions" (Nash 2019, p. 439).

While the Morrill Act of 1862 specifies that the universities so founded shall teach "such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts", and that states should purchase "lands for sites or experimental farms" (United States Congress 1862), the original land was stipulated to be sold. The Hatch Act of 1887 stipulated the establishment of agricultural experiment stations at land grant universities, with the purpose of conducting "researches or experiments bearing directly on the agricultural industry" (United States Congress 1887). The Morrill Act of 1890 appropriated more funds for the land grant universities and stipulated that land grant universities must not distinguish between 'race or color' in admissions, or else states must create separate colleges for 'white and colored students' with funds divided 'equitably' is laid out in the act (United States Congress 1890). The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 gets closest to the point, enacting agricultural extension programs at land grant universities with perpetual funding "in order to aid in diffusing among the people of the United States useful and practical information on subjects relating to agriculture and home economics, and to encourage the

application of the same” (United States Congress 1914).

However, there really are no lines in any of these acts stipulating that particular parcels of land be used for particular ends. They simply require research in agriculture for the benefit of public and industry. Thus, the Occupiers’ invocation of land grant status runs into a conundrum: does a movement dedicated to land and food justice want to justify itself based on legislation that expropriated indigenous land?

Without the legal weight of any of the land grant acts behind their arguments, it becomes clear that what the Occupiers were arguing was that the *research priorities* of UC Berkeley were not in accord with the ‘public mission’ of the acts. What is up for debate are scientific research priorities, funding priorities, and public vs. private good. The development of the Gill Tract is controversial not because there is a legal requirement to preserve the land, but that the Occupiers believe that the university should be pursuing urban agro-ecology to meet the challenge of climate change:

Our demand is that farmland should be a farm. The best farmland in the East Bay should be used to discover how urban agriculture is going to grow best for our bio region. The Gill Tract could be a resource for the entire East Bay, and that was our vision (Ashoka Finley, quoted in Darling and Greither 2014).

The Occupiers and supporters made a number of arguments about the benefits of urban agriculture, and the necessity of urban agroecology. Yet, typical of the current conflicts over research and meaning in agriculture, the importance of urban agriculture in the world is highly contentious. Some authors have claimed that as much as 15% of the world’s food needs are met in urban areas (Armar-Klemesu et al. 2000; Clinton et al. 2018), while others have critiqued this statistic and suggested much lower numbers, even less than 1% (Badami and Ramankutty 2015; Ellis and Sumberg 1998; Zezza and Tasciotti 2010). It is typical of the Gill Tract’s position as boundary object in ongoing scientific disputes that one of the main supporting arguments behind transforming it into a hub of urban agriculture research is itself up for debate.

The Occupiers hoped to counter the privatization of the university, which has heavily favored corporate agricultural interests, conventional agricultural techniques and novel biotechnology solutions. Privatization, although a political-economic phenomenon, is itself part of the scientific dispute over GMOs, sustainable agriculture, and agro-ecology. The Occupiers' invocation of the land grant university mission emphasized again the Gill Tract's status as boundary object in these scientific disputes, and the Occupation's own genesis in disputed science.

2.7 Conclusion

Places can be boundary objects for scientific dissent as well as scientific collaboration. The long involvement of the Gill Tract in debates over biotechnology in agriculture, as well as agro-ecology and biological control, demonstrate how a space can take on meaning through its use, and how that meaning has political effects. I contend that the Occupation in 2012 would not have happened, despite the strong political currents raging in 2012 over Occupy, if the Gill Tract had not been a central node in this long-running scientific dispute. The Occupation was as much a statement about scientific priorities as it was a statement about food justice or the university's development plans. Organic agriculture hints at the scientific dispute lurking in the Gill Tract's history, yet it does not explain why the Gill Tract was the space chosen. There are other open spaces in the Bay Area, smaller university research fields closer to campus, as well as other disputed spaces in Berkeley owned by the university, such as People's Park. What makes the Gill Tract special is its current scientific use and its scientific history, its existence as a scientific boundary object.

After the Occupation, the political struggle continued. Eventually, a community-university partnership farm was established in the northwest corner of the Gill Tract, on roughly 2.5 acres of the property. Even as the activists continued to mobilize against the development of the south side of the Tract, the university was finally able to contract with developers to build a Sprouts Farmers Market chain grocery store, an assisted living facility, and a variety of retail shopping on the south side of the tract. The construction was delayed until 2016, but was eventually finished that year (Gill Tract Farm 2020; Williams 2015). Even as the community farm

continues to farm the northeast corner of the land, most of the land the Occupiers set out to save was lost to suburban development and privatization.

Given the ultimately unsuccessful nature of Occupy the Farm's activism to halt development on the south side of the Gill Tract, one could view the community farm as part of a longer-term strategy employed by the university to defuse the activist situation and continue with development¹⁰. However, I would like to examine the community farm through the lens of activism: What happens when activist movements move from confrontation to cooperation? Many of the original activists participated in the founding of the Gill Tract Community Farm, and some continue to engage, although many new faces have emerged to volunteer at the community farm. The next chapters give a partial account of the relationship that emerged between the community farm and the university, and implicitly make the case for studying activism post-confrontation. What happens to the energy? How does that translate into staying power and long-term investments of time, energy, and money? How are both sides changed by the encounter?

¹⁰In fact, one former activist who I met while living in the Bay Area told me that community energy for direct action against the development had waned after the opening of the community farm. It is hard to substantiate this claim, as I did not conduct enough interviews or interact consistently with the immediately surrounding community, but it suffices to note that the narrative exists for those involved with the Gill Tract Occupation.

Chapter 3

A Handshake Agreement

The ongoing relationship between the Gill Tract Community Farm and UC Berkeley

3.1 Introduction

One of the prime contentions of the Occupiers is that they have a fundamentally different relationship to the land at the Gill Tract as “the university”. Although one informant at the farm told me “occupation is a colonial word, it’s what white people do best”, the community farm is actively working with an Indigenous land trust and an Afro-Indigenous farming collective to share management of the land. “We are constantly trying to bring administrators into relation with this place”, he went on. He defined place as, “The embodied experience of relationships between human-plant-soil.” For example, he said, “You can’t just take work being done at the Oxford Tract and move it to the Gill Tract. It’s not the same.”

Yet, throughout my interviews, university employees – professors and administrators – showed at times a great degree of understanding of the politics, desires, and goals of the Farmer-Occupiers. This chapter interrogates the legibility of the Gill Tract Community Farm to the university and vice versa. What is understood and what is lost on both sides, and why?

Moreover, if the university does in fact understand, to a great degree, the poli-

tics and ambitions of the farmers, why are the farmers' goals not realizable within the bounds of the university?

It is my contention that university administrators and professors, in their capacities as intellectuals, are capable and willing to undertake the interpretative labor necessary to understand many of the short- and medium-term demands of the Farmer-Occupiers at the Gill Tract, while at the same time systematically neglecting the most radical demands of the Farmer-Occupiers politics. This suggests that inability to act on demands is due in large part to ideological forces within and beyond the university that greatly constrain the possible actions of administrators. The Farmer-Occupiers' contention that the university is a 'colonial, corporate institution' is thus not a denunciation of any administrators *per se* (although a number of individual administrators are criticized and discussed on a regular basis at the community farm), but rather an identification of the university as the most real representative of structural capitalism in their lives. A body that claims education and public good as its primary goals but works for the benefit of corporations is a walking contradiction easily identified and criticized. Thus, the Farmer-Occupiers are positing the university, whether consciously or simply through their actions, as an appropriate and important realm for *political* action directed against neo-liberal capitalism.

As Barry (2013) writes,

The spatiality and temporality of public knowledge controversies are themselves invariably in play and at issue. Knowledge controversies should not be understood as necessarily local, regional or global in their scope; nor are they exclusively immediate, medium-term or long-term in their significance. Indeed, the question of what should be included as part of any particular controversy, the significance of particular sites, its spatial dispersion and temporal extension, its history and future, its urgency: all these issues may become elements of the controversy. In a knowledge controversy, there may be disagreement about what the controversy is about; indeed disagreement can occur over whether there is a significant controversy, or just a minor technical problem that should be easy to resolve and need not occasion

public debate at all [9].

At the Gill Tract, there is clear disagreement over ‘what the controversy is about’, as the most radical, system- and ideology-challenging demands of the Farmer-Occupiers are routinely overlooked by university administrators in favor of resolving short and medium term controversies over the future of the land known as the Gill Tract.

When the Farmer-Occupiers assert a greater autonomy over the land than university administrators are comfortable with or acknowledge, it is at once a supreme expression of privilege¹, in that the Farmers are claiming the ability to speak for how ‘the people’ would want to use the land, but it is also a recognition that ‘the University’, as an abstract entity in society, is one of the last public resources still up for contention in an age of massive privatization of public services. While academics gradually recognize that the university is a part of the world, in that knowledge production within the university shapes and is shaped by historical and political forces beyond the academy (Kamola 2019; Paasi 2005), the Farmer-Occupiers are making both science and resource use a profound democratic question for the 21st century, linking their activism to food activism across Latin America. This highlights the links that a university like UC Berkeley has with Latin America, in that biotechnology research conducted at Berkeley will be exported primarily to the developing world as a ‘solution’ to a perceived population crisis and coming global food shortage, the only solution to which involves ever greater investments in technology.

This chapter serves then to highlight both the overlaps between the Farmer-Occupiers understanding of the Gill Tract and administrative understandings of the Gill Tract, as well as differences in the realms of possibility that both perceive. While the Farmer-Occupiers’ are reluctantly resigned to finding a workable

¹Multiple interlocutors invoked the term ‘privilege’ in different contexts. The two main contexts in which privilege appeared were: 1) in its dictionary and colloquial context as an articulation of “a right, advantage, or immunity granted to or enjoyed by an individual, corporation of individuals, etc., beyond the usual rights or advantages of others; spec. (a) an exemption from a normal duty, liability, etc.; (b) enjoyment of some benefit (as wealth, education, standard of living, etc.) above the average or that deemed usual or necessary for a particular group” (OED 2020b); 2) in the context of discussions of race at the farm, specifically ‘white privilege’ (for more, see Footnote 3 in this chapter).

financial model for the Gill Tract, they nevertheless continue to push towards progressive, even utopian, visions for the use of the land and academic research more broadly. Administrators and professors within the university, even those deeply involved with and sympathetic to what they perceive to be the most palpable demand of the Farmer-Occupiers – the preservation of the land – routinely and uniformly deny the most radical and utopian parts of the farmers’ visions, preferring to largely depoliticize farmer demands to the level of whether or not to develop the Gill Tract, or to the financial, material and administrative technicalities of maintaining the Gill Tract.

This goes far beyond typical centrist-radical analytical dichotomies favored on the left and goes to the heart of institutional knowledge production and quotidian reproduction of power. The greatest battle at the Gill Tract is not over development of the land, but on the boundaries of acceptable visions, of acceptable thinking. The question is not of democratic control, but of dreams.

3.2 A brief comment about positionality

I should probably pause here for a moment and discuss how my own positionality shifted in relation to the Gill Tract and the university throughout the course of this project. As Kuus (2020) writes, “One should not underestimate the ability of strong institutions and skilled individuals to subtly guide the researcher toward the ideological and intellectual parameters of the settings she studies, often through the use of intricate technical language” (5). And I did, of course, find my administrative interlocutors highly likeable. After all, these are people who talk professionally—in meetings, with students—for a majority of their time during the days. The volunteers at the Gill Tract were significantly less self-assured, needed more time to piece their thoughts together, and had generally less to say. It is no wonder, then, that I began to find the perspectives of my administrative interlocutors eminently plausible.

But that is to suggest that finding my interlocutors within the university believable can be chalked up to a kind of performance on their part. That is not what I want to suggest. As Gusterson (1996) affirms after spending two years with nuclear weapons scientists,

Although my earlier sense of terror about nuclear weapons has dissipated, I still believe that, based on probability theory if nothing else, human beings and nuclear weapons cannot coexist indefinitely without calamity... However, I have also come to accept the weapons scientists' view that nuclear deterrence played a key role in averting the genocidal bloodshed of a third world war and that if a world without the terrible discipline of nuclear weapons is a dangerous place, so in a different way is a world without the terrible discipline enforced by nuclear weapons" (235).

While the fate of the Gill Tract is nothing so serious as nuclear war, I did come to find plausible the notion that, within the university, many administrators wanted to find a way for the Gill Tract Community Farm to succeed. I came to this belief not so much through administrators' charisma as through coming to understand the logics under which they operate, the ideological and material constraints on their positions, and their own actions in relation to the community farm.

In his essay 'Becoming a Weapons Scientist', Gusterson (2004) introduces one of his close interlocutors, Sylvia, whose path to becoming a weapons designer raised uncomfortable but enlightening parallels with Gusterson's own trajectory in becoming an anthropologist. Through the course of his fieldwork, Gusterson watches Sylvia become enmeshed in the laboratory's culture, yet sees her as somewhat apart from the institutional trappings of Livermore. Yet, by the end of the essay, Sylvia has designed a nuclear weapon and Gusterson has realized that the 'pervasive sense of guilt and conflict' that he perceived in Livermore weapons scientists was far more his own making than theirs. He has become an anthropologist, able to step into the culture of the laboratory, but also distanced to it through his theoretical understandings. Similarly, I could say that through the process of writing this thesis, I took steps down the road to 'becoming a geographer'. It is useful to note this transformation as I navigate the complex task of teasing apart what those at the community farm and the university are saying, thinking, and meaning.

3.3 Autonomy: How do administrators and farmers conceive of the community farm's relationship to the land and the university?

I don't want the land to be lost to agriculture. I don't want it to be cemented over. It's a really beautiful space. I want the university to invest in it. I want the university to build a beautiful fence and buildings, and I want us to deepen it. But that's going to involve a type of interaction with the university that I'm not sure if everyone is comfortable with.

But there are great examples of it: at UC Santa Cruz, at UC Davis, at other places of very good – and maybe at UBC, other places – very good sustainable farming that's done in partnership with community and the university.

Whether the farmers claim autonomy or not, from the perspective of everyone I talked to at the university, the Gill Tract and the Gill Tract Community Farm are emphatically a part of the university. The land belongs to the university, and the community farm is understood through the three overlapping lenses of the university's mission: Research, Education, and Public Service. The Occupiers understood their presence as signifying a taking, or a cessation of land by the university:

We know it's a grand experiment. What happens when a colonial, corporate institution, disguised as a public university, decides to give its land just by a word of mouth agreement back to a bunch of anarchists and land occupiers?

And then when those people start to invite black and indigenous people onto the land, and I will also say that the the movement has always included people of color. Black, Indigenous folks, some of the core leaders of the original Occupy movement embodied those identities.

My interlocutor highlights that the university 'gave back' land to 'a bunch of anarchists', emphasizing the separation between the 'colonial, corporate' university and the community farm(ers) by recognising the positionalities of participants working

at the Gill Tract and the groups partnering with the community farm. The implication is that UC would not seek to address questions of racial justice through land reform.

Roman-Alcalá (2018) demonstrates how Occupy the Farm activists made demands and won concessions from state actors, even while deploying ‘autonomist’ techniques and rhetoric. This imbrication with the state, while maintaining a rhetorical separation, continues at the Gill Tract Community Farm. I repeatedly heard comments recognizing that the Occupiers believed that they had a greater autonomy from the university than university employees believed they did:

I was a little uncomfortable with the fact that, because of the history, I guess there was, I got the feeling that the group has a sense that they have greater autonomy to make decisions about the land that doesn’t actually recognize the true situation, that their autonomy is, in some sense, only as long as the university decides that this is an okay thing to be happening. Because they don’t, yeah, look, they don’t own it. Right, if you own it, it would be in a different position.

And they don’t own it. And that’s, unfortunately, that- well, for better or worse, that is the nature of American land use law and property rights. So I guess I’m only uncomfortable when I feel like there is a sense of entitlement to something that is like, ‘No, this is this is a long standing cooperative arrangement.’

But everything’s been resolved. It hasn’t been ever, you know, things that have come to a head and there’s been decisions. It’s like, ‘Well, that’s the decision.’ And the most concrete ones were the desire to build things. It’s just University rules didn’t allow...

But they were accepted. No one... Although some things might have been built... Yeah, some things might have been put up that— I don’t know if we ever had to ask anyone to take stuff down. Maybe we have, I’m not even sure. There might have been some temporary structures built that we’re like, ‘You really can’t do that without permission.’

Private property is one of the main sources of conflict and disagreement at the

Gill Tract, as I will discuss in more detail later. During the initial Occupation, the university wrote in a public letter, “We take issue with the protesters’ approach to property rights. By their logic they should be able to seize what they want if, in their minds, they have a better idea of how to use it” (Public Affairs, UC Berkeley 2012).

I witnessed how this disagreement plays out during my time volunteering at the Gill Tract. One morning in 2018, I got a call from the farm manager telling me that he could not get ahold of any other volunteers and could I please come to the farm that afternoon to help dismantle a structure they had put up? The day before, a few volunteers had constructed a more permanent structure for the farm stand, which was usually set up underneath a tent, an arduous half-hour long task every Sunday that required four volunteers to carry the tent, tables, and produce for the stand out to the road. The field manager had driven by, seen the structure, and immediately phoned the farm manager to tell them that the structure needed to come down.

As I helped a more established and invested volunteer take the new farm stand apart – it was really just some old boards the volunteers had found, screwed together to make a haphazard roof – the volunteer told me, “It’s just fear that keeps things running. The field manager is afraid if she didn’t do anything, then the dean would be mad at her, and the dean is afraid of the administration.”

The desire for autonomy at the Gill Tract Community Farm is expressed concretely by a desire on the part of some of the Farmer-Occupiers for some kind of legal agreement or “memo of understanding” with the university acknowledging the right of the Community Farm to be on the land for a certain period of time. The original goal was an acknowledgement of the 10-year period between 2012 and 2022 through which the land had been transferred to CNR, but an ultimate goal would be a declaration that protected the land in perpetuity.

While multiple people acknowledged that the university does not make agreements like that for any of its spaces, no one acknowledged the potential danger of attaching an end date to the project. However, one interviewee, a university researcher, did mention the university’s inability to follow through on its promises of development. When asked if they thought the Occupation was helpful for preserving the Gill Tract and whether the Community Farm was important for the preservation of the Gill Tract, they told me:

No. No. I mean, for 40 years, they would say things to me like, 'Oh, well, this might be your last year to grow corn at the Gill Tract.' And at some point, it was just like, this is not gonna happen.

Beyond the preservation of the land, another motivation for some kind of formal agreement is the desire on the part of the Farmer-Occupiers to construct more permanent structures and to plant more permanent crops, such as trees. As one administrator told me:

I think the legal status is sort of like 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell'. That's my understanding.

Because the farmers have repeatedly asked for some kind of long term assurance, and the university is not willing to give that. So that's where they're at.

What is funny about some of the discussions is that the farmers were like, 'We want to have long term assurance, so that we can build this or that.' It's kind of funny because the University was like, 'Even if we gave you long term assurance, you still can't build this.'

I do think that the university was quite arrogant and poor in communication in the past. But I also think that the farmers have sort of a willful ignorance of the legal status of the farm.

Formality may be a double-edged sword as well. As long as the university ignores the Gill Tract, the university will have no interest in changing the farm. The more the university pays attention to the Gill Tract, the more it may filter the Gill Tract through its own lenses of success for an urban agricultural space. University farms at UC Davis and UC Santa Cruz were mentioned in many conversations. The idea of turning the Tract into a 'feather in the cap' or 'crown jewel' of the university came from sympathetic administrators or professors. The following comment was typical in that regard:

There were some stronger voices in the beginning, who were really activating [to obtain a Memorandum of Understanding from the University] and would often take up a lot of space and time discussing that effort rather than trying to build a really solid program at the farm, which

some of us really felt was a top priority to be able to garner more visibility and convince those administrators who were concerned about the radical nature of the farm, that we have amazing programming going on that supports students that supports community members that can serve as an incredible kind of visible landmark, and could be a feather in the cap of the University of California, rather than being something that they're worried about or constantly on their guard for squashing any rebellion.

Yet, as one sympathetic administrator commented about the farms at UC Davis and UC Santa Cruz:

I mean, the history or the origin histories of those sites, as well as the Stanford farm, are very different. They emerged at different particular historical moments where there were certain priorities and willingness to invest in those programs. I think they were successful because of commitment by the university to dedicate faculty time, hiring staff for those particular places. And, absolutely, in terms of a model moving forward, we've talked about the Gill Tract potentially being an incubator site for urban farmers.

The university's willingness to overlook issues was maybe most potently described on both sides by the presence of houseless individuals on the Gill Tract land. This also probably points to the very progressive underlying character of Berkeley, and the privilege afforded the Farmer-Occupiers by the local politics.

One of the other primary issues and concerns I've had out there is actually the security. And again, we've never pushed it, we haven't made it a big deal. But my understanding is that when Sprouts was built, there was a promise to build certain fences that were never built.

There's this big fence, and then you can just walk around it. *[laughs]*

It's sort-of quasi-security. It's well known, there's homeless folks who end up in the street in the riparian zone or back in there [on the Gill Tract], and—without prejudicing whether those individuals should or

shouldn't be there in any way—if at times that means members of our community or the farm feel unsafe, then that's an issue. Right? But it hasn't come to me recently as a crisis. So we've let it sit. No one's wanted to be the one who spent the money to fix the whole security problem.

The *laissez-faire* attitude of the university allows the Farmers at the Gill Tract to form their own partnerships and to ask their own theoretical questions. In 2018, the community farm began a partnership with an Afro-Indigenous farming collective of former UC Berkeley students calling themselves Black Earth Farms, as well as a partnership with Sogorea Té Land Trust, an Indigenous women's-led organization seeking to return Ohlone land to Ohlone stewardship in the San Francisco Bay Area. Black Earth Farms supervises the north side of the community farm, while Sogorea Té is responsible for the south side. The relaxed attitude of the university has allowed these groups to ask their own questions about houseless people sleeping at the Gill Tract:

It's become so trendy to be like, 'Oh, we're on Ohlone land'. What we're dealing with at the Gill Tract is: Well, what does that actually mean? Like, what does that really mean?

What does it mean when houseless people start to live on the Sogorea Te land? And whose jurisdiction is it to deal with these houseless people? Is it the Ohlone folks that should be dealing with this? Is it their, quote, jurisdiction?

The speaker acknowledges that indigenous politics have become a central organizing question, yet they also implicitly separate the community farm from more mainstream or official recognitions of indigenous sovereignty. When they say, "What does that really mean?", they are highlighting that the Gill Tract is practically engaged in questions of indigenous sovereignty, that the praxis of the farm is beginning to depend on the answers to those questions, and that land acknowledgements such as those practiced by the University of California cannot ever equal practically grappling with the implications of being on indigenous land.

Here too, the question of autonomy is front and center. While the speaker centers the question of indigenous sovereignty, speaking as if the community farm and its partners were the only actors invested in managing the houseless presence at the Gill Tract, the prior speaker highlights that the university is well aware of the situation. Sympathetic administrators are turning a blind eye to the houseless situation, as long as there is not 'a crisis'. Rather than viewing this as qualified autonomy, it is more apt to recognize that the community farm and its practices have been, to an extent, absorbed into the institution. A level of trust has built up, even if unspoken, and the institution has extended its codes of practice to include tacit permission for the community farm's method of governance. Those at the community farm may not realize this, but their ongoing relationship with the university is changing university practices, at least in certain instances.

However, onerous rules set down by the university still apply at the community farm, rules that can severely hamper the functioning of the farm and the spirit of the volunteers:

I mean, there's no written authorization for us to be on the land. And, you know, there were a lot of rules from the university, including: only one person could have the gate codes, and this person had to be a university employee.

Later I will discuss how materials such as locks become the most important political questions with respect to the Gill Tract. Here, I want to highlight that, with the imposition of rules making it more difficult to access the Gill Tract and constraining the actions of volunteers, the university hampers the ability of the community farm to maintain its fields and maintain its energy. Volunteers spoke to how knowledge of the university affects their conversations and their actions:

I think as a whole, we definitely have conversations about it in our different meetings . When we're in these conversations, it feels like 'Okay, well, there's this thing hanging over us, hovering over us, that wants us to do things a certain way or take away the land if if we don't do it, or if we cause a problem for UC [Berkeley].'

But I think as a whole when it comes to working [at the Gill Tract] and volunteering there—and just being part of the community, harvesting and all of that—that thought is definitely in the back of people’s minds. I don’t think it creates fear of being there or worries or concerns. I think that it’s on our minds a lot when we’re in these conversations. I think that’s when it’s mostly affecting us.

But when it comes to being on the land, there’s something about how most people feel very grounded here.

This volunteer-activist highlights that they and others ‘feel very grounded’ at the Gill Tract, despite what might feel like threatening or over-bearing rules, or what one activist referred to as a ‘permanent crisis situation’.

Even as volunteers and activists negotiated their autonomy or distance from the university, the presence of the community farm made it harder to mobilize effective support against the development of the south side of the Gill Tract:

They [the university] went ahead with the development of the five acres on the south side, against our objections. But they just said, ‘Well, look, we only gave you three acres that you could play with. So you don’t really have any control of that. So we’re not gonna– you know, doesn’t really matter what you say, basically.’

And there were incidents, efforts to organize to prevent that. And 2015 - 16. Yes, spring of 2016, when they came in at night and cut the trees down early, early, early morning, cut the trees down over there. And there was an encampment for three days around Earth Day. But there was no groundswell of support for it, like there was in 2012. So the development went ahead.

With the inability of the community farm to halt development, some activists filtered away from the more action-oriented Occupy the Farm activism, leaving behind those interested in farming the land.

3.4 Those left to farm: What draws people to volunteer?

Many of those who Occupied the Gill Tract or formed a part of the original Occupy the Farm activist group no longer help out at the community farm. Some are still active in farm governance, but very few still regularly put in time farming the land. What draws people to volunteer at the Gill Tract Community Farm, especially as its future remains in doubt?

I remember one of my friends who lives out in a rural area. And I was describing some of the tension that we've been having at the Gill Tract. And they were like, 'Well, maybe the reason why it's so hard and why people are feeling disconnected is because they don't have ownership of the land really.' And in that context, I think [my friend] meant ownership in the sense that there's no guarantee, [the Gill Tract farmers] could be taken from the space at any moment in time. What my friend perceived was, in a rural place on their farm, you could live here, you could live on the land, you could build a life on the land. And so that depth of connection allowed people to access it in a deeper way and to be more committed to the project. And I turned right around on her and I said, 'Actually, I think it's the opposite. Where, in some way we all perceive that this land is—'

To me what it feels like and this is a super—I don't know how you're going to think about this, but to me, it feels like all of the spirits of the land have been driven out from all of the other places and they've concentrated in this one area. And so there's this strong energetic node, ecologically, but also spiritually. And there's a creek, there's a creek on the land. It's one of the few areas of daylight creek. And it certainly would have been really, really close to the shell mounds, and salmon would have run up the creek. And just how badly the ecology is yearning to be re-awoken, to me is like the driving force that brings people back.

This volunteer expounds a metaphysics notably distinct from the western, scientific metaphysics of the university. The volunteer's 'geopoetics', to echo a phrase

from Routledge (2000), closely resemble indigenous ontologies of the land. The volunteer identifies the ‘spirits of the land’ clustering at the Gill Tract, for reasons that align with ecological concerns about preserving the land (e.g, the presence of a creek above ground) but that also align with traditional Ohlone cosmologies (e.g., the presence of shell mounds, the hypothetical salmon run up the creek). The work on the farm is depicted as transformative and inspirational, both for those working at the tract against the perceived pressure of university development, as well as for the ecology itself, which is depicted as ‘yearning to be re-awoken’.

As Routledge (2013) reminds:

Social movements frequently draw upon local knowledges, cultural practices, and vernacular languages to articulate their resistances. Songs, poems, stories, myths, metaphors, and symbols are used to inform and inspire collective action evoking a sense of place, history, and community (2).

Clearly, this volunteer is motivated by a sense of place, and is motivating a number of myths and symbols that stand outside more traditional western ‘worldings’ (Haraway 2013, 2016).

Yet, the power of the place is tempered by the difficulty of the work and the limited number of volunteers:

I can’t speak to how long this has been going on, but certainly the past year or so. There are a core of committed volunteers who are doing too much at the farm. They’re stretched too thin. I’m not one of those people, so it’s my external assessment. But there are a few people who are on multiple working groups. They’re always trying to catch up. That makes it really hard for them to shepherd projects they’re supposed to do. And I think their dedication gives them a lot of energy, but it’s also not bottomless. I’m not sure people know how to address that. And especially this year, it’s been so difficult, but many of the people believe in what the farm is doing, believe in a greater social justice vision and see a lot of things to work on. And oh, right now, there’s a lot that needs dismantling, rebuilding, so people are stretched no matter what. And at the farm there’s a lot that needs doing.

This volunteer speaks to the moral and ethical imperatives that bring people to volunteer at the Gill Tract Community Farm. The things that need “dismantling, rebuilding”, informed by a broader normative vision of social justice. Yet the fact that energy is not “bottomless” demonstrates just how thinly stretched volunteers are. The only way that people could invest such time and energy is if they firmly believed in a larger project and a larger vision.

This interviewee also refers to the ‘last year or so’. Given the dates of my interviews, the ‘past year’ would have encompassed approximately 6 months pre-COVID and 6 months with COVID (August/September 2019—August/September 2020). This is undoubtedly, in some sense, a “COVID comment”. Volunteers and administrators explained to me that, during the pandemic, the only way to keep the farm running was to close it to walk-in volunteering from the public. To volunteer, one needed to register in advance for a certain number of hours per week in specific time slots, making the work at the Gill Tract more formal even as it remained unpaid.

Yet, a large portion of the time that my interlocutor is referring to is pre-pandemic. From my own experience volunteering at the Gill Tract, volunteers were always scarce and a small core group of dedicated individuals kept most of the farm systems running, from the compost, to the planting, to the watering systems. Numbers would often be short, and I remember being called on multiple occasions by the farm manager to ask if I could help in the afternoon with one task or another because not enough volunteers had agreed to come.

Those at the university, even those sympathetic to the Gill Tract, offered very different reasons for volunteers to work at the Gill Tract. Often, university professors and administrators suggested that people work at the Gill Tract because they don’t have access to land or want to be outdoors. The following interviewee was illustrative in this regard:

Maybe they live in an apartment and it just feels really good to have your hands on plants and soil. And I assume that people take home a few vegetables. So its nice to spend a couple hours and then have some fresh kale. [...] It’s like exercise and they get outside and spend an hour a week working and then it feels good – I assume that food is

donated from the community farm – to provide food for people.

While this interviewee clearly enjoys working in gardens or on farms, they read all of the reasons for volunteering at the Gill Tract through an individualist, utilitarian lens of ‘feeling good’. Politics is effaced in the service of getting a little exercise and satisfying one’s sense of moral obligation. Spiritual connections or political exigencies are not acknowledged by this employee, who later stated that they did not understand why farming needed to be political.

Both the stress and the tension mentioned by the two volunteers, as well as the transformational power of the work, evoke resonances with David Graeber’s 2009 writing on the power of horizontal organizing:

It is very common to see a pattern of exaltation followed by burn-out. Those drawn into the world of horizontal organizing will often find the experience amazing, liberating, transformative; it will open their eyes to entirely new horizons of human possibility. Six months later, they may just as well quit in disgust. Or the groups they were working with may dissolve in bitter recriminations. The recriminations are almost never about the process itself, however. In America, at least, in nine cases out of ten, they turn on arguments about race—and secondarily, class and gender—especially, whether the obsession with consensus process and direct democracy, or even direct action, are themselves forms of white privilege (Graeber 2009, p. 332).

This process of excitement and liberation followed quickly by burn-out, as well as the difficulty of navigating privilege within an activist volunteer space, were echoed by comments by four different activist-volunteers at the farm. One activist volunteer, who had been well-involved with the day-to-day farming at the community farm back in 2017 and 2018 when I was also a volunteer, had since fallen away from the community farm moved on to other projects. This volunteer explained their feelings in some detail:

At the beginning, I kind of get really excited about new ideas and fall in love with them and then I think, ‘Like oh my god, this is the answer.’

Like then this new thing is the answer. And so I kind of devoted a lot of time to [the Gill Tract Community Farm] in the beginning and was really excited about it and super excited about the people I was meeting there.

I just really loved working together with another person or another group of people on a project, whatever that was at the farm. Making the beds or planting things or whatever. I thought I always learning something and connecting with people.

And I think that as I became more experienced I understood how the farm works more, and I became kind of a resource. I think there was some hesitancy for me to make time bigger commitments or to take on a more legitimate role within the organization. I tried going to working group meetings and I tried participating in volunteer days where I led less-experienced volunteers, and none of that really felt authentic to me.

As the volunteer became more and more embedded with the farm, they were faced with more and more responsibility. Although the community farm espouses a horizontalist framework, this volunteer still did not see themselves as having a 'legitimate role' at the community farm. It indicates a serious tension at the community farm, of trying to involve volunteers with the running of the farm while also not alienating them with too much pressure and responsibility. Hopgood (2013) notes that at Amnesty International, "the burden carried at the outset by volunteers and staff, especially women, was heavy and largely unacknowledged" (67). While no one suggested a gender disparity at the community farm, and all the activists at the Gill Tract (except the Farm Manager) are volunteers, there is certainly a significant division in the time commitment and physical effort needed to farm, rather than participate in farm governance.

A second volunteer spoke with me about white supremacy and the value of 'occupation':

There has been a lot of white domination and white practice and whiteness involved. Especially when you start talking about occupation

There's a lot of problems with white people occupying space because that's what they do best. Right?

So, I think when we talk about occupation as a movement strategy — Antonio Ramon Alcalá² talks a little bit about this in some of his essays, but I don't think he gave it the full depth of treatment that is deserved — the notion of occupation as a movement strategy and how it has problems of settler colonial roots. But then there's also Indigenous movements that use it as a strategy.

This volunteer questions the positionality of the community farm and some community farmers by using terms like 'white domination', 'white practice', and 'whiteness' pejoratively. Echoing Graeber, they wonder whether the farm's own political strategies have been expressions of white privilege by connecting 'occupation' with 'whiteness'. They are concerned the farm's politics deepen or re-express white supremacy (what they term 'white domination' and 'white practice') even as the farm pursues food justice work ³.

²Roman-Alcalá is an academic who has written several articles about the original Occupation of the Gill Tract. See, for example: Roman-Alcalá (2015, 2018).

³ The concept of white privilege traces its roots back to W.E.B. Du Bois' formulation of the 'psychological wage' endowed by whiteness: "It must be remembered that the white group of laborers, while they received a low wage, were compensated in part by a sort of public and psychological wage" (Du Bois [1935] 1992, p. 700). White privilege was discussed in the 1960s by the Weather Underground and members of Students for a Democratic Society, although they used the term 'white skin privilege'. See, for example: "You Don't Need A Weatherman To Know Which Way The Wind Blows" (Ashley et al. 1969), *Outlaws of America: The Weather Underground and the politics of solidarity* (Berger 2006), and *White blindspot* (Ignatin and Allen 1969). The current use of the term draws its genealogy broadly to McIntosh's (1989) essay "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack".

The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'white supremacy' as: "The belief or theory that white people are superior to other peoples, and should therefore have greater power, authority, or status. Also: a social system based on or perpetuating the political, economic, and cultural dominance of white people". For speakers at the Gill Tract, the second definition is meant. For a discussion of this usage in the academic literature, see Mills (2013) and Mills (2017).

The two terms are often used in conjunction with one another, with white privilege being the necessary outcome of a white supremacist system. For example,

I would claim that a broader and more useful concept that is still tracking the crucial features of the phenomenon under investigation can be produced by dropping as a prerequisite the stipulation often associated with it of *de jure* white privileging. In the more extensive sense that includes *de facto* domination, *the European nations and the Euro-colonial world in general can be seen as white supremacist, insofar*

A third volunteer spoke to me about the continuous feeling of crisis at the community farm:

I'm sure people have also mentioned the difficulty with having not only the behemoth University of California, which owns the land, but also the other side, being entirely volunteer driven. And so it's hard to move things except on an emergency basis. But emergency response is very exhausting, especially if you have other commitments like earning a living and family and all that stuff.

Without crisis, volunteers' and activists' commitments outside the farm can take precedence over the ongoing work at the farm. These commitments, in turn, mean that only the most dedicated can be counted on to show up. This, itself, is a huge issue of privilege and access to the farm governance, because only those with the most time will be able to show up regularly, while others face burn-out moving from emergency to emergency.

The fourth volunteer with whom I spoke mentioned immediately the issues of privilege and identity politics that swirled around the space:

I want to give voice to the race/class/educational intersection. The farm's history and interface with the UC creates a culture that is even more leftist-academia-centric than most urban ag spaces, which already gravitate in that direction, and thus leans more white/bourgeoisie

An administrator echoed questions of privilege at the farm, though with a very different focus:

I've even mentioned it to them actually the situation of privilege that they're operating under. They sometimes posit themselves as these urban farming experts. And I'm like, 'You're actually in a huge situation of privilege to have the free land and free water that other farmers don't have.'

as "whites" were (are) dominant over and privileged with respect to people of color across the planet [emphasis added] (Mills 2017, p. 476).

For participants at the Gill Tract, discussion of white privilege and white supremacy suggested to me an understanding of these terms in the way I use them here.

And I'm not trying to say that they should feel guilty, but I think that they need to work that into their calculations.

These are difficult topics and difficult emotions in the United States: privilege, race, class, guilt, all these conspire to take their toll on volunteers and make it difficult for all but the most committed to involve themselves and stay involved. This leads immediately to questions about how democracy functions in a group where only the most committed can really involve themselves at the deepest level.

3.5 Democracy: Conducting meetings, forming understandings

The influence of Occupy Wall Street on the community farm meant that certain ideas about democratic process and prefigurative politics⁴ were brought to the Gill Tract:

During the three weeks of encampment, farming, defensive strategies, media work, negotiation with the University and other tactical necessities, Occupy the Farm was organised via an open “general assembly” model of participatory decision-making, like Occupy Wall Street. This model uses “direct” or “participatory” (as opposed to representational) decision-making, modified consensus rather than majority rules voting, and attempts to be nonhierarchical, diminishing the role of individual leaders or figureheads in favour of distributed leadership among participants (Roman-Alcalá 2018, p. 622).

This model has persisted into the community farm, where decisions are still made through modified consensus at meetings that any volunteer can technically attend.

⁴*The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements* explains:

The term prefigurative politics refers to a political orientation based on the premise that the ends a social movement achieves are fundamentally shaped by the means it employs, and that movements should therefore do their best to choose means that embody or “prefigure” the kind of society they want to bring about (ibid.).

Prefigurative politics were intimately associated with Occupy Wall Street (Smucker 2014) and were thus influential on Occupy the Farm. As Gopal Dayaneni said, reflecting on the organizers’ inspiration for Occupy the Farm, “The whole point of this is to not talk about what we want, and to not demand what we want, but *to make what we want real* [emphasis added]” (Darling and Greither 2014).

However, aspirations of democracy do not necessarily mean full equality amongst volunteers or participants:

A lot of people there at the farm now were not involved in the occupation. The occupation people are only a smaller portion. And I have to say, we're actually having trouble now with them asserting that they are the leaders. Unwillingness to share power, when there's been a lot of people who have come in for other reasons since then, and some of them had nothing to do with the occupation, they just care about urban agriculture or Indigenous land stewardship or other things.

While Occupy sought to mobilize all participants equally in the practice of community and politics, it is generally typical of left organizations to have a core group of committed leaders who mobilize volunteers on a semi-regular basis Brissette (2013). Yet Occupy's ideals of participatory democracy were only ever partially realised at the Gill Tract. The group Occupy the Farm was composed of a small group of activists who mobilized support for preserving the Gill Tract through autonomist language and appeals to horizontalism and direct democracy, but who nevertheless held strong feelings of ownership and leadership towards the movement's goals and tactics (Darling and Greither 2014; Roman-Alcalá 2018). What Brissette (2013) calls the "committed group of core organizers" who mobilize other activists is very much a reality at the Gill Tract, and has been since the early days of Occupy the Farm, suggesting that the community-oriented, horizontal decision-making structure has only been partially realized at the community farm. However, the less radical nature of the community farm and the ongoing relationship with the university, with all the concessions it entails, led many of the original Occupy the Farm organizers to drift away from the community farm, taking their more radical demands with them to other projects throughout the Bay Area and the world.

At its beginning, Occupy the Farm emphasized diversity of ideas and diversity of tactics. Original organizer Gopal Dayaneni described the importance of diversity from the lens of 2020:

I think one of the key things that we're experiencing in this moment [COVID-19] that we're learning and that we really attempted to apply

on the farm was this recognition that diversity is our best defense. Diversity and seed diversity and food crops diversity and ideas diversity and participation.

And the more radically inclusive we can be, in particular, and the more diversity we can have, the more resilient we will be. And I think that is an important lesson for this moment. Centralized, concentrated vertical systems are precarious. And actually, the rigidity makes them fragile in moments like these. And decentralized, distributed, democratic, community controlled systems are way more resilient in moments like these, which is why we see peasant farmers in the Philippines self organizing to ensure that poor folks in the city are getting food. (Occupy the Farm Film 2020, April 22, Gopal Dayeneni)

This echoes anarchist organizing principles of past decades. Graeber (2009) describes such principles as he witnessed them in his ethnography of the alter-globalization movement of the 90s and early 2000s, referring to anarchist groups as ‘consensus-based groups’ to highlight the democratic basis of their principles:

In most important ways, consensus-based groups are a perfect inversion of [hierarchical groups with leaders]. They start by assuming that a diversity of perspectives is a value in itself, that no one could really convert another completely to their point of view, and it’s probably a bad idea to try. Debate turns not on questions of definition but on immediate questions of action in the present, and the emphasis on maintaining egalitarian structures follows directly from that” (323)

Yet administrators continued to question the democracy at the farm, as well as the commitment to diversity. Commenting on the community farm’s goals, one administrator said:

They think the land should be given back.

That does have to do with their point or that no land should be owned, or that the university should not own land. I think there’s a range of ideologies, but it does fall into some of those camps.

Some of the farmers see it as historical correction both. They can't really say racial [correction] because the leaders are very white. It's not like they're proposing to give it back to Indigenous groups. But they do see it like, 'Oh there has been some bad agricultural stuff happening in the past.'

There's also been some very good agricultural stuff that's happened in the past, but they feel like their control over the land now is about asserting that this land should only be this public...

I think that they think because UC is a public university, they should be able to stay there as long as they want.

Highlighting that there is a 'very white' group in control of the land, which sees itself as 'asserting' a kind of public right to public university land⁵, this administrator raises the question of just how should public land be managed in a democracy. One volunteer who spoke with me emphasized the split between farm volunteers and those who attended the governance meetings but rarely engaged in farmwork:

I think that the structure was, if anybody wants to show up for any of these working groups, then they are welcome. Even a new person can start going to working groups and sitting in on them. But the ones that I went to just didn't feel dynamic, and they happened at odd hours. It's kind of annoying to show up in the middle of the day on a Monday.

If you really want to be engaged with farm, it's just a lot to participate in all these meetings. I hate fucking meetings. I just want to be out

⁵While this interlocutor does not finish their sentence explaining to what public the Occupiers are appealing ("They feel like their control over the land now is about asserting that this land should only be this public..."), the unfinished thought suggests that the administrator attributes to the activists a belief that they are speaking for, and acting on behalf of, a or the public. Theater scholar Bennett ([1990] 2013) comments that "a performance can activate a diversity of responses, but it is the audience which finally ascribes meaning and usefulness to any cultural product" (167). Building on this insight, Delborne (2011) argues that participants in scientific controversy construct 'audiences', subsets of the public who follow, and ascribe meaning to, scientific 'performances'. Such audiences are necessary in knowledge conflicts for grounding truth and establishing credibility and influence. The dangling public in the half-finished phrase of my administrator-interlocutor suggests a partial awareness of the ongoing scientific conflicts adjacent to the Gill Tract, as well as the farmers' own positioning and performances in relation to those conflicts. Recall the skeptical earlier statement from the same interlocutor, "they sometimes posit themselves as these urban farming experts", which suggests a performance of authority in relation to an (unnamed and unidentified) audience.

working on the farm. I was going pretty frequently in the beginning, I think maybe two or three days a week, for two hours each time. It was interesting because I felt like I was doing a lot of work on the farm for quite a period of time.

But then, some of the people who were doing the working group stuff weren't actually doing work on the farm that I could see. I'm like, 'When do you come to the farm?' You know, 'When do you go and plant stuff?' It felt like it should be the people who are putting their shovels in the ground and getting dirty that get to make the decisions. And that kind of seemed like that's what the ethos and the idea behind the farm was. But in practice, there were a lot of people who maybe helped fight for the farm in Occupy. And they were definitely the veterans, the longest around and the most consistent and invested into it. So like [for those original activists], 'Who wants to listen to a new guy? What does their voice matter?'

This volunteer highlights their frustration with putting in hard labor at the farm, up to 6 unpaid hours a week, without being welcomed into the decision making structure. They found it both difficult to attend meetings and to overcome their own distaste for meetings. Yet this volunteer also resented those that could and did attend meetings, who, this volunteer believes, felt that they had contributed to the community farm by attending and participating in such meetings. Here, an extremely class-based divide begins to show, one that resembles blue-collar/white-collar, peasant/urban, or party member/intellectual divides the world over.

Another administrator emphasized equivocal feelings about supporting radical action in the future, raising doubts about the democracy inherent in the community farm:

Interviewer: If the relationship [between the university and the Gill Tract] went badly, and there were another occupation of the Gill Tract, would you support a movement like that?

Interviewee: To me that would depend on whether or not the occupation is democratic. If it was a democratic setup, with really fair and

equal participation by members of the community, and it was really reflective of a progressive racial, gender and economic mindset.

I'm not convinced it is that way, now. I'm not convinced there's sort of a utopia of understanding among the farmers.

As this administrator remains unconvinced of a truly 'democratic setup' at the community farm, it raises an important question, was democracy ever more than a means to an end at the community farm? If the original goal of the movement is seen as preserving the land, rather than prefiguring a vision of the future, then democracy and horizontalism were a convenient political formulation in 2012, at a time when Occupy's rhetoric and ideals were embedded in the public consciousness. In 2020, however, democracy is less important than maintaining control and access to the community farm for urban agriculture. With shifting political currents and shifting support from the university, the governance has remained stable, subject to de facto leaders emerging and maintaining within the community farm. Yet, as Graeber (2009) has written about consensus-based activist groups, "Where [consensus-based process] falls short is precisely where it encounters what activists would call deeply internalized forms of oppression. Racism, sexism, class bias, homophobia, all these are forms of violence that are both seen as absolute evils, but also as so deeply internalized that one simply cannot expect people to police themselves. What's more, they tend to be entangled in one another in ways that make it very difficult to combat all of them equally at the same time" (ibid., p. 288). This supports precisely what the university administrator highlights: the most difficult internal politics at the farm are the internalized oppressions brought from outside.

Even when internalized oppressions lead to difficulties, the goal of governance at the Gill Tract Community Farm is to achieve consent about even the most difficult topics. For groups that emerged out of the North American anarchist left, Graeber (ibid.) suggests that three features define consensus-based groups: founding principles, an assumption of diversity, and an ethos of mutual solidarity. The community farm has elements of all three woven into its principles and its governance.

The governance structure of the community farm is a complex web of autonomous, horizontal decision-making bodies. There is a Stewardship Council,

composed of stakeholders from multiple parties, including a citizen of Albany, a faculty member from the university, and farmers. The members of the Stewardship Council are ratified by the Stewardship Assembly, which is composed of any volunteer with the time, energy, and commitment to attend Stewardship Assembly meetings. The Stewardship Assembly ratifies all proposals from Working Groups, of which there are a number, including Fundraising and Finance, Outreach, Farm Management (for planting planning), Education and Events, and Anti-Oppression.

As one Farmer-Occupier described the genesis of the farm governance:

It took a long time to come up with those founding documents. A lot of meetings. Long and drawn out and very tedious, but they did it. To their credit, core people hung in and did it. So, it included University involvement, it included a seat for a person from Albany, included a student representative, a person from each Working Group, that kind of thing. And, of course, very horizontal structure. So that power would come from below, not dictated. So while the university demanded or required this farm manager position, decisions were made by the community.

The university being involved with the community farm and the university making demands do not refer to the same people or entities within the university. Certain professors and staff decided to invest their time in the community farm, to help get it off the ground, whereas other administrators, taking a risk-management or administrative perspective, made specific requests of the farm governance. The heterogeneity of the university, and the freedom the university affords to its members, becomes immediately clear. Most organizations would not let their members or employees work with groups that were outspokenly hostile to the organization.

Several administrators commented on the model of governance at the farm, evincing a high level of understanding of the aims and workings of the consensus-based processes. Having attended meetings, an administrator told me:

I would say I'm deeply respectful of shared governance in all of its forms. And you know, on one level, I was just incredibly impressed. It takes a really high degree of personal dedication to fully invest in.

It's beyond shared governance. I mean, we call a university shared governance, that means the faculty can vote on things, doesn't mean the university agrees, that's shared governance. But this is beyond that. I'm sure there are formal terms, I'm not even sure what the right ones would be, but a kind of almost leaderless democracy. And I'm familiar with a lot of other American traditions and similar experiments in really trying to have really flat decision making, so I'm deeply respectful of it.

It does take incredible personal dedication, because it is extremely slow moving. Right, it's not a group for being asked to approve or disapprove a decision, it's a group that is trying to *collectively* – with really strong constraints on any one person pushing the agenda – come to things. So, from an administrator's perspective, it's not efficient, but if you've got time for it.

The personal admiration for a different style of decision making comes into conflict with the 'administrator's perspective'. Demonstrating both the constraining nature of holding a position within the university, while also demonstrating the personal, intellectual nature of the people holding such positions, this administrator locates the community farm governance model within 'American traditions'. However, they inevitably find the difficulty of maintaining a horizontal, consensus-based process over years, with changing volunteers, to be more than they could manage. They make the comparison to the partial democracy of the university, in which faculty are allowed to vote on some, but not all, policies, and in which faculty votes are not always honored by the administration.

Echoing the administrator's description of the farm's governance model, Graeber (2009) describes the implications behind a full consensus-based decision-making model: "Consensus is a way to reach decisions consistent with a society that does not employ systematic violence to enforce decisions. It is an attempt to find a moral formula that maximizes individual autonomy and commitment to community at the same time" (ibid., pp. 327–328). Moreover, "Consensus process operates on a kind of institutionalized generosity of spirit. In a meeting with fellow activists, it is one's responsibility to give others' the benefit of the doubt for honesty and good

intentions. In most circumstances, this principle works remarkably well in creating actual honest and well-intentioned behavior” (Graeber 2009, pp. 287–288).

Despite a shared understanding of the governance of the farm, the farmers still feel that the university does not respect their governance structure. A farmer-volunteer told me their view on the university’s perspective and actions towards the Gill Tract:

The university seemed to go along with [the governance structure of the Gill Tract], but they still would not necessarily consult us with rule changes. And they weren’t really open to considering things that we proposed. So we had to do things by subterfuge.

Acknowledging that the university did not object to the community farm’s governance, the farmer-volunteer nevertheless notes that rule changes come down without warning, and that the farm has very little say beyond the room to maneuver that they have been allowed. These rules pertain exclusively to material concerns at the farm: what can and cannot be built or planted; what sorts of signs are displayed on the main road; whether animals are allowed on the farm; etc.

Most of the communication between the university and the Gill Tract happens within the Stewardship Council. Some administrators have attended meetings as gestures of goodwill from the College of Natural Resources, but as one told me:

I have a personal high degree of respect and tolerance to sit in a meeting like that, and watch, and listen. I’m sure some of my colleagues would probably exercise less, maybe, patience to participate. I wouldn’t be able to do it on a sustained basis.

As Graeber writes, for anarchist-influenced activists “meetings are pure zones of social experiment, spaces in which activists can treat one another as they feel people ought to treat each other, and to begin to create something of the social world they wish to bring out” (ibid., p. 287).

However, the open nature of the governance structure leads some researchers to question the ability to collaborate with the Farmer-Occupiers:

The problem is, who is the community? I mean, who is this group? You don't know who they are. One day you go there and there's a bunch of people, you go there the next day, there's another bunch of people. Who is in charge? They do whatever they want. They plant whatever they want.

The researcher highlights the changing nature of volunteers, the ephemeral labor possibilities of working with people who are giving their unpaid, free time to a project, as opposed to paid staff. He also highlights the difficulty, as well as the slow speed, of trying to communicate and collaborate with a group that does not have leaders. The governance structure at the community farm is an experiment, and its experimental and volunteer nature are a barrier to fostering long-lasting connections with researchers within the university. Instead of pursuing research, the farmers turn to food production in order to address pressing local issues and build relationships with the community.

3.6 Food Production and Food Security: Does the mission of the university include care?

In its own words, the mission of the University of California reads as follows:

The distinctive mission of the University is to serve society as a center of higher learning, providing long-term societal benefits through transmitting advanced knowledge, discovering new knowledge, and functioning as an active working repository of organized knowledge. That obligation, more specifically, includes undergraduate education, graduate and professional education, research, and other kinds of public service, which are shaped and bounded by the central pervasive mission of discovering and advancing knowledge... (“UC’s mission” 2021)

To summarize, “the University’s fundamental missions are teaching, research and public service” (ibid.).

When push comes to shove, the Gill Tract Community Farm bills itself as a working urban farm and as an important node of food security in the Bay Area.

The farm relates especially strongly to the UC Berkeley community, in which recent surveys indicate that 44 percent of undergraduate and 26 percent of graduate students experience food insecurity (Brown et al. 2017). This in comparison to the general public, which in Alameda County experiences food insecurity at a rate of 13 percent (Prier 2018). Yet administrators find it very difficult to fit food production into the “mission” of UC Berkeley.

It might not be the best fight to try to convince this huge institution to change its whole mission. Maybe they think that UC Berkeley should be in the feeding people business, but I just don’t think that’s a good fight to fight.

I think the educational mission is a good mission. And it’s a mission that can absolutely contain the work that [the farmers] are doing [at the Gill Tract]. And I think and then we can teach the university to appreciate the feeding that they’re doing. But there’s nothing in the university structures that is set up to support nor appreciate the feeding mission.

Since Carol Christ became the Chancellor of UC Berkeley in July of 2017 (*Biography* 2021, February 3), the faculty and administration have felt that Christ provided “visible leadership” on food security issues, specifically around providing for the ‘basic needs’ of students. One administrator contrasted food security, and the use of campus land for food production, with the building and maintenance of dormitories:

Part of public service is knowing who is benefiting. Now, the basic needs part of this has really changed in the last few years. The actual producing food, that doesn’t fall clearly under any of the three pillars of our mission. I would say the Chancellor has provided visible leadership on this. Once those surveys started coming out about food insecurity and housing insecurity, I think that made people really pivot and rethink a lot of things, frankly.

And, how does a dormitory achieve our three pillars? Well a dormitory achieves it because that’s how you take care of the people who are

here learning in the classroom. Does a dormitory serve our public or our core mission? Well, we don't necessarily study it. We might hold class in the common room, but that's kind of incidental. And the dormitory itself is not a public service. So by any narrow definition the dormitory does not fit any of the three pillars. But clearly just like having a classroom or having a research lab or having a building, it is a decision the university has made that in order to deliver on our mission, we need to provide housing for students.

Feminists, and feminist Marxists, have argued, at least since the Wages for Housework campaign in Italy in the 1970s, that care work is invisibilized (Bracke 2013). Social reproduction, and the labor required for social reproduction, are left in the background while men's labor is legitimized and fetishized ⁶. The university's attention, or inattention, to food security and housing security for students, and the fact that neither fits into the mission of the university, speak to the continued gendering of university labor and university space. Spaces of research and teaching unquestionably fit into the university mission, whereas spaces of food production, housing, and everyday life are secondary to the core mission and can be torn down and developed at any time. The university is currently considering turning the only other campus agricultural space, the Oxford Tract, into student housing, substituting one care mission: food and connection to nature, with another: student housing (Price 2019).

One graduate student spoke to a local online publication about the housing at the Oxford Tract:

"This is a continuation of manifest destiny," he said, noting the historical ethos where land is seen as transactional, and where agroecology — a system of growing food that prioritizes ecosystem health and food sovereignty — contends with private land ownership. "I am not

⁶See Mies's (1998) classic text for a feminist Marxist analysis of the difference between men's and women's labor, and the ways in which Marxists have tended to disregard women's labor by focusing on the factory, while capitalism has benefited from the social reproductive labor of women. See Federici (1975) for a theoretical discussion of the Wages for Housework campaign in Italy (and internationally). See Bracke (2013) for a critical analysis of the Wages for Housework campaign in the 1970s and the transnational feminist networks of the time.

against building housing on the Oxford Tract,” Rainey said. “But what kind of housing? And on whose terms?” (Price 2019)

Just as the Occupy the Farm movement spoke to a desire for land use on the community’s terms, Rainey highlights the inevitably hierarchical decision-making process at the university, which continues to build on farmland, despite notable research use and student use of the land.

One of my interviewees also commented on the development of student housing at the Oxford Tract:

New student housing is terrible because of the contract [the university signs] with outside companies. Even if it’s the same price as existing housing, it’s inefficient and it’s silly. I can’t believe I forgot Blackwell [a new dormitory built by the university] exists. They built this new giant dorm and they made all the rooms doubles, which they can’t be doubles now because of COVID, but whatever. And then they put a gym in it when it’s across the street from the RSF [Recreational Sports Facility, one of UC Berkeley’s on-campus gyms]. If they built on Oxford Tract, I’m sure it would just be another building, so inefficiently using space. And it’s such an exorbitant price like the rest of University Housing, which is about the same as private housing and apartments around it.

I don’t understand how rent prices work and things like that, but it just does not seem like a solution. Because new buildings, new apartment buildings, that they’ve built specifically for student housing are at prices that I could never afford in a million years. It’s like, ‘So what was the point of that?’ Now I’m just gonna have to move farther from campus, live in a shittier apartment because the new housing is more expensive.

Other UC Berkeley students spoke of similar concerns. In a community town hall meeting over the proposed development of the Oxford Tract, one student claimed that on-campus housing, “has never been affordable” (Havens 2019). The question of affordability hearkens back to criticisms of university privatization from the 90s

(Press and Washburn 2000), as well as continued political debates about the cost of attending university. As the university behaves more and more like a private corporation, prioritizing budget streams to make up for fallen state revenues, many students find their concerns deprioritized. Yet the fact remains that the university is in the business of caring for people, as my administrative interlocutor continued to explain:

We need to provide housing for students. And that's part of the college experience. So do we need to provide food? I think people are rethinking what is the role of growing our own food. And again, the official position of the university, it's like, 'We could afford to buy it if that was really the issue.' But, I mean, you've been part of this community, you know as well as I do that there's a strong argument that just going to the store and buying it is not the same, and that there is real value to people being engaged with growing food.

Recognizing that the value of food goes beyond simply purchasing and eating it, this administrator echoes the demands of food sovereignty movements – themselves amplified by Occupy the Farm – that control over land is essential to healing the 'metabolic rift' (Roman-Alcalá 2018; Wittman 2009a,b).

This acknowledgement of the importance of food sovereignty has been well-enough accepted by the university, or at least certain administrators, that after COVID started, the Community Farm was allowed to keep operating under a 'Basic Needs Exception':

When COVID hit, we had a set of discussions about whether they could keep operating. I would say the university waffled a little bit, and, in the end, they just seem to not be wanting to step in and become the hardliners⁷. And we approved the garden's continued operation under the Basic Needs Exception. So everything was shut down on campus, but basic needs was allowed for people providing food. And

⁷Note how this administrator, although placed within the university hierarchy, refers to "the university" as an entity separate from themselves and making decisions. This use of language was commonplace even as interviewees suggested that I complicate my analysis of 'the university', reject a 'community farm vs. university' dichotomy, and realize that 'Berkeley doesn't think'.

they do provide food to the Student Basic Needs [Center]. And so does the Student Organic Garden.

That has been a delicate arrangement, because as one administrator once said to me, ‘You know, we can buy that much food. This is not gonna break the bank if we need the food for basic needs.’ So, yes, they’re providing food, but the argument that this is the essential and only way that the university can meet this need is just not true. Yes, we can buy the food.

But I don’t know if anyone ever claimed it was the only way to provide the service. The point is, they are providing a service. So we kind of got the sense that the university kind of looked the other way, and didn’t seem to want to have a fight over it.

However, the ability of the Gill Tract to provide food to the campus community through the UC Berkeley Student Food Pantry, operated by the UC Berkeley Basic Needs Center, is itself subject to the vagaries of volunteer labor:

The Gill Tract has been delivering produce [to the Berkeley Student Food Pantry] for a while. A few years ago, they would bring produce. And now, what has happened in the past couple years, is [the Berkeley Student Food Pantry] formalized the relationship with Daily Bread, an organization that pretty much coordinates the volunteer power to go pick up donations of food from local restaurants and bakeries. And what I understood was that, at one point Gill Tract didn’t really have the ability to do that connection of the deliveries, bring it all the way from the farm, maybe it’s pretty far, it’s not like they can just walk down the street. So that labor component was sort of trying to pass that off to Daily Bread, this organization that, basically, random people who are usually retired, have extra time, bring their little car and they pick something up somewhere, drive across town, bring it to [the Student Food Pantry] during its open hours.

And so that happened with the Gill Tract where they made that connection. They’re like, ‘Okay, this is the person at the farm. This is the

person at the pantry. Here's somebody who's going to go in between.' So that started happening.

And then the pantry is run by students for the most part. And so the students aren't very good at communicating. The Pantry never really has a direct line with those volunteers, never really has a direct line with Gill Tract. It's been a more amorphous relationship. Obviously, everybody in both ends cares a lot about what's happening in the relationship, but nobody's really talking about it, or revisiting the relationship and seeing what's going on...

Something happened within the past year, year and a half, where, whoever was bringing stuff from Gill Tract got upset because the pantry is now open to staff. And, for whatever reason, decided they'd wanted to stop bringing us the donations of the produce. They were just like, 'I don't want to be involved in this because I see staff abusing the pantry.'

And this is all, you know, I hear it from somebody, somebody saw it or heard it. I don't even know if any of it is true. But at some point in time, the pantry kind of lost a lot of that Gill Tract produce.

Even as the Gill Tract Community Farm is fit more and more into the structure and understanding of the university, as it is permitted a place within the university's mission, its volunteer structure and the relative disorganization of its governance and management, operating on an emergency basis, make it difficult for the community farm to fulfill its promises and satisfy its constituents. The reactive decision-making of one volunteer left one of the Gill Tract's most material connections to the campus community effectively severed for over a year.

3.7 Material Connections: Locks and Keys

For many of the administrators that I spoke with, their most hands-on interactions with the Community Farm came when they needed to make decisions about specific objects at the Gill Tract. Who would control the keys was an ongoing concern. During my time volunteering, only the Farm Manager was able to lock and unlock the gates to the farm. The rules stipulated that the Farm Manager be present any

time the farm was open. Given that the university was only paying the farm manager for 20 hours per week, this meant that the Farm Manager planned weekly to spend far more than their allotted hours at the farm. As one volunteer-farmer told me: “[The farm manager] took his job very seriously. So, for many years, he was only paid half time, but he was putting in 50, 60 hours a week”. After the Farm Manager left in 2019, and the funding for the position was discontinued by CNR, the question of who would lock and unlock the gates became an issue that needed to be resolved administratively:

[The university and the dean’s office] granted permission to who is allowed to lock and unlock the gate, and open and close the farm, and that was going to be a well defined, limited set of people. At that point, we did reach out to the Master Gardeners, there were a number of Master Gardeners⁸ involved. And we did reach out to the Contra Costa-Alameda Master Gardener as part of the Ag and Natural Resources Division, just to check in, and I know he’s involved, I haven’t tracked his engagement, but basically urban ag is his portfolio given the counties he works in. And I know we kind of identified Master Gardeners as a group of people who we felt like, ‘They have been through training in the UC system.’ That was just a nice designation to be able to say that’s a group of people who we feel have some accountability to the UC system because they’ve been trained. And we’re just looking for that kind of sense of accountability.

Even as the farm is brought further into the folds of the university, the horizontal governance and former protest nature of the movement means that the university is looking for someone with ‘accountability to the UC system’ to handle the locks and

⁸A local program website for the Master Gardeners in my area reads, “Master Gardeners combine a passion for gardening and the dedication to share their knowledge with the community. As part of an international, non-profit organization, all Master Gardeners are volunteers and offer their knowledge in many venues” (Brun 2015). The program began in 1973 at the Washington State University Cooperative Extension near Tacoma, Washington, and has since spread to all 50 U.S. states and eight provinces in Canada (Langellotto et al. 2015; Pittenger 2014). Master Gardeners complete a training course before being certified. They share their knowledge with the public through a variety of forums, including articles, helplines, and public speaking engagements.

keys. Another administrator told me, almost sheepishly, the saga of the portable toilet at the Gill Tract:

This is so funny, but [there's the] Port-a-Potty that BFI used to cover. Then BFI ran out of money. Then the Dean's office covered it for like six months. And then BFI got a grant and said they'll take back over the Port-a-Potty charges and the Dean's [of the College of Natural Resources] office is like, 'Great, thank you so much.' Just like that. Literally, everyone is laughing as they're passing back and forth invoices, like, 'Who's going to pay for the Port-a-Potty at the Gill Tract?'

In Barry's (2013) study of pipeline construction in the Caucasus, he asks why cracks in pipeline metals and pipeline coating materials became the subject of international political controversy while sub-standard labor conditions or the displacement of villagers to build the pipeline did not. "Why were the failures of material objects rather than the working conditions of labourers rendered visible" (Barry 2013, p. 145)? For Barry, the answer lies in a series of contingencies – historical, spatial, and temporal – which rendered specific materials visible and political at specific times. Yet, I would like to suggest that the importance of materials in the relationship between the university and the community farm demonstrates the always partial ability of one to be legible to the other. The locks, the keys, the port-a-potty, and many other materials are boundary objects in an ongoing relationship, mediated by material questions that are addressable in the short- and medium-term, rather than the fundamentally different long-term political vision of the future offered by the community farm.

During my time volunteering, it was well-known that the university would not let the Occupiers build new buildings, or any permanent structures at all. Similarly, the planting of trees was prohibited, so many fruit trees were being grown in large pots. Other rules forbid bee-keeping and chickens on the land. One partial theory I heard voiced while volunteering was that the university did not want the Community Farm gaining or demonstrating a more permanent foothold on the land by planting trees. However, one administrator assured me in an interview that any researchers would also have to seek permission from the university before constructing anything on university research fields, and the community farm was

being treated much the same way as other researchers on the land. While it was unclear to me whether this was for zoning rules or other reasons, the clear message was that the community farm was being treated fairly as any *researcher* at UC Berkeley would be treated. Graeber (2009) writes about the difficulties that leaderless groups have when interfacing with large material objects in a world organized along hierarchical line:

When one examines what really does create practical problems when anarchists try to start creating “new society in the shell of the old,” this is precisely what one finds. Certainly, there are always complaints about “accountability issues,” as activists like to put it – how to make sure volunteer workers actually show up for their shifts, or activists actually perform the tasks they volunteered for in a meeting. But I’ve never heard of a project like a cooperative bookstore, or of [*sic*] bicycle shop, collapsing as a result. Instead, the one thing the immediate, day-to-day experience of people trying to create alternatives really brings home is the degree to which almost everything, in America, is surrounded by endless and intricate government regulation. The coercive force of the state is everywhere. Most of all, it adheres in anything large, heavy, and economically valuable; in any valuable object, in other words, that cannot be simply hidden away: in cars, in boats, in buildings, in machinery.

Let me provide a simple illustration.

At one point in 2002, someone gave the NYC Direct Action Network a car. It was an old car that the donor had no real use for; he handed it over with all the appropriate papers in the glove compartment. We quickly discovered that a “DAN car” was basically a legal impossibility. In the eyes of the law, a car must have an owner. That owner is normally presumed to be an individual, not a collectivity. It is of course possible for a car to be owned by a collectivity, but that collective entity has to be one recognized by the state. This means that, unless the car is owned by the government itself (or a foreign government), the collectivity has to be some kind of corporation. One could

imagine DAN as a kind of non-profit corporation, but actually to be legally recognized as a nonprofit requires a great deal of paperwork. It also requires that one at least pretend to have a certain form of organization, with a direction and various responsible parties willing to fill out the paperwork. (Graeber 2009, p. 282)

The university's attempt to impose a more formal structure on the farm mirrors many of the issues encountered by Graeber in his account of the NYC Direct Action Network. Looking further afield, it also resembles the requirements of the *Indian Act* of Canada, which stipulates who is and is not an Indian, divides Indigenous peoples into 'bands', and requires that band councils must be elected, rather than respecting Indigenous right to self-governance (c.f. Bartlett 1977, Buchanan 2008). When the university originally stipulated that there be a farm manager with sole access to the keys, or asked for Master Gardeners to lock and unlock the gates, it is looking for a hierarchy that doesn't exist, attempting to discipline and regulate the community farm by imposing a structure from above. The existence of the farm manager did, in fact, create problems for the community farm, beyond just having one person to lock the gates. Multiple volunteers mentioned the power and knowledge possessed by that single person, even while praising their dedication and diligence. In practice, the existence of the farm manager meant that most of the responsibility for the actual farming was left to one person, who would then interface with a number of volunteers. To those volunteers, the farm manager was the one and only face of the farm, and the only resource when they had questions. While the farm manager was invested in farm governance and accountable to various farm working groups, they still acquired an ownership over the day-to-day tasks beyond what many other participants in the community farm felt comfortable with.

Graeber's description of the difficulty of achieving legal status as a horizontally organized group was corroborated by volunteers at the Gill Tract:

Currently, the community is pursuing two tracks as far as recognition and status. One is through its relationship with the Berkeley food Institute, and the other through becoming, through the Gill Tract Farm Coalition – which is kind of the community farm. Although, it's a lit-

tle bit ambiguous, because the coalition is also still the name for the original organizations that came together to help support the farm in 2012, at its very original, founding, revolutionary, upset stage – But that coalition currently is also the name of a fiscally sponsored entity that is able to contract with people to do work at the farm. And it holds funds. It's through an umbrella incubator organization called the Social Good Fund, that the farm has its fiscally sponsored status. And the goal of the Fundraising and Finance Working Group folks is currently, within the past year or so, to get independent 501(c)(3) status for the Gill Tract Farm Coalition in order to have more of a legal footprint and kind of a stronger negotiating presence with the university with the hope of getting an MOU [Memorandum of Understanding]⁹ in place. Right now, what there is, is a handshake agreement, which I believe is in effect through 2022.

A Memorandum of Understanding wouldn't be all that enforceable, but it would be harder for people to get out without the risk of public opinion against them, I guess.

And then with the Berkeley Food Institute, the Berkeley Food Institute is interested in setting up an MOU, that's not a UC MOU, but sort-of a Berkeley Food Institute private MOU with the Gill Tract, because they do fundraising on behalf of the Gill Tract, and that entails making commitments to donors about deliverables, and it would be good to have something in place that sets out obligations on both sides.

The current agreement at the Gill Tract, termed a 'handshake agreement' by more than one interviewee, demonstrates the terms by which the university has been conducting the relationship with the community farm. On one hand, the university holds to hard and fast rules, such as with many of the materials at the Gill Tract,

⁹Multiple interlocutors on the community farm side mentioned a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to me. In their view, the MOU would lay out the time frame under which the community farm is permitted to stay at the Gill Tract, as well as an agreement not to develop the land. While this document would not be legally binding, as a written document, they hope this would be an expression of the permanence of the Gill Tract Community Farm and a public demonstration of UC Berkeley's commitment to the community farm, which could be held up publicly against the university if the university went back on its commitment.

including the locks mentioned above; on the other hand, the university has allowed personal relationships to develop over time and has permitted the farm to become a part of the university on a quasi-official basis. The community farm can secure funds. The community farm interfaces with offices and professors across the university. Yet the relationship is conducted in many ways in exactly the way that an anarchist might hope to have it conducted: through personal relationships exercised at regular meetings of a wide variety of stakeholders, including the university.

Continuing to discuss the difficulties and perils of achieving 501(c)(3) status, the same interviewee went on to say:

Interviewee: Anybody with a project – I’m not sure how it is in Canada – but in the US, if you file the forms, and adapt the boilerplate bylaws, and pay the fees, which I think are not huge, you can start a 501(c)(3) to forward your nonprofit project. And I have friends who have done this. So I think the holdup for the Gill Tract has really been a political holdup, which is that the Gill Tract has this horizontal structure and it has this radical foundation and history. And not everybody thinks that it’s a great idea to transform itself into a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, which has tax advantages and state applications and a board of directors that at least nominally have power over any staff that might be hired, and have power to direct the organization. And they also have the legal responsibility for the organization. So whoever that ends up being – the board of directors – they’re financially on the line, if there’s a problem down the road. So I think it’s more concerns like that. Not so much the individual liability of the board of directors. More so, we don’t want to be controlled by a board of directors.

So on the Fundraising Working Group, we feel like there are a lot of different ways that people enact the legal requirements for 501(c)(3)s on the ground. We could have a board of directors which is just us, which is people who get that they are not really in charge. And that’s going to be fine. But I think something else that might be a factor is that the Gill Tract has survived for a long time without being a 501(c)(3) and in a way the university has – and people at UC who

are dedicated to the Gill Tract – have stepped up to figure out a way for the Gill Tract to continue when it looks like there's no money. And we're not paying for very valuable real estate in the San Francisco Bay Area, which I think the university is very interested in doing other things with. We don't pay for water. I think those are the two main things, but they're huge.

Interviewer: So if you became a 501(c)(3), the fear is that the university would charge you rent, and charge for water. Is that it?

Interviewee: That may be a fear. That's not a fear that I've heard. I was actually more thinking about the perspective of people who might be thinking, 'A 501(c)(3) is basically a capitalist structure, a fig leaf of capitalism, to make it look like good things can still happen, we can still take care of people, even though that's not what our government does, and push it to the private sector. So why should we buy into that? When actually, by our presence here and our political stance, we have made the university deal with us as we are for eight years? Let's keep going this way, it's working out.' So I think there's at least some of that. But, though I said it was a small handful of committed volunteers, it's also a larger group of a number of people who take a very personal interest in the Gill Tract and its future. So there are a lot of people who have thoughts about this.

As the Community Farm seeks stability from the university, volunteer-activists remain aware of the many locks and keys of 'capitalist structures'. Viewing their continued existence as a 'political stance', and therefore a political act, which forces the university to engage with them and potentially change, volunteer-activists remain wary of acquiring more legitimacy from institutions and structures they do not believe in nor trust. As they manage the legal and material requirements of running a farm, beyond the social difficulties of operating under an alternative governance structure, the Occupiers come up against the bounds of the state, but also push the university to relate to them in the cracks they have opened in the system.

3.8 Seeking stability and sustainability: Funding and Finance

The Gill Tract Community Farm and the Gill Tract exist in a liminal state because of the community farm's inability to access financial resources and secure a stable funding source. For years, the Community Farm has been relying on small donations, piecemeal grant funding, and the beneficence of the College of Natural Resources in funding a paid farm manager. However, the funding for the farm manager was recently discontinued by the College of Natural Resources, and all grants have end dates. Although this means it fits into the university structure financially, it is still unable to access university resources. From a financial perspective, the relative poverty of the Gill Tract was extremely legible and apparent to administrators, who offered various potential transformations of the site to help make the community farm 'sustainable'.

One administrator commented plainly about the community farmers' ability to raise money:

They're really bad at fundraising. But, you know, there's a sense that it is below them. And that's what had me say the word privilege because I said, 'Who in this world has the privilege to not think about raising money?' You may feel like it's icky, but I'm glad for you that you feel like raising money is icky. I've never felt that way. I've always had to raise money for myself to be able to eat and pay rent. Who are you to say you are above raising money for anything, you know?

Privilege is not an unusual word to throw around in relation to activism. Hopgood (2013), in his work on Amnesty International, notes that volunteers often use *privilege* to describe their ability to work at Amnesty. Hopgood (ibid.) also compares Amnesty to a secular religion, referencing Durkheim and Swain's (2008) analysis of the religious separation of the sacred and the profane. By describing the activists believing that 'raising money is icky', this administrator implicitly points to the profane nature of money for anti-capitalist activists in a capitalist world. As Hopgood (ibid.) notes in relation to Amnesty: "It is hardly a surprise that money should be the subject of such tension." Whatever part of Amnesty's mission a per-

son identified with, “ money was from the start a profanity, the inherent purity of purpose and innocence of will that supplied Amnesty’s foundational energy sullied by the knowledge that in the end what made it all possible was money” (144). I was told that, in order for the community farmers to receive money from UC Berkeley, they required it to be routed through a separate organization (an umbrella 501(c)(3) organization) rather than have it come directly from UC Berkeley. The suggestion when I was told this was that money from UC Berkeley was dirty, or profane.

One source of funding for the community farm has been the Berkeley Food Institute. The Berkeley Food Institute, founded in 2012, is a partnership between several schools and programs on campus to support agro-ecology and sustainable agriculture at Berkeley. One administrator hinted to me that one of the impetuses for the College of Natural Resources supporting the institute was to have administrators on campus responsible for the Gill Tract Community Farm. However, as one employee told me about the funding situation for sustainable agriculture in comparison to conventional agriculture and modern biotechnology solutions at UC Berkeley, funding is much more limited for agroecology:

I don’t think the university said, “We’re going to pick funding to go here or there”. The university is a cash-strapped¹⁰ public entity; it has its hand out all the time. A lot of private money comes in for these high tech solutions [such as CRISPR, gene editing, and other biotechnology]. And [the Berkeley Food Institute is a] receptacle for the other kind of money which is much smaller, it’s philanthropic, it’s not profit making, but the Berkeley Food Institute represents the other side of sustainable agriculture funding that does come in from different people, sustainable agriculture people.

Recently, the Occupiers reached out to a unit within the Provost’s Office in order to explore more long-term funding possibilities for the Community Farm. *New Academic Ventures - Berkeley* (NAV-B) was founded with the express purpose of ‘revenue generation’, with a goal to “to help make all departments, schools and colleges on campus financially sustainable through capitalizing on their research,

¹⁰Note: My interlocutor used a stronger, vulgar term to convey the relative lack of funding of UC Berkeley.

expertise and intellectual capital” (“New Academic Ventures - Berkeley” 2021). As an administrator described NAV-B and its relationship to the Gill Tract:

NAV-B’s job is to make money for Berkeley, to be very crass, but it’s also to solve problems along the way. And the Gill Tract had the problem of being in a negative deficit, campus has a housing deficit, or at least it did before COVID, and one way that the campus makes money is through housing, and supplying housing to students, and NAV-B felt like there was a win-win there.

Alongside NAV-B, the farmers have been exploring the possibility of building themed university housing and classrooms on the southwest corner of the Gill Tract (See Fig 1.1, label B), with agroecology as the focus of the housing. In this vision, students would live in the housing, study in the same buildings, and work on the farm as part of a specialized degree in sustainable agriculture or agroecology. Another administrator, more sympathetic to sustainable agriculture, described this ‘win-win’ situation and how it came about:

It was, like, these funny MBA types in Tesla’s who were like, ‘We’re gonna help the university make money.’ And they were very committed to seizing – I shouldn’t say seizing – leveraging existing assets to help the campus be more sustainable.

And they came in their Tesla’s down to the Gill Tract. They tromped all around. And they were actually very enthusiastic about what’s happening there. And I think the farmers were impressed by how well they listened, actually, as representatives of the Chancellor’s office. It’s kind of a funny little corner of the Chancellor’s office. They don’t really have a lot of power, they’re really more advisory and trying to help these projects get started. And they were the ones who sort of crafted together this plan about themed-housing and the farmers are into it and they crafted a proposal.

Demonstrating a remarkable level of synergy between ‘a funny little corner of the Chancellor’s office’ and the farmers at the Gill Tract, the appeal of Nav-B’s proposal to the community farmers demonstrates the extent to which the community

farm has become a part of the university, rather than separate or antagonistic to it. The plan that is now being proposed to the university is to develop a 'brownfield' part of the Gill Tract, a space where military barracks were constructed during World War II and which has not been used for farming in close to a century, for agro-ecology themed student housing. The vision is to have the interested students living at the Gill Tract, working on the community farm, participating in an urban-agroecology degree program. One farmer-volunteer told me, "We realize we have to develop an income stream, it's just that we do it under our control, our perspective, not [the university's]." Yet the plan for agro-ecological housing was developed in concert with the university, suggesting a growing synergy between the farmers' desires for the land and the university's.

3.9 Shared understandings: Garden or Farm

While the farmers' desires for the Gill Tract and the university's may be converging, understandings of the community farm do not. Across my interviews, there was a widespread identification of the Gill Tract Community Farm as a 'farm', by those working the land, and as a 'garden', by those at the university. At the university this was not uniform, as several more sympathetic professors and administrators referred to the Gill Tract as a 'farm'. These administrators were also closer in many respects to the farm, interacting with the Gill Tract or with farmers on a regular basis. However, professors and administrators less sympathetic to the farmers or more removed from interaction with the farmers or the land referred to the farm as a 'garden'. The use of 'garden' or 'farm' seemed to vary with the perceived legitimacy of the community farm's politics and practices.

Perhaps the most explicit evocation of the belief that the Gill Tract did not merit 'farm' status came from the following interlocutor:

Interviewer: I can't really call it a farm. I mean, it's too small, and it's just really... To me, it's a garden.

Interviewer: How would you distinguish between the two?

Interviewer: I think a farm, the rows need to be at least 200 feet long and there needs to be more than two of them. There's a certain... It's

sort of a scale... I think the size of that is still very much a garden.

As one *Slate* author, raised on a corn-farm in Iowa, discovered on a tour of urban agriculture projects in New York, size is not everything: “The popularity of small-scale sustainable agriculture, particularly in an urban setting, has blurred the line between [farm and garden]” (Crawford 2014). Describing how Farm Service Agency officials will insist that diversified growers (“those who grow small quantities of three-dozen crops instead of huge quantities of just one thing” (ibid.)) on small acreage are not farmers, Crawford continues,

Confronting an assortment of plants on an acre of land, many Mid-western farmers I know would also call that a garden. Size matters, it seems. Yet size lies in the eye of the beholder. At the Black Farmers and Urban Gardeners Conference in November, a community gardener from Brooklyn, N.Y., insisted to me that something so large as an acre could only be a farm... (ibid.)

In heavily urbanized Berkeley and Albany, the presence of several acres of undeveloped farmland is indeed an unusual sight. Even though the Community Farm sits on only about 2 acres of the total 6 that remain undeveloped, it is one of the largest growing spaces west of the Berkeley and Oakland hills.

In *Lawn People*, Robbins (2012) argues that a *lawn person* is a certain type of political subject. He writes,

Taken together, this proposition that the lawn is a political and economic network also should provide us with a better portrait of ourselves. But this is not because by seeing the lawn we are seeing an external expression of something internal to us. Rather it is because the lawn, among myriad other objects of daily life, constitutes who we are. In daily life, this means that personal identity, the way people imagine themselves as members of their families and communities, might be as much a product as a driver of lawn care (ibid., pp. 14–15).

Lawns, gardens, and farms are both ‘objects of daily life’ for many people. What does and does not constitute a garden or a farm is an ideological judgement

of whose daily life counts as “normal” within a given society. Following Althusser, Robbins writes,

The dominant system of ideas prevailing in a society, its *ideology*, according to Louis Althusser, functions by appearing nonideological—indeed by denying and repelling its own ideological character. It cannot be ideology if we think of it that way; it must be intuitive (or from within), not an idea from without. Likewise, we must feel that only other people (Economics professors, AM talk radio hosts, communists) have ideologies, never ourselves.

Moreover, Althusser argues, such systems of ideas must be material, not just synapses in the brain, since they are embodied, institutionalized, repeated, and lived. You have to act them out. Social agents have ideas (e.g., lawn aesthetics) but these are also actions (e.g., chemical applications) and part of a practice (e.g., lawn care). These practices, Althusser adds, in his somewhat off-putting mechanical terminology, are defined by the *material ideological apparatus*, a whole system of ideas through which the elements of the economy (labor, chemicals, surpluses, etc.) are represented back to individuals as a necessity and a sensible, immediate, daily way of life (home, community, and nature). (Robbins 2012, p. 15)

Just as lawn aesthetics represent a particular ideology, garden and farm aesthetics, what chemicals are or are not applied, what food is grown, represents a practice of food production. Food and food production, the essential of the everyday of every animal’s life, represents a defining ideological apparatus. One interlocutor, when asked what success would look like for the community farm in its relationship with the university, told me sardonically: “When they managed to not have it overwhelmed with weeds? Because it takes diligence to really stay on top of any sort of farm.” Here, the researcher disparages the agroecological efforts of the Farmer-Occupiers by depicting the farm as a chaotic, uncontrolled environment. Without knowing which parts of the land the researcher is referring to, based on my experience of the farm and agroecological practice, this chaos masks what

could be planned cover cropping, allowing the land to lie fallow, or a focus on a different part of the land.

A particular regime of production embedded in certain labor relations, prescribed chemical applications to entice landscapes to appear a particular way. What is essential here is that the determination of “garden” or “farm” is a reflection of conflicting ideologies, just as the question of whether the farmers are engaging in research, education, or food production reflects certain ideological judgements based on regimes of practice that create certain subjects: scientist, professor, administrator, dean, farmer, activist, volunteer. However, many of those within the university seem willing to recognize that the Gill Tract is engaging in a kind of research:

Most of the research [at the Gill and Oxford Tracts] is just plain plant science research or molecular biology research. So it does not have a sociological component, although that is a component of the community farm. So, when they get into the food distribution, when they get into, you know, the governance structure, the social outreach that they do, the social work that they do, I recognize that is also research and it does fall within the purview of some of the faculty that are involved.

The possibilities for sociological research at the Gill Tract were reinforced by another researcher from the university:

I think the Gill Tract offers a lot of possibility. Particularly the community farm, I think, offers a lot of possibility for thinking about the role of urban agriculture and community spaces, thinking beyond just crop production and food availability. That’s obviously a crucial part of this, particularly in the context of food sovereignty and the kind of empowerment that can come through controlling at least a portion of one’s own food production.

But I also think, you know, to really give urban agriculture and these community led non-hierarchical spaces their full credit in terms of the potential, I think we need to be looking beyond just the food production side of things.

Yet, some researchers found the research value of the farm, and even the scientific value of agroecology, questionable:

I feel like agriculture is a very human-oriented endeavor. And there are certain things you can consider that make it a little more ecological like mixing up a few rows of this and a few rows of that and things like that. But you know, to be successful farming, it's hard to be too much of an ecologist except for...

It's good to think about the soil. So, I'm not really sure what agroecology is and how successful it is...

I think [with] those kinds of questions [that agroecology asks], it's hard to know what the hypothesis is, and whether your hypothesis correct or not. So, to me, things that are ecology feel pretty nebulous in terms of science.

As Crawford (2014) notes:

Unspoken hierarchies of class, gender, and race are at play in the definitions, too. To call someone's farm a garden (with its feminized connotation), a hobby farm (with its elitist connotation), or subsistence farm (with its impoverished one) can carry a whiff of superiority... (ibid.)

The Gill Tract Community Farm has a complicated internal relationship with hierarchy, especially race. However, one of the main activist impulses behind the Occupation of the land and the founding of the farm was to address questions of food justice and food security within the urban Bay Area. One recent study showed that the number of black farmers in the United States declined by 98% between 1920 and 1997 (Rosenberg and Stucki 2019). About 2.3 million people, or roughly 2.2 percent of U.S. households, do not own a car and have to travel more than a mile to reach a supermarket (Ver Ploeg et al. 2009). As the Food Empowerment Project writes, the "defining characteristic of food deserts is socio-economic" (Food Empowerment Project 2021). Grocery stores in black communities in the United States are typically inferior, smaller in size and offering fewer options, than

their counterparts in white communities (Morland et al. 2002). Three times as many supermarkets are located in wealthy areas as poor ones (Walsh 2008).

Access to land is difficult for low-income communities in the Bay Area, who are being priced out of neighborhoods due to silicon-driven gentrification. Although the Gill Tract is not located in a community that would be identified as food insecure, as stated before, the student body of UC Berkeley experiences a surprisingly high level of food insecurity. Moreover, the Gill Tract views itself as an experiment or example of what is possible in an urban area. The farm demonstrates that it is possible to grow organic vegetables on small plots of land in an sustainable, agroecological manner. It hypothesizes similar projects as one potential solution to the issue of food security confronting low-income communities (Darling and Greither 2014).

Here is where the controversy and non-legibility of the community farm to the university becomes apparent. While in the short- and medium-term the Farmer-Occupiers may have difficulty in understanding the university's behavior, their systemic critique of capitalism allows them a rather holistic understanding of the long-term trajectory of the university's politics and behavior. The university will continue to be entrenched in, collaborate with, and propagate capitalism. Those administrators, researchers, and professors that refer to the community farm as a garden are demonstrating a steadfast refusal to accept the political future offered by the farm, a refusal to view the farm as a true solution to food security and food justice questions. One administrator reported to me,

As one administrator once said to me, 'You know, we can buy that much food, this is not gonna break the bank if we need the food for Basic Needs.' So that, yes, they're providing food, but the argument that this is the essential and only way that the university can meet this need is just not true.

Yet, this leaves open the question of when the university actually feels compelled to provide food for students, and to which students. When the state has abandoned many communities' food needs, there is no institutional mandate to provide for the food needs of students, let alone to adjacent communities. As much as 'farm' signifies the ability to feed society at a large scale, the distinction between

‘garden’ and ‘farm’ is a distinction between those who believe – or at least acknowledge the possibility – in the ability to solve food justice and food security through community-based, participatory, agroecological means. As one farmer told Crawford, the *Slate* reporter: “It’s [the word *farm*] the metaphor to explore issues of sustainability, scope, scale, financial concentration, community control, equity, environmental degradation, global warming”(Crawford 2014).

Officially, the USDA defines a farm as, “Any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the year” (*Glossary* 2021, February 5). While the Gill Tract donates much of its produce, including to the Berkeley Student Food Pantry, the donation-based farm stand on Sundays alone brings in between \$5000 and \$8000 a year (according to a participant who estimated that the farm stand brings in \$100-\$150 per week), easily qualifying the Gill Tract Community Farm for USDA Farm status.

One interviewee associated with the Berkeley Student Food Pantry told me that the produce that the Gill Tract provides is significantly different than the normal produce the pantry would buy, and thus highly sought after:

I’d say [the produce from the Gill Tract Community Farm is] really important, mainly because it’s bringing in some variety that we wouldn’t otherwise have. And quality.

It actually depends. Sometimes the quality is a little bit tricky. We have to sort through it even more once they bring it to us. But other times it’s like–

The richness and nutrient diversity of a variety of foods, colors of produce.

When we purchase produce, we have to go through a distributor and we get basics: apples, oranges, potatoes, onions; stuff that we want to make sure we have as a staple that people need on a daily basis.

But it’s not going to be a good variety. It’s not going to be our ideal of what we would provide. And our goal really is to have produce all the time and increase the variety because it’s the most popular thing. We always run out of it. It feels like we never have enough produce.

As this interlocutor highlights, “it feels like we never have enough produce”. Although the university can buy the produce, the diversity and the nutrition value are perceived to be higher when the vegetables come from a local farm. This divide, between students and locals who want to feel a sense of control over their food, a sense of control over their future, and bureaucrats who believe that, if compelled, the system can provide whatever is asked of it, is the strongest divide between university and farm and the place where the university finds the Occupier-Farmers demands least legible. This bleeds over into visions of the future of the farm.

3.10 Visions of the Future: The meaning of success

My first suggestion is that we look at this as if we were dealing with a political ontology that assumes that actions, and not objects, are the primary reality (Graeber 2009, p. 328).

What would it mean to look at the ongoing conflict and collaboration at the Gill Tract with a political ontology of actions, rather than objects? We have already explored how objects serve as one of the key ways that the community farm and the university interact with each other. Objects are the medium through and about which the community farm and the university communicate and arrive at compromises. Yet, the future of the Gill Tract, in fact the future of society, is predicated on human action today, yesterday, and tomorrow.

For Graeber, all human activities are the product of ‘actions’. The ‘production of food, shelter, or machine tools’ as well as ‘sermons or soap operas or zoning laws’ are products of the same type of human activity: human actions mixed with material processes. ‘Just as much as the production of food requires thinking, art and literature are really a set of material processes’ (Graeber 2001, p. 54). Graeber expands about the different kinds of actions that define ontologies for political actors:

Right and Left political perspectives are founded, above all, on different assumptions about the ultimate realities of power. The Right is rooted in a political ontology of violence, where being realistic means taking into account the forces of destruction. In reply the Left has

consistently proposed variations on a political ontology of the imagination, in which the forces that are seen as the ultimate realities that need to be taken into account are those forces (of production, creativity...) that bring things into being (Graeber 2011)

To reiterate what I said earlier, the conflict is not over land preservation, or democratic control of public land, but of dreams. Though the university is peopled by academics and administrators of various political stripes (especially in Berkeley, where most administrators and academics would probably fall broadly on the left or center-left of the political spectrum), as an institution of the state, the university still subscribes broadly to a political ontology of violence, where the police can always be called in to settle a political dispute with students. Whatever the political beliefs of specific individuals within the university, the prevailing ontology exerts a profound influence on the thinking of any member of the hierarchy: "Institutions systematically direct individual memory and channel our perceptions into forms compatible with the relations they authorize" (Douglas 1986, p. 92). Perhaps this is why folks within the university consistently defined success for the community farm as fitting into the university or community hierarchies in one way or another.

For example, being important to the mayor of Albany:

Success, to me, would be: if I went to the mayor of Albany, and they said, 'That farm is wonderful. Our residents talk about how important it is.'

Or, being interested in engaging and developing 'warmer and fuzzier' feelings with the university:

Great question. I think it's gotten much better. I mean, the success of the... Really, how we can measure it in terms of... Well, one measure is that it still is there. Right? And also that there do seem to be warmer and fuzzier feelings and there has been a change of leadership at CNR as well. So I know that the current Dean is not hostile and angry towards the Gill Tract and he's gone down, visited them, attended meetings. And you know, on the flip side, the farmers are more interested in collaborating with the university than I think they

were in the past. And we've been in a discussion process over the past couple years ... top priorities [were] establishing financial sustainability for the Gill Tract, and ... we did a whole bunch of exercises in terms of brainstorming how we could do fee for service and other programs, and they were into it. So I think that's another measure of success that they are interested in engaging. There's more—seems to be more—trust and collegiality than before.

Or, having greater faculty involvement:

I don't necessarily think of success or failure in any of the other projects I work on. I just think of facilitation. So I would say success would look like having a greater number of faculty involved, as well as a broad cross section of the community, which I know the community is strongly working for. So the people who are food insecure and the people who live in the neighborhood, the people who need the food, you know, that would look like success. So I think the community's really committed toward working towards that. I think having greater faculty involvement is really the key towards strengthening the ties between the community and the university. With that comes the funding, so to have faculty-generated and community-generated funding.

Or, even, to become (or have become) a center for agroecology within the university, partnering with local, national, and international NGOs:

Interviewee: The ideal situation was proposed back in the early 90s through the university.

Interviewer: The BACUA [Bay Area Coalition for Urban Agriculture]?

Interviewee: The BACUA, that was ideal. But the university turned it down. They were not interested. So that was ideal, or at least, something that had a body and a purpose. The idea was to set up a major center of research of urban agriculture. The logical place for an international center or national center of urban agricultural research, education and extension would have been the Gill Tract.

Interviewer: When I talk with people [at Berkeley], most people bring up funding as the primary issue around the Gill Tract and around really anything at Berkeley.

Interviewee: Funding is an issue but if you have an organization, you know, a center that is created on urban agriculture, run by faculty, and students together with community members that are serious, like NGOs like Food First and others, funding would not have been an issue at all.

But, who is going to give money to these people at the Gill Tract? They have no structure, they have differing perspectives. They don't know where they're going. Nobody's going to fund that.

This interviewee rejects the imaginative capacities of the Farmer-Occupiers, seeing no future in the work they are engaged in. Even this interviewee's vision of 'serious' community is filtered through classic organizational structures such as NGOs. Despite sharing an affinity for agroecology, they compare the community farm to the 'ideal' BACUA proposal from the 90s, discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

One administrator was very specific about the comportment that they expected from the community farmers:

The other measure of success is that the those who are getting in the garden, take very seriously that they are part of a university community where other people with other needs may need to be working with them cooperatively. And I'm not saying anyone's blocked that, but I could see it happening. And if that group began to fight against what we needed to do, for example, to support the researchers, that would not be success, because then, you are here on university land out of a cooperative arrangement, and part of that cooperation is that you have neighbors and the neighbors are corn geneticists.

All of these university employees, administrators and professors, stress the need for the community farm to fit into the university in various ways, to depoliticize, to focus on food justice without questioning university research priorities. Yet, some administrators did reflect an understanding that the meaning of the community farm went beyond any university priorities in the long term:

I think fundamentally, first and foremost, it has to maintain the spirit and the mission of what it was always meant to accomplish. And that would be the key to success: being able to preserve that mission and even the spirituality that seems to be centered on the site, while still achieving other goals. The secondary goal being it needs to be able to support itself and generate income so that it can prosper and not rely upon a farmers market or intermittent schoolchildren's trip, these things that are just cobbling it along. It's hamstrung because of its inability [to raise funds].

So the third definition of success and priority would be to accomplish other goals of the university, which is to create housing and a sense of place and community for students that are of like mind. And that, to me, is students who have an appreciation and a desire to focus on food justice issues. I think that would be just a phenomenal outcome: being able to create a residential college for the College of Natural Resources, specifically and explicitly for the purpose of food justice, and then grow it right there.

Without specifying the 'spirit and mission' that the community farm 'was always meant to accomplish', this administrator nevertheless acknowledges the existence of ideas outside the institutional purview of the university. Referencing the 'spirituality' of the site highlights the difference between the community farm and university logic.

What is notably absent from any of these definitions of success is the realization of any of the community farm's political goals beyond the preservation of the land. Neither does success for the community require concessions from the university, beyond the continued existence of the farm and the possible expansion of the community farm to encompass the entire Gill Tract land. No one is mentioning or discussing an overhaul of the university's research programs or interests, a change in wider agricultural systems, the return of the Gill Tract to indigenous stewardship, or a change in ideology for the university.

Yet the farmers also do not proffer these as measures of success for the relationship between the university and the community. When they attempt to actualize

more radical visions, such as indigenous land stewardship, they attempt to do so through ‘subterfuge’, with a strong belief in their own autonomy. This suggests a lack of trust in the university, as well as a continued belief that the university sits and acts in opposition to the community farm. With the Sogorea Té land trust and Black Earth Farms, the community has sought to bring a type of indigenous stewardship to the land that is recognized neither by UC Berkeley nor by the state. While individual farmers may desire or speak about any of these potential visions, a general institutional sentiment at the community farm exists in which:

The two things [the university administrators from NAV-B] talked about were: a residential college on the land and developing our agricultural production in commercial ways. Those two things are fine. We realize we have to develop an income stream, it’s just we want to do it under our control, our perspective, not [the university’s].

In other words, the farm *has* become entrenched within the university, to the degree that the domain of conceivable actions has been narrowed to a broad agreement on future possibilities, including accepting that the farm needs to generate income beyond receiving money from the university. While attracting radical volunteers, the community farm no longer musters an institutionally radical vision, as it is gradually absorbed into the university, even as it retains a host of markers of its radical past and radical dreams. There is a general common understanding of what is possible within the confines of the relationship with UC Berkeley, even as community farmers may desire greater autonomy, indigenous land stewardship, or a university investment in agroecology.

One interlocutor felt strongly that the activist movement and the ongoing community farm project was not, and could not be, a success, given that the Occupy the Farm activism and the resulting community farm had little to no effect on overall funding for agroecology at UC Berkeley:

Basically, agroecology research has been cut down to zero. Now, as a matter of fact, there’s a seminar coming up, or already happened, about genetic engineering meeting sustainable agriculture. So that’s basically the discourse of the college now, and agroecology has been totally eliminated from the agenda.

Yet this sentiment was contradicted by administrators within UC Berkeley, who suggested that part of the development and investment in the Berkeley Food Institute, which serves as a hub for agroecology on campus, was directly tied to the 2012 protests. Thus, even as the farm becomes enmeshed in the university and certain inevitabilities have appeared in the relationship between farm and university, the potential for change, for influence is there, both within the confines of the university and slightly beyond. When asked whether the farm could continue to run as it currently does, a volunteer equivocated, emphasizing possibility while highlighting constraints:

It's hard for me to say. I think that it could keep going. I think it will be more and more difficult. And I think that if new people aren't recruited to, if it stays all volunteer and new people aren't recruited, that eventually, the current folks will burn out, and then nobody will be running the farm. However, I don't know if people have also talked to you about the emerging partnerships with the indigenous land trust, and with Black Earth Farms. So other possibilities are out there for support for the farm, folks to participate in portfolio farm governance, some of that is happening already. And it has been ongoing for a while. I think those relationships are not formalized. So it's a little tricky to know how much everybody can rely on each other.

3.11 Conclusion

The Gill Tract Community Farm, and the demands of the farmers, are surprisingly legible to university administrators. Even when actions taken are not those desired by the farmers, key administrators demonstrate a high degree of understanding of the farm's structure, governance, goals, research potential, and potential value to the university. I also did not speak with anyone who appeared to want the Community Farm to fail, although some questioned its potential for success in its current form. The university was, if anything, much less legible to the farmers of the Gill Tract. Although the farmers at the Gill Tract could speak with some knowledge about the structure of the university, decisions were mostly described as being rendered by an opaque "university", descending from the upper echelons as if verdicts

from a vengeful God on high. While administrators could also talk this way about “the university”, they were much more able to qualify based on internal politics and give nuanced descriptions of internal policy-making.

This reflects not only a power-asymmetry between the university and the Gill Tract, but the difficulty of building institutional knowledge with a volunteer-run, horizontal organization. As people come and go, knowledge and communication are lost and must start over again. Just as one volunteer can decide not to deliver vegetables to the Student Food Pantry, one volunteer fading away from the organization can take valuable knowledge with them. While some volunteers last, the capacity for burn-out is high. In turn, the constant churn of volunteers leads some otherwise sympathetic researchers and administrators to view the Community Farm with a high degree of scepticism.

Chapter 4

Possibilities in urban food politics

Auto-ethnographic Reflections

This essay then is the product of a sustained effort to try to rethink terms like realism, imagination, alienation, bureaucracy, revolution itself. It's born of some six years of involvement with the alternative globalization movement and particularly with its most radical, anarchist, direct action-oriented elements. Consider it a kind of preliminary theoretical report. I want to ask, among other things, why is it these terms, which for most of us seem rather to evoke long-since forgotten debates of the 1960s, still resonate in those circles?

(Graeber 2011)

4.1 Introduction

Between March 2017 and January 2019, I worked as a volunteer at the Gill Tract Farm on a weekly or bi-weekly basis, assisting with planting, harvesting, composting, and many other general farm tasks. I walked the roughly 30 minutes from my house in North Berkeley every Sunday, and also on some Tuesdays when I was not working. During the same period, from late 2017 to early 2018, I worked as a software developer in San Francisco for Pared, a software startup capitalizing on the labor flexibility of the gig-economy to fill last-minute shifts at restaurants

(Lynley 2018). The restaurant industry in the United States is notoriously exploitative (Shirley, 2014). Most workers in the industry work part-time, with variable hours, and do not receive employer benefits (Ibid.; Reinventing Low-Wage Work). According to one poll of restaurateurs, the average employee tenure is 1 month, 26 days (de Jong 2017). Without any changes in the current labor practices of the restaurant industry, Pared's market potential is huge, demonstrated by their recent \$10 million funding round (Lynley 2018).

I contend that these counter-posed urban geographies, and my ability to freely move between them, illustrate serious contradictions at the heart of the Bay Area, currently struggling through a housing crisis that has left thousands homeless (Coté 2014; Hansen 2018). The conflict between these geographies also depicts serious limitations in the commons-based politics espoused by the Gill Tract Farm. Importantly, the Occupiers were ultimately unable to prevent the development of several acres of the South portion of the Gill Tract for an expensive, for-profit assisted living facility, several chain restaurants and stores, and—in a biting twist of irony—a Sprouts Farmers Market chain supermarket (Williams 2015).

This chapter explores the limits of land- or place-based politics in the digitally urbanizing Bay Area. Given that I was able to move between two highly incommensurable political situations, the gig-economy start-up and the anti-capitalist farm, I will draw on my own experience to attempt to delineate the contradictions at the heart of the food geographies of the Bay Area. I discuss who is drawn to volunteer at the farm and why, bringing in theories of narrative and alienation to ask: Can activists counter massive structural changes generated by technological capitalism emanating from Silicon Valley through autonomist politics rooted in place?

4.2 Autoethnography: A bona-fide method

This chapter, more than the others, makes significant methodological use of autoethnography. When considering using autoethnography, one of my advisors remarked that autoethnography is 'a bona-fide method'. Autoethnography is about depicting "people in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live, and the meaning of their struggles" (Bochner and Ellis 2006, p. 111). The goal of au-

toethnography is to “engage in rigorous self-reflection”, or “reflexivity”, “in order to identify and interrogate the intersections between the self and social life” (Adams et al. 2017, p. 1).

In one of the oldest texts using the term “autoethnography”, Goldschmidt (1977) remarks, “In a sense, all ethnography, is self-ethnography”. For example, in primatology “descriptions of primate behavior revealed more about the state of the observer’s id than about the animals observed” (294). From that perspective, this whole thesis could be considered ‘self-ethnography’, a reflection more on my own interests than about the actual state of affairs. In fact, given Massey’s (2005) point that many narratives run through a place, it seems appropriate that any given observer would only pick up and highlight (their own perceptions of) certain narratives.

The goal of using autoethnography is to situate oneself at the boundary between autobiography and ethnography, in order to “offer accounts of personal experience to complement, or fill gaps in, exsisting research” (Adams et al. 2017, p. 3). It is most useful here in pointing out two connections between the Gill Tract and urban geography. One is to demonstrate the incredible potential of individuals to move between regimes of value. By connecting the community farm to disconnected urban food geographies through my own volunteering and work experience, I can begin to situate the community farm’s intervention in local politics in terms of the scale of changes occurring at the local level. A second connection is to the rejuvenating aspects of volunteering in an alienating, consumer capitalist society. I interrogate my own feelings of isolation and sense of meaning at the Gill Tract alongside both Graeber’s (2009) articulation of why people become activists, as well as Žižek’s (2007) critique of anarchic activism. I begin by placing the Gill Tract within the urban geography of the Bay Area.

4.3 Reflections on California

When talking with others about my experience in California, the more politically astute are quick to point out that the juxtaposition of place-based anti-capitalism with geographically unleashed silicon hyper-capitalism is “just California”. California does not represent an anomaly in the way that modern capitalism propa-

gates and is (not) opposed. Instead, California, or even just the Bay Area, is the particular product of Gold Rush, Wild West, settler-colonial, radical labor, and counter-cultural histories self-consciously exploited by entrepreneurs who came of age in the 70s and made their money in the Reagan years or after. The co-existence of the radical and the counter-cultural with the venture capitalist lends San Francisco and Silicon Valley its hip cachet even as a flood of young white collar labor overwhelms Bay Area housing markets and spreads gentrifying tentacles ever farther afield. Some scholars have even suggested that the counter-culture of the 60s, so prominent in California and the Bay Area, was never opposed to entrepreneurial consumerism, but was in fact heavily imbricated with it. Turner (2010) argues that counterculture and business culture were self-consciously knitted together by Stewart Brand and the *Whole Earth* network Brand founded. Frank (1998) demonstrates how advertising and menswear executives wholeheartedly embraced counter-cultural values in the 60s, and had in fact been articulating a critique of mainstream American society very similar to the counterculture critique that would come to be associated with young people pursuing alternative lifestyles in the 1960s and 1970s.

Berkeley, in particular, maintains its radical prestige as ‘Berserkeley’ even as dilapidated bungalows near the upscale Gourmet Ghetto neighborhood of North Berkeley sell for more than \$1 million to 30-something techies looking for a quieter neighborhood to start a family¹, students struggle to find a 1-bedroom apartment for less than \$3000 per month², and rooms in shared houses rarely go for less than \$800 per month. To see the co-existence of rapidly vanishing radical Berkeley politics and Silicon Valley/San Francisco start-up culture, one needs to just drive across the traffic-jammed Bay Bridge. Up and down the West Coast, in Port-

¹Median home prices in Berkeley have been increasing at a roughly linear rate from mid-2012, when the median home price was \$610,000, to today, when the median home price is \$1.45 million (Zillow 2021). In the Bay Area as a whole, the median home price was \$866,900 as of July 2020, smack in the middle of the Coronavirus pandemic (Hansen 2020).

²The average rent in Berkeley currently hovers around the \$3,000 per month mark, as it has for several years. The average size of an apartment is 700 ft^2 (65 m^2). As of April 2021, the average was \$2,950, down from \$3,284 a year prior (Rent Cafe 2021). In the San Francisco Bay Area, 1-bedroom usually refers to an apartment with one separate bedroom, a common living area, a bathroom, and a kitchen. A studio apartment is an apartment in which bedroom and living room are the same, which may or may not include a kitchen.

land and Seattle, remnants of a dwindling counter-culture are slowly disappearing beneath urban re-vitalization and tech-industry-fueled gentrification. Under these conditions, what is the possibility for place-based politics, and who engages in it?

As Naomi Klein wrote in 2001, following the profound feelings of success within the alter-globalization movement after the screen-grabbing ‘Battle of Seattle’, “To most of us here, Seattle meant a kind of coming-out party for a global resistance movement, or the ‘globalization of hope’, as someone described it during the World Social Forum at Porto Alegre. But to everyone else Seattle still means limitless frothy coffee, Asian-fusion cuisine, e-commerce billionaires and sappy Meg Ryan movies. Or perhaps it is both, and one Seattle bred the other Seattle—and now they awkwardly coexist” (Klein 2001). This awkward coexistence is the same in the Bay Area, where it feels like radical projects are a dime a dozen. It even extends to the Gill Tract land, which embodies simultaneously Occupy’s hopes for an alternative future and a perceived victory, however small, against a representative of capitalism, yet also hosts corn genetics research, acts as a store of value for the university, and evokes abandoned land or a ‘homeless encampment’ for at least one of my interlocutors at the university:

It is an extremely valuable piece of land, right in the heart of Albany on a major intersection, and it is an eyesore. It looks like an empty lot. I mean, the community garden is wonderful as it is, and you’re a former volunteer there, so I might piss you off by saying this, but sometimes it resembles a homeless encampment. There’s ramshackle buildings and artificial structures, and it’s not aesthetically pleasing by any stretch.

Clearly, the Gill Tract holds a number of competing, contradictory, and intertwining narratives. David Graeber (2013) examines how people are easily able to switch between different narratives as they move about their lives. He argues that they are moving between different arenas of value that structure the rules that guide people’s actions. By value, Graeber means exchange value, he means moral and ethical values, and he means desires. By skirting and melding these disparate notions, he is able to arrive at a theory for how people are able to adopt and discard different narratives throughout their daily lives: they simply enter contexts which promote

different values. He argues:

It is value, then, that brings universes into being. Whether anyone believes in the reality of these universes is usually inconsequential. This, in turn, is what makes it so easy, in contexts characterized by complex and overlapping arenas of values, for so many actors to simply stroll back and forth between one universe and another without feeling any profound sense of contradiction or even unease (Graeber 2013).

. At the Gill Tract, the anti-capitalist organization of the community farm promotes a particular set of values, of mutual aid, of sharing, of common interest, even decolonisation. Yet the overriding capitalist logics, ever-present in the Bay Area, promote a distinctly different set of values, of competition, individualism, and profit, above everything else. While volunteers can enter the community farm and participate for a short time in the equitable universe of the farm, they must shortly return to the world beyond the fences, cold and profit-driven.

Massey (2005) has argued that multiple narratives intersect to construct what we call ‘place’, an event written onto the temporal and spatial fabric of our worlds. Yet some narratives contradict so strongly that they can not exist in the same space. The community farm, as a place, affords a space in which radical values—social justice, anti-capitalism, horizontalism—can be brought into being. However, located in the heart of the Bay Area, actors are able to walk in and out of the community farm’s narrative at will.

It would be a fabrication if I were to claim that most of the volunteers who regularly helped out at the Gill Tract were in any way involved with the tech industry. There are many activists in the East Bay who scrape by as social workers, teachers, nurses, and other care workers, as well as scores of retired folks who have finally found the time to become politically active. However, during my time volunteering on the farm, at least two other volunteers had worked some kind of software job, and one of those was in much the same position as me, working a software job during the week and volunteering on the weekend to regain “a connection to nature” or “to the earth”. For my part, and I can only speak for myself, but I sensed a similar vibe from my fellow techie; the work on the farm was far more important than my work in a start-up. I gave up weekend time, took vacation days to help out

at the farm, and continued helping out at the farm when I was between jobs. I saw the farm as “the real work” that had to be done, even as only a fraction of my time was devoted to it and the intensely physical work quickly wore me out.

Silicon Valley is a place of bubbles and exploded dreams, but riding the BART back and forth between Berkeley – packed in with sweaty armpits, the aroma of urine in the air, regularly feeling unsafe in a metropolitan area where a housing crisis and a drug crisis are playing out on the streets and subways – techie dreams of world domination felt remote, if palpable at all. Even in the weekly or bi-weekly all-hands meetings within a start-up, the shine of beer-infused, ping-pong playing creativity comes off and the mind-numbing financial numbers come out. Growth projections, revenue forecasts, plans to secure the next round of funding. As an acquaintance told me at a meet-up for small start-ups, “The beer and the ping-pong are meant to disguise the truth: that working in a start-up is just a relentless search for more funding”. Dreams become tortured, bureaucratic nightmares.

Yet dreams are not enough to make politics a reality. Are there really politics when volunteers are simply working on the farm, shoveling dirt, planting seedlings, weeding beds or making compost? Even if the volunteer work contributes to the project, does the engagement go beyond the superficial, to an embracing and actualizing of the political project? As one interlocutor told me, bemused and frustrated by the Occupiers:

I wouldn’t know why there would need to be anything political about farming.

So, while planting vegetables, even on one’s own property, can lead to arrest or even jail time, depending on one’s positionality, as homeowners in Detroit and LA discovered (Finley 2015; Kirkpalani 2011), there is the potential, the high likelihood even, that people have only come to the farm to enjoy the outdoors. However, as Klein (2001) writes, “activists aren’t waiting for the revolution, they are acting right now, where they live, where they study, where they work, where they farm” (ibid.). Klein holds out the possibility that actions in the present, founded on belief in a different world, can actualize that world.

However, quite frankly, I was uninterested in participating in the political life of the farm, even as I believed the work to be political. At the community farm,

nurturing pea sprouts became a political project. I was aware of the farm's recent history – I watched *Occupy the Farm* early on in my time volunteering – but I had no patience for meetings. For me, a big draw of working at the farm was the absence of meetings and the surfeit of soil that needed to be moved, with real muscle. I had briefly tried to join an anti-racist political organization but found evenings of meetings to only compound my stress from working 8+ hours a day in an office, complete with sardine-style commute on the BART. Here, at the Gill Tract, one could be political in a way that appeared to heal the soul, or at least give the body a workout.

This, I think, is the danger of anarchist politics³, or any politics founded on action as its primary locus. Action becomes the solution to all social ills and any acts that contravene authority become direct action. By play-acting that the university did not want community farmers at the Gill Tract, every shovelful of dirt could manifest as a blow to the system. Yet, as Chapter 3 demonstrates, many at the university do want the community farm at the Gill Tract, and as one interlocutor told me, “[The community farm] arose as a brokered solution to a crisis”. This suggests that administrators viewed founding the community farm as a way to resolve or mitigate tensions inflamed by the 2012 Occupation and subsequent activism. Although the production of organic vegetables for food banks and other community organizations may very well change the lives of the people seeking out such sources of food, the end-result is only a stop-gap for broader structural issues that local politics is insufficiently able to address. At least tacitly, these actions view the current system as unchangeable, seeking to alleviate social ills within an unchangeable system while gesturing to utopian possibilities. The problem with utopia is that it is nowhere. A revolutionary wants and believes they can change the prevailing system, they do not accept it as essentially too vast to alter.

In fact, I was not changing the system. Or, at least, I was not changing the system any more than I was fortifying it by working on the other side of the Bay Bridge. In the financial district in San Francisco and now spreading out within

³Although anarchism as a political philosophy is difficult to define, given the heterogeneity of actors encouraged by the spirit of anarchism, I follow David Graeber in defining anarchism as "an ethical discourse about revolutionary practice" whose "basic principles" – "self-organization, voluntary association, mutual aid, the opposition to all forms of coercive authority – are essentially moral and organizational" Graeber (2009, p. 211).

the city as recently re-written tax codes⁴ attract more and more tech capital to San Francisco's office spaces, one gets a first-hand view of the forces re-shaping the city and modern life. Above sidewalks stained with human feces⁵, glittering open offices house the intellectual labor leading the 21st century transformation to a total surveillance world⁶. Key to this is the remaking of the city. Various tech companies have entered into high-profile partnerships with cities around North America which, in a curious epistemological echo of the Syngenta partnership at UC Berkeley, give the companies the power to collect data and surveil anyone moving within the blocks they are allotted (Kofman 2018; Kwet 2020). At the same time that these companies are remaking urban space, they are also remaking labor relations. Incidentally, they are re-shaping the Bay Area.

4.4 Precarious Labor

"Precarious work is a topic en vogue" (Prosser 2016, p. 949). Flexible work and precarity in general are associated with neoliberalization and neo-liberalizing states, with their post-Fordist production regimes (Herod and Lambert 2016; Peck 2001). Ettlinger (2007) calls precarity "a condition of vulnerability relative to contingency and the inability to predict" (320). Recognizing that precarity can extend beyond economic precarity under current relations of production and consumption, Hodgkinson et al. (2014) write, "Understandings of precarity as a condition tend to divide between those who see it as something specific to work under neoliberal labour market conditions... and those who see it as a feature of broader life" (584).

High-profile companies such as Uber, Lyft, DoorDash, and TaskRabbit, are capitalizing on economic trends and technological possibilities to bring centralized organization and discipline to flexible work (Chan 2019). After the explosion of Uber, Lyft, and other Bay Area start-ups in the early 2010s, tens of thousands of software engineers moved to the Bay Area as the companies expanded (Zukin

⁴City taxes were reformed in 2012 in order to attract start-ups to San Francisco, favoring small businesses with small profits (a.k.a. start-ups) (Shih 2012). Year over year, between 2010 and 2017, San Francisco added 24,000 jobs. However, the tax relief cost the city about \$10 million per year (Cutler 2019).

⁵Between 2008 and 2019, human waste was reported on San Francisco's streets an astounding 132,562 times (Andrzejewski 2019).

⁶To read it in researchers' own words, see for example: Chen and Chen (2018).

2020). Mostly young and well-compensated, these immigrants drove real-estate markets so out of kilter that tech workers began an exodus to the East Bay to escape the obscene rental prices in San Francisco. This, in turn, accelerated a massive, ongoing process of gentrification in Oakland and Berkeley, whereby lower-income and often black residents were forced – legally or illegally – from their homes of many years to make way for high-paying tech workers looking for cheaper digs⁷, driving precarity outside the labor market as well as within. At the same time, many of these start-ups were beginning to re-shape labor markets, first in the Bay Area and then moving out to other cities across the world. Uber undercut taxis across the world, leading to suicides and despair amongst taxi drivers⁸. Various companies, such as TaskRabbit and DoorDash, sought to capitalize on new flexibilized labor markets for work beyond driving. The small company I briefly worked for, Pared, is attempting to flexibilize the restaurant industry.

What does it mean to flexibilize an industry that already does not provide full-time jobs? In fact, most restaurant workers already work part-time, with wages supplemented by tips, and without benefits. A 2018 industry study suggested that just less than half (47%) of restaurant workers are underemployed, and that roughly half (54%) of underemployed workers in general are actively searching for additional work, while about a third (32%) accept work on a gig economy platform (Snag 2018). Pared is attempting to "siphon off workers from an already shallow pool of full-time candidates" in order to create "a professional network, a LinkedIn for [the restaurant] industry" (Bowen 2019). Yet the restaurant industry is already one of the most difficult—physically, mentally, and emotionally—for workers. "Academic studies and industry surveys routinely flag immense personal woes for restaurant workers, including addiction, depression, exhaustion and insomnia"⁹ (Morgan 2020). As the Washington Post reported, Pared is "a system that, whatever Pared's intent, seems to prioritize desperation and urgency for both

⁷*Digs*: living quarters. For news coverage and local research on gentrification, see: Anti-Eviction Mapping Project (2019), Chamings (2020), and Levin (2019).

⁸An 'epidemic' of taxi driver suicides was identified in New York City after the value of taxi medallions fell from \$1 million to \$200,000. See: Fitzsimmons (2018) and Salam (2018).

⁹Workers in the food-service industry have the highest rates of substance abuse and third-highest rates of alcoholism, according to a 2015 study by the US government's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (Bush and Lipari 2015).

management and labor” (Morgan 2020). As one Pared contractor put it to the same Washington Post reporter, “Pared lets kitchen staff work more hours in a broken system. Is that helpful for quick bucks? Yes. Is it a solution to the industry’s problems? No” (ibid.).

The conflict over flexibilized labor and gig economy companies is heating up with California’s 2019 passage of Assembly Bill 5 (AB-5), which creates a three-pronged question to determine if a worker really is an independent contractor¹⁰. According to Carole Vigne, staff attorney at Legal Aid at Work, “There’s no question that these workers who are going into restaurants, even on a part-time or temporary basis, are employees,” (Bowen 2019). New York is considering whether it will pass a similar bill (Morgan 2020).

What is the potential to connect the food activism of the Gill Tract to the labor activism needed to counteract companies like Pared? Both Pared and the Gill Tract are nodes in the metabolic processes of feeding society, yet they sit so far apart, in such different universes of value, that I rather easily moved cross the physical distance between, although at great psychic cost. I was constantly plagued by the knowledge – haunted by the fear – that my work during the week canceled out whatever good intentions I had on the weekend, that volunteer work could never offset the relentless drive of post-industrial capitalism. A sense of moral impurity carpooled with me in to San Francisco in the morning and rode the BART with me home in the evening. Just as well, however, I knew that the work at Pared would go on with or without me, and that I needed to pay the rent in the Bay Area, and that participating in any ‘anti-capitalist’ (at least in ideal) work at all placed me in a small minority of people who wanted to change society.

Perhaps the logical response – at least the Old or New Left response – would have been to reach out to workers on the Pared app, to see if there was the potential to organize or radicalize them, to look for coalitions across farm and restaurant. A

¹⁰As this thesis was being written, California voters passed Proposition 22. Supported by Uber and Lyft, which joined other gig economy companies to spend over \$200 million on the ballot measure, Proposition 22 enshrines gig economy workers as independent contractors in California law. While AB-5 was initially heralded as a harbinger of stricter enforcement and redesign of labor laws nationwide (or even worldwide) in the wake of the massive success of gig economy companies, Proposition 22 is now being portrayed as the first in a long line of victories for gig economy companies (Conger 2020). Clearly, political battles over labor precarity and gig economy companies will continue to be fought for years to come.

coalition of food. As (Klein 2001) writes:

As one of the organizers of Reclaim the Streets has remarked, we should be grateful to the CEOs for helping us see the problems more quickly. Thanks to the sheer imperialist ambition of the corporate project at this moment in history—the boundless drive for profit, liberated by trade deregulation, and the wave of mergers and buy-outs, liberated by weakened anti-trust laws—multinationals have grown so blindingly rich, so vast in their holdings, so global in their reach, that they have created our coalitions for us.

A potential coalition exists: marginalized restaurant workers trying to hold onto precarious livelihoods as the space for their existence disappears amidst staggering rent inflation; agro-ecological activists looking to preserve farmland and change the way food is provided in an urban area. Clearly, there is a potential vision of agro-ecologically produced, locally grown food provided to restaurants run by workers, where you do not need to be wealthy to afford a bite to eat, where food insecurity is replaced by food security. Other visions are possible. As Uitermark et al. (2012) write,

The city is constitutive of social movements. The defining features of cities... provide the basic elements for contention to develop. Because cities are dense, they are likely to trigger conflicts over space. Because they are large, they have sufficient numbers to sustain organizations of even small minorities. And because cities are diverse, they become the laboratories where new ties are forged and the battlegrounds where competing demands vie for domination (2546).

Yet effective social movements have not emerged to bridge the gaps between flexibilized labor and food insecurity.

Despite the potential for opposition, what I experienced was a fractured psyche, chronic questioning, and a persistent lack of meaning. Classic symptoms of alienation. I want to quote at length from David Graeber, writing about the alter-globalization movement of the 90s, to describe why alienation is a useful word in this context:

If one enters an anarchist infoshop, almost anywhere in the world, the French authors one is likely to encounter will still largely consist of Situationists like Guy Debord and Raoul Vaneigem, the great theorists of alienation (alongside theorists of the imagination like Cornelius Castoriadis). For a long time I was genuinely puzzled as to how so many suburban American teenagers could be entranced, for instance, by Raoul Vaneigem's *The Revolution of Everyday Life* — a book, after all, written in Paris almost forty years ago. In the end I decided it must be because Vaneigem's book was, in its own way, the highest theoretical expression of the feelings of rage, boredom, and revulsion that almost any adolescent at some point feels when confronted with the middle class existence. The sense of a life broken into fragments, with no ultimate meaning or integrity; of a cynical market system selling its victims commodities and spectacles that themselves represent tiny false images of the very sense of totality and pleasure and community the market has in fact destroyed; the tendency to turn every relation into a form of exchange, to sacrifice life for "survival", pleasure for renunciation, creativity for hollow homogenous units of power or "dead time" — on some level all this clearly still rings true.

The question though is why. Contemporary social theory offers little explanation. Poststructuralism, which emerged in the immediate aftermath of '68, was largely born of the rejection of this sort of analysis. It is now simple common sense among social theorists that one cannot define a society as "unnatural" unless one assumes that there is some natural way for society to be, "inhuman" unless there is some authentic human essence, that one cannot say that the self is "fragmented" unless it would be possible to have a unified self, and so on. Since these positions are untenable — since there is no natural condition for society, no authentic human essence, no unitary self — theories of alienation have no basis. Taken purely as arguments, these seem difficult to refute. But how then do we account for the experience?

If one really thinks about it, though, the argument is much less power-

ful than it seems. After all, what are academic theorists saying? They are saying that the idea of a unitary subject, a whole society, a natural order, are unreal. That all these things are simply figments of our imagination. True enough. But then: what else could they be? And why is that a problem? If imagination is indeed a constituent element in the process of how we produce our social and material realities, there is every reason to believe that it proceeds through producing images of totality. That's simply how the imagination works. One must be able to imagine oneself and others as integrated subjects in order to be able to produce beings that are in fact endlessly multiple, imagine some sort of coherent, bounded "society" in order to produce that chaotic open-ended network of social relations that actually exists, and so forth. Normally, people seem able to live with the disparity. The question, it seems to me, is why in certain times and places, the recognition of it instead tends to spark rage and despair, feelings that the social world is a hollow travesty or malicious joke. This, I would argue, is the result of that warping and shattering of the imagination that is the inevitable effect of structural violence (Graeber 2011).

My fragmented self was the classic condition of the post-modern citizen. Eventually, I left the Bay Area to pursue graduate school, in no small part an attempt to find a career that more accurately matched my ideals: able to analyze the world with the goal of changing it. This sense of alienation was not unique to me. Many of my interlocutors at the Gill Tract told me that volunteering at the community farm – with its explicitly anti-capitalist, land-based ideals – gave them meaning. That, while the ideals might ring hollow away from the Gill Tract, where other universes of value controlled their lives, when they returned to the Gill Tract the vision of a different future appeared possible again. In a sense, the Gill Tract's small attempt to heal what Foster (2000) calls the 'metabolic rift', also heals the alienation felt by many volunteers, albeit in a transitory way, only so long as they are within the universe of value of the community farm.

Slavoj Žižek, on the other hand, might say that participation at the community farm is exactly the kind of meaningless action that allows capitalism to continue

unchecked and unchallenged. Responding to Critchley's (2013) expression of an 'infinitely demanding' anarchic politics removed from the state and constantly demanding the impossible of a state that cannot provide, Žižek writes,

Today's liberal-democratic state and the dream of an 'infinitely demanding' anarchic politics exist in a relationship of mutual parasitism: anarchic agents do the ethical thinking, and the state does the work of running and regulating society...

The big demonstrations in London and Washington against the US attack on Iraq a few years ago offer an exemplary case of this strange symbiotic relationship between power and resistance. Their paradoxical outcome was that both sides were satisfied. The protesters saved their beautiful souls: they made it clear that they don't agree with the government's policy on Iraq. Those in power calmly accepted it, even profited from it: not only did the protests in no way prevent the already-made decision to attack Iraq; they also served to legitimise it. Thus George Bush's reaction to mass demonstrations protesting his visit to London, in effect: 'You see, this is what we are fighting for, so that what people are doing here - protesting against their government policy - will be possible also in Iraq!' (Žižek 2007)

Žižek would argue that what activists and volunteers at the Gill Tract are doing is 'saving their beautiful souls' while acting as (a small portion of) the 'superego' of liberal democracy, challenging it to live up to its own principles. Their existence is 'parasitic' on liberal-democratic capitalism, not because their privileged economic positions allow them to engage in volunteer activity, but because they can hold the moral high ground for their actions only while challenging a system that they, in fact, cannot change. Whether that system is capitalism itself or the university as a representative of capitalism, Žižek would argue that the appeals to the land grant university, to 'public good', and to Indigenous sovereignty (Chapter 2), or the production of organic food for students when the university can buy such food (Chapter 3), are expressions of symbolic, 'infinite' demands that cannot be met. By simply demanding, without expecting or needing to receive an answer, the activists can feel good about maintaining a moral high ground, while the university and

university officials can feel good about fulfilling the intellectual's duty to open inquiry, allowing the community farm to continue to exist on a marginal portion of the Gill Tract.

4.5 Dreams and Deferrals: Saving their beautiful souls

The people who volunteer regularly at the Gill Tract attest, perhaps, to Žižek's point. The volunteers include: a few former UC Berkeley students, part of the original activism that led to the creation of the Community Farm, now in their late 30s; a number of retired folks, who invest significant amounts of time; and a few extremely dedicated students. Essentially, Millennials (and younger) and Boomers. One might say that the first group represents the generation of Dreams Deferred. Forced to come of age during or soon after the 2008 financial crisis, during the triumphal reign of the neo-liberal 'Washington Consensus', many of those in my generation have been forced to confront, in one way or another, the fact that they will not be able to share in the middle-class lifestyles of their parents. Nor will their middle class parents, or their parents' generational compatriots, vote or act to redistribute wealth or confront climate change and ecological collapse.

The Boomers, on the other hand, represent the generation that was allowed to dream. The slogan on the walls of Paris in May of '68 sums up how this generation came of age, "Be reasonable, do the impossible". Especially for those who live in Berkeley, the long '60s still echo in the dreams of the present. As one elderly casual carpool driver¹¹, a retired schoolteacher driving to UCSF for a medical appointment, commented to me shortly after Donald Trump was elected in 2016, "In the 60s, we just thought the world would be better in the future. I don't know where we went wrong."

Volunteer organizations survive thanks to people with free time. In that sense, the clustering of students and retired folks at the community farm makes clear sense. Yet there is a way in which, connected across a large age gap, Millennials and

¹¹Casual carpool is a Bay Area institution, in which riders line up at pre-arranged spots to climb two or three at a time into a stranger's car in order to take the HOV lane across the Bay Bridge into San Francisco. The driver gets a reduced toll and gets to skip the toll booth, and the riders usually spend only \$1 instead of the \$4 on BART. When I worked in San Francisco, I took casual carpool every day into the city. I always loved that it was a form of legitimate hitchhiking, in which people in suits took rides with other people in suits (Berger 2016).

Boomers share a certain fractured reality. Millenials inherit a world and political system that has been structured in such a way as to roll back as many of the civil rights and environmental gains of the 1960s and 1970s as possible, a world shaped by the free-market right. If Millenials have a political dream, it is of a movement and upswelling akin to the protests of the 1960s. Why else would the music of the 60s still resonate with young people? Except that the political visions and ecstatic proclamations of the 1960s still have not been made good. Except that the better world must be demanded once again.

The startling similarities between the recent racial justice protests in the US and the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, the horrifying sameness of the structural violence directed towards racialized Americans, point to the current reality. But where the 1960s had dreams galore, of communes, of acid-trips, of a global revolution, the current moment has been starved of alternatives.

4.6 Conclusion

The “California confluence” of utopian politics and techno-utopian silicon capitalism breeds a strange political convergence. What appears obvious looking outward from Berkeley may not reflect the lived practice of the rest of the world. Yet the Gill Tract Community Farm can easily be seen as a node in a larger network of political possibility discovering itself in the second decade of the twenty-first century. *Blockadia* or *Zones à Défendre* represent a new challenge to extractive capitalism, as well as a belated but necessary response to ecological degradation and impending, actually-occurring climate change. My ability to move seamlessly between these spaces, anti-capitalist and hyper-capitalist, represents the kinds of fault lines that activists will have to overcome if they are to make a new world in the shell of the old. We should not discount dreams and collective imagination.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Blockadia *or* Conflicts are really ongoing relationships

“Whose farm? Our farm! Whose farm? OUR Farm!”

But whose farm is it, actually? The chants present a particular claim to public ownership, speaking for a particular public’s right to occupy, use, and manage UC Berkeley research land. “This is primarily a conflict over a resource: land”, said Keith Gilless in 2012, then Dean of the College of Natural Resources. Yet, the construction of a public, of a social movement, in opposition to a nefarious university whose development schemes abrogate democratic desires and norms presents a binary opposition that does not reflect the multiple narratives intersecting on the ground at the Gill Tract.

The Gill Tract was forcibly expropriated from the indigenous peoples of pre-Colombian California, passing to UC Berkeley after years of homesteading. It housed the Division of Biological Control as well as the USDA Western Regional Research Center. It was briefly Occupied by a group instigated and led by former UC Berkeley students, and now houses a community farm, which pretends to autonomy but is accommodated into the discourse and discussions of the university, even as it changes slightly and subtly the university’s practices (Chapter 3).

In 2018, the Gill Tract Community Farm began partnerships with two groups focused on pairing racial justice with farming. Black Earth Farms, composed of

former UC Berkeley students who identify as afro-indigenous, farms the north half of the community farm, while Sogorea Té Land Trust, an organization run by Ohlone women seeking to return land in the Bay Area to Indigenous stewardship, is managing the southern half. As these groups move the farm's politics and governance away from the primarily white leadership that has dominated, new fault lines and new opportunities open for the community farm. Some demands radicalize as the farm enters into the complicated politics of indigenous land rights in the Bay Area. As one employee told me:

A colleague at UCSF just reached out and said, 'We're trying to think about giving back land at UCSF to Native American tribes, what do you think is the likelihood that UC Berkeley will give back Gill Tract to Sogorea Té Land Trust?' I was like, 'Worth a try.' I mean, I would support *that* a lot more than an occupation. I would totally support that. But good luck, sister.

Land grant universities are in a special space. Even if we were to be giving back land to Native Americans, I'm not sure it should go just to Sogorea Té. There has to be a very deliberative process to decide to what tribe—a recognized or an unrecognized tribe—would be in charge. All of that would have to be considered very, very carefully under the leadership of Native American land stewards themselves. So to go through that whole complicated process? Yeah, I think that would be awesome. But I think we're barely scratching the surface right now.

Administrators are able to recognize the demands of the farmers and volunteers, even if administrators do not themselves agree with or support those demands (Chapter 3). While using land for care work and social reproduction does not fit legibly into the university's mission, administrators are nevertheless able to recognize the value of the land at the Gill Tract as well as the value and potential of the community farm. In many cases, even though administrators within the university are able to articulate and understand the demands and desires made by activist-farmers at the Gill Tract, they are able to ignore or disregard the most radical demands, attempting to fit the farm into a more clearly understood university

hierarchy and visions of what a farm within the University of California system should be.

The Gill Tract Community Farm emerged out of conflict, out of ‘a crisis’, as multiple interlocutors put it. Behind the apparent conflict over land lay another conflict, with much deeper roots, about the future of agroecological research (Chapter 2). The Community Farm is still engaged in a long conversation about the use of public resources to serve the public good. As it is subsumed further into university structures, it becomes less of an opponent to the university and begins to fit into established narratives and visions within the College of Natural Resources.

The Gill Tract remains a boundary object in the dispute between biotechnology and agroecology, as corn researchers continue to share the land with the agroecology-inspired farmers. Yet the potential for the politics of the farm to transcend its boundaries, or the boundaries of the university, appear slight (Chapter 4). Multiple narratives coalesce at the Gill Tract to form a coherent universe, a potential future world rooted in place, yet the powerful narratives beyond its borders occupy much more space and many more contiguous places.

5.1 Activism after the dust settles

This thesis makes a case for paying attention to what happens to activist movements ‘after the dust has settled’. Just as activists at the Gill Tract slowly trickled away after the successes and defeats of the Occupation, so would it be easy to see the most interesting features of the community farm as played out through the processes of contestation over the land. One could argue that founding the community farm allowed the university to defuse oppositional community energy in order to develop the south side of the Gill Tract. Yet, this neglects the very real nature of the ongoing relationship between the university and the community farm. The community farm is a minor player within the university structure, but it is now clearly an actor *within* the university and no longer in direct opposition to the university. By absorbing the community farm and its members, new and old, into its dynamic assemblage, the university is permitting a new style of engagement. Administrators are forced to consider what ‘the mission’ of UC Berkeley is and whether the community farm fits that mission, and they are compelled to relate to the Gill Tract on

a regular basis largely on the community farm's terms: through shared governance conducted in a radically horizontal fashion. This is a partial institutionalization of Occupy Wall Street's spokes councils and horizontal governance structures (Kinna et al. 2019).

Just as it behooves academics to study Occupy in order to understand the ongoing evolution of liberal politics in the United States (Levitin 2015), continuing to research and study the Gill Tract Community Farm allows us to better understand the trajectory of social movements, how they navigate institutionalization and commitment to principles, as well as how local politics can and cannot change large institutions. Not all of such questions can be answered in this text, but I hope that it can serve as a continued step in the ongoing research into a dynamic case.

This also helps to contextualize where David Graeber's influence on this text starts and stops. Graeber is primarily a theorist of organization and action. He is interested in the structure of meetings, and his ethnography of the global justice movement leads from meetings to massive confrontation with police in Montreal. His theoretical work is concerned with understanding how new regimes of value can come into being and how anarchist zones can be (transiently) carved out of the confines of state power and influence.

This thesis, however, is focused on the aftermath. After the massive confrontation with police, the community farm continues to operate, albeit within the structure of the university. Roman-Alcalá (2018) argues that Occupy the Farm never achieved truly 'autonomous' (re: anarchist) politics, but for me, the more interesting question is, what is possible when pure 'autonomy' is not an option (if it ever is, in any given political situation)? While (some) participants at the community farm may espouse anarchism, and the community farm may be governed along horizontal lines, the community farm is nevertheless engaged in a long process of relating to a highly hierarchical, state institution, and trying to influence its students, its practices (including its research practices), and its politics, however slightly. The community farm is a place where other universes of value can be brought into being, but those values can only give a partial understanding of the farm, as it navigates the material-ideological infrastructure of the university in order to maintain its existence.

Thus, while I have relied heavily on Graeber in order to understand place,

narrative, and the participants at the community farm, it is equally important to remember that the community farm is not a pure expression of anarchism, and is wrapped up in the ideological regimes of the university. It is both legible and illegible to administrators, and success may just as well mean securing permanent funding as it does returning the land to Indigenous hands. In fact, for those who engage with the farm, what success means varies immensely from person to person. The Gill Tract Community Farm, and the fate of the Gill Tract, as the relationship with the university continues, evolves, and changes, will continue to provide interesting avenues for research.

5.2 Interesting Avenues

If I had had more time, I would follow up more closely on the scientific conflict present at UC Berkeley between agroecology and biotechnology, both the history of the conflict as well as the ways it has spilled out into the open. At least two professors at UC Berkeley have seen their careers mired in controversy after publishing results counter to the desires of the agro-chemical and biotechnology industries¹. The history of the Division of Biological Control, especially in relation to the large changes in the 1990s that effectively ended the division, deserve a broader treatment alongside the enormous public controversies that flared over the 1998 Novartis partnership and the 2007 partnership with BP². The implications of these conflicts extend broadly into major questions raised in this thesis over the nature of the university, as well as the university's mission in broader society. The funding cuts caused by COVID-19 only raise the stakes of these questions³

Similarly, a broader treatment of urban food politics is warranted than I am able to give in Chapter 4. Again, COVID-19 changes who has had access to food and what labor possibilities are on the table for low income workers. Understanding how land-based agricultural and ecological politics connect with urban labor politics—centered around transforming the food system—is necessary for envi-

¹See: Aviv (2014), Dalton (2003, 2004b), Delborne (2008), and Press and Washburn (2000)

²See: Dalton (2004a), Democracy Now (2007), Neumann (2015), and Press and Washburn (2000)

³See: Doidge and Doyle (2020) and Hubler (2020). Budgets are being slashed across the world in the wake of economic slumps caused by the pandemic.

sioning a ‘Just Transition’⁴. A good theoretical treatment would involve understanding how to organize across supply chains. Food is globalized, so that farmers are distanced from those who deliver, prepare, and serve food, and this distance changes the dynamics of politics. This last section connects the Gill Tract to land-based movements worldwide, and displays the kinds of networks that are forming and need to be formed if ecological catastrophe is to be averted.

5.3 Blockadia and the *Zone à Défendre*

As humanity confronts the climate crisis, more and more protest movements are appearing that root themselves in place and connect themselves to land, emphasizing an ethic counter to the extractive ethic of modern capitalism. Naomi Klein calls this loose-knit network of place-based activism *Blockadia*. She writes that Blockadia “is not a specific location on a map but rather a roving transnational conflict zone that is cropping up with increasing frequency and intensity wherever extractive projects are attempting to dig and drill, whether for open-pit mines, or gas fracking, or tar sands oil pipelines” (Klein 2014, pp. 294–295).

The Zone à Défendre (ZAD) in Notre-Dame des Landes, France, represents one local node of Blockadia. Established on farmland that was set to be developed for an airport, drawing environmental activists who felt that the airport threatened protected wetlands, the ZAD was established “against the airport, and against its world” (ZAD 2021). First proposed in the 1960s, local residents opposed the development of the airport again and again until in 2010, when they invited activists to squat the land to prevent development ambitions that had heated up again. At that point, the ZAD became a symbol of resistance in France, to the state and to climate change, as activists set up more than 100 improvised buildings on more than 2000 acres, and began farming the land in common, using broadly agro-ecological principles (Rialland-Juin 2016). There were multiple attempts at governmental eviction, in 2010 and 2012, until in 2018 the French government sent in more than 2000 police officers to clear the land of its radical occupiers (Duplay 2020).

As one Zadiste wrote about the French government’s 2018 eviction attempt,

⁴For more on the concept of ‘Just Transition’, see: Evans and Phelan (2016), Healy and Barry (2017), McCauley and Heffron (2018), and Newell and Mulvaney (2013)

“The battle lines were made clear, it was not about bringing ‘law and order’ back to the zone, but a battle between private property, and those who share worlds of capitalism, against the commons. The battle of the ZAD is a battle for the future, one that we cannot lose” (ZADForever 2018).

Across France, other Zones to Defend have sprung up in emulation of the area in Notre-Dame des Landes. Tens of thousands of people have participated in mass actions to oppose government attempts to evict the squatters. In 2018, the airport project was officially canceled.

All of this has a certain harmonic resonance with the Gill Tract and the community farm. Why can one place, one region of farmland, arouse so much activity, even activity across the world? It must be part of a global movement or arouse feelings that extend far beyond the community in which it is embedded. And why continue farming after the building has been complete or the project canceled? Because the activists were always against more than just a local manifestation of capitalism. They were also against ‘the world’, or the universe of value, of the construction project.

Permaculturists and agroecologists see the world as inherently interconnected and interdependent (Holmgren 2002; Puig de la Bellacasa 2015). Global ecological problems mount as what Naomi Klein calls “extractivism” continues to intensify (Klein 2014). Each node of Blockadia – linked through the internet, amplified through the internet, decentralized but mutually reinforcing – confronts a specific local problem linked to the global problems confronting the world: soil degradation, climate change, mass extinction, collapse of insect populations.

The Gill Tract is just one node in an interconnected global movement, a social movement network comprised of what Routledge (2013) calls “convergence spaces”. From La Via Campesina, to the Zapatistas, to the Zadistes, to the pipeline blockaders across North America, this distributed network, though hard to characterize, seeks a greater attachment to place and a valuing of land beyond its market potential. It seeks a renegotiation of our relationships to ourselves and to the land we live on.

Back in 2001, Naomi Klein wrote about the alter-globalization movement:

Thousands of groups today are all working against forces whose com-

mon thread is what might broadly be described as the privatization of every aspect of life, and the transformation of every activity and value into a commodity. We often speak of the privatization of education, of healthcare, of natural resources. But the process is much vaster. It includes the way powerful ideas are turned into advertising slogans and public streets into shopping malls; new generations being target-marketed at birth; schools being invaded by ads; basic human necessities like water being sold as commodities; basic labour rights being rolled back; genes are patented and designer babies loom; seeds are genetically altered and bought; politicians are bought and altered.

At the same time there are oppositional threads, taking form in many different campaigns and movements. The spirit they share is a radical reclaiming of the commons. As our communal spaces—town squares, streets, schools, farms, plants—are displaced by the ballooning marketplace, a spirit of resistance is taking hold around the world. People are reclaiming bits of nature and of culture, and saying ‘this is going to be public space’ (Klein 2001).

The Gill Tract Community Farm is a dynamic part of the ongoing attempt to reclaim the commons, to oppose capitalism, and to create a new world in the shell of the old. There is much to be learned by observing how the project develops, the potentials made possible or actualized by its existence, and the constraints it encounters.

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