In War and Peas, Comrades at Farms:
Political Intentionality and Construction of Space in a Montreal Farm Collective.

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Abstract

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The central fieldwork site for this research was a farm collective called La Grange, located outside of Montreal in the municipality of Laval, Quebec. This research aims to explore the dynamics of collective organization and the factors involved in the construction of shared political and physical space as they apply to this particular farm project and the changes it has undergone over the course of the three farming seasons during which participant observation was conducted. The theoretical framework for this research follows a trajectory that is in the tradition of the anthropology of social movements, with the concept of prefigurative politics providing a theoretical backdrop for discussions of the practices and political orientations relevant to La Grange and its participants. Prefiguration, and in particular its capacity to translate political theory and ideology into action, provides rich soil for discussions of political intentionality, collective organizing and power dynamics, DIY (Do It Yourself) ethos, anarchist theory, organic farming practices and food justice issues.

Acknowledgements

This work is dedicated to Hugh McCormack (May 29, 1935 – Sep 4, 2018)
Thank you for what you built.

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- Stuart Caldwell

Introduction

It's a bright summer day as I stare out the bus window, watching quietly as the sterile greys of Montreal's omnipresent concrete and asphalt gradually give way to the palliative earth tones of the vibrant green thickets and uneven patchwork farmland of Laval.

"How many of these crops are indigenous? What did this land look like before European contact?" I ponder to myself, "how did it become this?"

My abstraction is cut short as the bus turns a corner on to the residential street of Milles-Iles. I gather my bags and move to the front of the nearly vacant bus and scan the passing scenery intently for the tell-tale golf course sign that prompts me for my upcoming stop.

Stepping out into the hot summer sun, I am greeted by the half-cursive, black-on-white lettering of the beloved "La Grange" sign as it stoically watches over a trio of bicycles in various states of disrepair, a half dozen vintage golf bags, and what appears to be a ladder for a swimming pool. I wave to Margaret, who is standing outside the door of her bazaar speaking with a customer and start down the packed brown earth of a tire tread, dodging the pools created by the leaky hoses that provided libation to the thirsty denizens of the greens garden earlier that morning. Turning the corner past the workshop, I am hit with a gust of wind that brings with it the heady odour of the giant pile of cow manure residing at the far end of the beds to my right. I fumble around for the "secret key" and manage it into the padlock that is protected from the elements by a strip of weather worn tire. I throw open the barn door under audible protest from the hinges, unload my gear, and change into my dirt stained farm clothes.

This is La Grange, a peri-urban farm located north of Montreal in the municipality of Laval and the site and subject of my research. In its current incarnation, it is known variously as the La Grange Farm Collective and the La Grange Farm Project. It has been

in operation since the spring of 2014 and has seen numerous changes in membership over the three years since its inception.

The Farm

The farm itself boasts about 15000 square feet of growing space behind and adjacent to Margaret and Hugh MacCormack's house. The 90 foot long greenhouse that was bought at a discount by the farm's founder Seamus is aromatic with the tangy, herbal odour of tomato plants and walking around inside gives the auditory impression that it is always raining on account of the untold scores of flying insects that ceaselessly bump up against the opaque plastic in countless tiny, vain attempts to escape the stifling heat of the interior. The frame of the greenhouse is slightly gnarled, owing as much to the elements as to its second-hand nature, and here and there one can see the red of the sealing tape covering the numerous holes in the plastic that inevitably occur after three seasons of use.

There are another three beds behind the greenhouse, two of which are separated by a motley row of perennial brush that constantly threatens to encroach upon the arable land and which requires fairly frequent regulation with machetes to keep at bay. Behind the gardens there is a path leading to a clearing known as the "enchanted grove" with chairs and a fire pit where meals are eaten and tents are erected during overnight stays. Connected to the grove by a small bridge made of urban-foraged plywood and construction pallets is the medicinal garden – the last stop before you run into hole #7 of the St Francois Golf Course. In the fall and winter, one can see clear through to the golf course but during most of the growing season the foliage obscures the garden, delineating the world of rich people golfing on chemical-soaked land from the rugged and haphazard DIY (Do It Yourself) world of La Grange.

The structure which serves as the barn, the bazaar, and Hugh and Margaret's home was a club house for this golf course in another life. The barn is of considerable size and has a stairway to a second level above the bazaar that is home to the "office" (which is an office in name only) and is used as storage space for a truly bewildering array of objects.

Old, dusty furniture and an assortment of gardening supplies rest aside boxes full of everything from out-dated French biology textbooks to an old costume of an alien that was used in a science fiction movie Hugh and Margaret's son made in film school in the 1970s.

Below is Margaret's bazaar, itself full of an equally impressive melange of objects, many of which are approaching antique status. We would always joke that "if it was made before the turn of the 21st century, you can find it in Margaret's bazaar". When La Grange members are working, Margaret divides her time between caring for her infirm husband Hugh, working the garden, and attending to the customers perusing the controlled chaos of the bazaar. She is over 80 years old but is more active by a large margin than many people my age and is colloquially referred to by the farmhands as "Grandma Tank".

The working area of the barn is constantly dusty and has a distinct aroma of aged wood. A herb drying rack made out of old lumber and window screens accompanies a constellation of the most used tools that adorn the wall to one side of the barn door, while the other sports a fridge and a creaky table cluttered with forgotten personal objects that volunteers have left behind over the more than three years the project has spanned thus far. While the barn was cleared out and thoroughly organized during the 2015 season to hold an event, the back of the barn is currently inhabited by all manners of objects, from a broken moped to a chandelier, most of which are destined for Haiti to provide earthquake relief at some vague point in the future.

In front of the barn doors, there is a wooden washing station comprised of a bathtub and a wooden frame covering the taut straining vinyl that vegetables are placed on to dry. Across from the washing station, there is an old rusted metal table where meals are cooked on a classic-green Coleman propane stove with a penchant for either going out constantly or torching your food to a crisp.

Behind this table is a beautiful (but increasingly invasive) row of Sumac trees that provide delineation for another contrast, one which will be discussed at length moving forward – this time between the rough and tumble soul of La Grange and the cold and calculated rows of the industrial farm next door.

Research Questions and Introducing the Theory

At the start of this research, the focus was to be on non-industrial food production, specifically the practices of peri-urban agriculture and the individual motivations of the participants who come to be involved in such projects. The study of La Grange in particular was originally intended to be a conduit through which I could enter into discussions on food politics and agricultural practices. However, it became apparent fairly early in the ethnographic research that food politics and agriculture were just the most salient aspects of La Grange, and there was far more going than just people growing vegetables. As we will see in the chapters to come, researching and immersing myself in La Grange in all its chaotic glory urged me to shine the limelight primarily on the politics of the space instead of its productive capacity or agricultural practices. The above being said, the primary questions that this research aims to investigate are twofold:

1) What are the factors and variables at work in projects like La Grange whose aim it is to construct politically driven collective spaces, what precisely are those political motivations, and by what means are those politics expressed and embodied?

2) What are La Grange's goals, how have these goals been shaped over time, and what are the means they are employing to reach these goals?

The politics of La Grange is dynamic and not static and is constructed through political orientations shared to various degrees by the participants, the most salient of which are the ethos of DIY (Do it Yourself), the principles of anarchism, and the concept of prefigurative politics, all three of which will also serve as my primary theoretical

frameworks. This shared political orientation is fluid and is constantly being renegotiated based on a host of factors such as the fluctuating membership and volunteer base, the varied level of involvement of said members/volunteers, and financial and environmental circumstance. These factors will make frequent appearances throughout this work.

The choice of theoretical frameworks owes simply to the fact that the ethnographic research conducted revealed anarchism, prefiguration, and DIY as the political outlooks most clearly expressed at La Grange and of the most congruence to the political identities of its participants. Moreover, these three frameworks were chosen in part because each in their own way is both a theory, and an approach to translating theory into action, a notion that has clear resonance with the people involved in projects such as La Grange.

One could also have analyzed the goings on at La Grange through a quantitative lens. How much food does La Grange actually produce? How many people could it feasibly provide food for? What are the nuts and bolts of its infrastructure and finances? These are questions I had at one point considered addressing but, as we will see in the upcoming chapters, focusing on such matters would not be true to the spirit of La Grange and does not add anything of significant import to the analysis at hand.

Whether its participants wear it on their sleeves or not, the La Grange Farm Collective is and has always been more interested in politics, direct action, and creating functional, prefigurative space than it has been about production and money. These kinds of quantitative matters, while by no means inconsequential to La Grange, are of secondary concern to its participants. For this reason, quantitative analysis similarly inhabits a peripheral role in this research and has been eschewed in favor of what Haiven and Khasnabish (2014) describe as "committed, engaged social science practice", the trajectory of which is defined as much by ethnographic data as it is by the philosophy and theory unearthed by said data.

This being said, before getting too far into the nuances of politics and theory, it is important to set the table with an overview of some of the different practices and

mentalities which inform how food is produced. This will provide a backdrop against which the functioning of the La Grange project can be understood. There is no shortage of literature already written on the subject but it nonetheless merits discussion, as it would be a fool's errand to attempt to discuss a farm without actually discussing farming and food production. So it is that preceding the denser chapters will be a history of La Grange, and introduction of the characters that inhabit the space, and a more detailed unpacking of the theory in chapter 1, followed by a dedicated chapter on food issues.

In addition to it being a space to express the political leanings of its participants, La Grange also attempts to embody a set of attitudes towards food production which are diametrically opposed to what are seen by the participants as the reckless and harmful practices used in large scale, industrial agriculture. As such, the first part of chapter 2 will be focused on the problematics of industrial agriculture, tracing its history and discussing its successes and failures, with the ultimate aim of providing a framework allowing us to delineate its practices and attitudes from those of La Grange and other projects of its ilk.

Having taken a course in organic farming in 1976, Margaret and Hugh set the tone for how food was produced at La Grange long before this current incarnation of La Grange was born. Referring to Montreal North Library's copy of Katharine Osgood Foster's *Organic Gardening*[1] as "the bible", Margaret and Hugh were firm believers in organic farming from the very beginning. However, while many of the practices of food production at present day La Grange undeniably take their cues from organic methods, many members of La Grange are aware of the contradictions and complications of what is often referred to as the "organic movement", and, as we will see, many are reluctant to wholly identify with it.

An embattled and polarizing term, the word "organic" has a galaxy of different definitions, the content of which depends almost entirely upon whom you ask. Over the

[1] They "renewed it every two weeks for an entire summer" according to Margaret.

years everyone from lobbyists, governmental regulatory bodies, and marketers, to renegade farmers, DIYers, and the counterculture of the 1960s have all taken a turn trying to define what exactly it means for a food or a method of production to fall under the umbrage of the nebulous term "organic". When various members of the farm were put to the question of what they considered "organic" to be, the responses varied considerably. The last part of chapter 2 will interrogate the term "organic", from a variety of perspectives, discussing both its usefulness as a concept, and the limits of its practice.

Lastly, I have also chosen to include this chapter because it represents a body of knowledge of which most La Grange members, particularly those with extensive agricultural experience, are aware of and have engaged with. This body of knowledge has also served as a point of convergence for the project, one that brought the individuals comprising it together and provided a space for them to, both literally and figuratively, experiment "on the ground" with other kinds of politics.

Following this, chapter 3 will enter into a discussion of prefigurative politics. Prefigurative politics can be defined as "a political orientation based on the premise that the ends a social movement[2] achieves are fundamentally shaped by the means it employs" (Leach, 2013, p.1), with the commitment to this alignment of means and ends in turn being shaped largely by "the central ideals of the movement" (Leach, 2013, p.1). In the case of La Grange, this "central ideal" is anarchism.

As a concept in the social sciences, prefiguration saw a good deal of use in the work of social movement scholars, particularly those focusing on the alterglobalization movement. In recent years however, it has all but fallen off the map in social movement research and, after laying down the groundwork of the theory and exploring its applications in studying other concepts, part of the task of chapter 3 is to see how well it has held up during the rather bleak period following the effective end of

[2] It is worth noting that La Grange cannot accurately be described as a "social movement". I address this below.

alterglobalization as a large scale social movement.

While almost none of those interviewed for this thesis knew what prefiguration was at the outset of the interview process, I nevertheless found that once they learned what it meant, they engaged with the term in a number of surprising and distinctive ways.

Why I chose to apply a term that was not being consciously practiced by the participants at La Grange, admittedly had much to do my own interest in anthropologists such as Graeber (2009), Maeckelbergh (2009) and Juris (2008) who employed the term to varying degrees in their respective studies of the alterglobalization movement. Some of those who came to be heavily involved at La Grange were long time activists who were politically active during this period and as such, I found it curious that they were not familiar with prefigurative theory. The question then followed: was it possible that these individuals had been practicing some manner of prefiguration at La Grange without even being aware of it?

Moreover, I found it intriguing that their engagement with the term tended to be couched in individual terms, despite the tendency in literature such as Breines' analysis of the New Left (1989) and the aforementioned analyses of alterglobalization, to apply prefiguration to large scale social movements. This in turn compelled me to investigate how well the term might function as an analytical tool when applied on a scale as small as an individual and their particular motivations, and it is with this frame of mind that I have attempted to employ prefiguration in my analysis of La Grange.

A DIY (Do it Yourself) ethos plays a large role in almost every aspect of the farm's day-to-day functioning, and making do with what there is and experimenting with different approaches to farming is the norm at La Grange. Perhaps the most ethnographic chapter in this thesis, chapter 4 explores the relationship between DIY and anarchism and uses ethnographic content to illustrate how DIY functions (or does not function as is sometimes the case) within the context of growing vegetables, building infrastructure, and maintaining a working farm.

As I will discuss in chapter 5, almost all of participants at La Grange, past and present, either politically identify as anarchists or, at the very least, respect and sympathize with many of its core principals. As such, the political philosophy of anarchism inflects the politics of La Grange to a considerable degree and manifests itself in a number of interesting ways, from how power is wielded between participants (both human and non-human) to how concepts such as "collective", "individual", "organization", "power", "space" and even "agriculture" are deployed and understood by the participants. As such, Chapter 5 will spend some time defining and discussing anarchism with the goal of establishing it as both a body of knowledge and as set of principles that inform political action.

This will be followed by an examination of several debates and concepts which have come up frequently throughout anarchism's history and which have been pondered at great length both by anarchists, and by scholars such as the anthropologists who tended to "travel in the same circles" (Graeber, 2004, p. 13). This will include a look at formal and informal organizational structures, the concept of "space", power dynamics, and play. Through all of this, chapter 5 will aim to discern what role some of these anarchist principals play at La Grange, whether or not La Grange could be considered an anarchist project, and to what degree it has or has not found success in enacting these principals.

In the end, one of the central goals of this research has been to probe the ways in which these many factors and various individual prefigurations and political commitments overlap and contribute to a shared construction of space in terms of both the literal, physical space of the farm and in the figurative dimensions of political orientation, collectivity, and community.

At its core, this is the story of a "space that should not exist" as one participant puts it, and the people who hang out there to work and "play in the dirt". But it is also a story about anarchism, and the way those who practice it can find refuge from a cold and atomizing world and build nodes of resistance, however small, against the myriad

injustices that exist within it. It is a story about the trials of self-reliance and the hardships of redefining the relationship that we have with the land, set against the backdrop of deeply entrenched systems of oppression and exploitation that are derisive, if not outright hostile towards such hopelessly idealistic notions. But, perhaps most importantly, it is about how such people construct a shared but often unspoken narrative and together create a space-that-should-not-be where they can, insofar as it is possible, put into practice the things they believe in. Also, they grow vegetables.

The Methodology

The research methodology employed was in the spirit of engaged scholarship and data was obtained through a combination of well over 300 hours of on-site participant observation conducted from May 2015 until November 2016, coupled with a series of semi-structured, informal interviews with a number of individuals from the collective. Over the more than two years[3] of sustained engagement with La Grange, I was afforded the opportunity to see both the physical transformation of the farm and the progression of the organizational structure and political commitments of the project.

The participant observation component of this research consisted of working alongside the other members of the collective at the farm, attending any meetings and events the collective facilitates, and of conversations and interactions with many of the members in various social settings outside of the physical setting of the farm, as many whom I have worked with have also become good friends whom I socialize with on a fairly regular basis.

The 10 interviews conducted were loosely structured, with each taking about 60 to 90 minutes and were conducted in a variety of settings. For the majority of the interviews, a document with a number of questions was distributed to the interviewees in advance of the interview so that they could prepare for the kinds of questions they might be asked. This pool of questions was nominally tailored for each individual but was revised after

[3] It should be noted that I had been a volunteer at La Grange for some time before I selected it as the site for my thesis and began my official research.

each interview to include new questions or unforeseen directions of inquiry that arose from previous interviews. The interview data was carefully indexed by topic/theme, with the most relevant excerpts transcribed fully.

In addition to the aforementioned informal structured interviews, there was additional data gleaned from unstructured interviews taking the form of informal conversations conducted quite literally "in the field" while weeding or seeding or during the often long commutes to and from the farm. It came to be that it was often in these moments where farm members articulated some of the most candid and interesting insights.

In terms of additional data, it is also worth noting that La Grange also organizes itself internally largely through a riseup listserv where work days are planned, meeting minutes disseminated to the group, and updates on what work was completed and what work still needs to be done are spread to its members, both current and former. This auxiliary data proved valuable for cataloguing the timeline of the seasons and the activities of the members and also allowed me to reflect on some of the more interesting conversations that occurred online.

Chapter 1 - Sowing Seeds:
History, Characters, and Theoretical Framework

The History

The farm itself has a long history. Known as La Grange by the large white sign in the front yard, it is located near Terrebonne, Quebec on land now owned by Margaret and Hugh MacCormack.

The structure which now serves as both the living space for Hugh and Margaret, the bazaar run by Margaret, and the barn, begins its story in the 1930s when it was built by a Terrebonne family and the land was used as a dairy farm until sometime around 1968, when the land was sold to eventually become the Club De Golf St Francois golf course and the structure was used as the course clubhouse.

After about 4 years, the golf course owners built another clubhouse and sold the original and the land around it. The new owner used the former clubhouse to sell Bombardier Ski Doos for 2-3 years. Upon closing his Ski Doo venture sometime around 1975, the owner filled the parking lot left over from the clubhouse days of the golf course with about 2 feet of soil and erected 8 greenhouses, converting the property into agricultural farmland that grew mainly tomatoes and cucumbers. This individual used as his water source, water connected to the local adjacent water filtration plant (basically untreated river water) and, consequently, at some point in the late 1970s, he suffered a near total crop failure due to disease and sometime thereafter died penniless of a heart attack. Being completely bankrupt and in severe tax debt, his family refused his legacy and the Quebec government repossessed the land with the intent of selling it to recover the unpaid taxes.

However, during this period, interest rates were near 20% and nobody could afford to buy the land, by now abandoned and in a state of disrepair, Margaret and Hugh moved into the house and began to revitalize the property, growing tomatoes, cucumbers and melons. The property then passed hands once more to the credit union Caisse Populaire

Desjardins, who allowed Margaret and Hugh to stay on account of the work they had done to the land until, when interest rates dropped to 13.5% in October of 1981, Hugh and Margaret bought the 2 acres of land for a relatively modest sum. They continued to grow produce on the land for another 3-4 years until Hugh was unable to farm. Gradually the former farmland became overgrown until sometime in 2013, when Margaret and Hugh's son Donal began to clear the overgrowth with the intent of it once again becoming farmland.

The bulk of this research was conducted during the 2016 farming season, the third season of the farm's most recent incarnation. After moving to Montreal from Vancouver Island and receiving his grandparent's blessing to officially start up a new farming project in 2014, Margaret and Hugh's grandson Seamus spent the better part of the first season landscaping and digging the trenches that would come to be the garden beds. Although Donal had expressed interest in partnering with Seamus to start up the farm, he was unable to commit the necessary time to fully partner, but still offered his support, installing a rainwater catchment, helping him to dig tree stumps out of the beds and remove the dilapidated greenhouses and other remnants.

The idea of having the bulk of the labour being done by volunteers[4] was a key structural aspect of the project from its initial conception, and this reliance on volunteer engagement initially[5] sought to bring the project closer to the various communities with which it had connections. There were however, few constants, and Seamus still had to rely a great deal on a fluctuating and somewhat sporadic volunteer labour pool, one that consisted mostly of his friends, in order to keep things moving forward. In the first 2 ½ months of the project (mid-April to late June of 2014) Seamus had recorded that of the 1000 hours of labour put into the project, 400 of them were done by volunteers.

[4] It is hard to provide an exact number of individuals who volunteered at La Grange during its first 2 years, as I was not engaged with the project as a researcher at this point and Seamus could not even offer a vague figure. Seamus is usually fairly good with numbers so if he cannot remember, it was probably a considerable number.

[5] I speak here specifically of Seamus's time "building the project". Seamus put a good deal of time into creating ties with communities in Laval and Hochelaga. Although these ties were not necessarily severed once he left, none of the most active members lived in Laval or Hochelaga and the maintenance of these connections was largely neglected.

In the winter of 2015, Seamus sought a co-facilitator for the project in his friend Jack. Jack, a mother of one and already involved in another farm project, the Coop Les Jardins de la Resistance in the nearby municipality of Ormstown, suffered a back injury which prevented her from being involved in any more than a peripheral way as the growing season came closer. While Jack helped a good deal initially by working with Seamus to plan the crops and germinate transplants, as the season progressed her involvement diminished and Seamus was unable to find someone with a comparable level of investment to help in the day-to-day responsibilities of the farm. Again, he was to rely largely on volunteers and friends to keep the project afloat.

The second season saw the project growing a staggering quantity of vegetables and herbs in the 6 arable plots. Almost every one of the 40-50 foot beds in these plots were used to grow an impressive diversity of edible plant life in the 2015 season including squash, string beans, 3 types of tomatoes, 2 types of kale, 3 types of zucchini, 3 types of cucumber, swiss chard, several varieties of lettuce, spinach, carrots, beets, green onions, radishes, leek, garlic, 2 types of peas, and rhubarb. The herb garden in the back of the farm also grew a plethora of medicinal and cooking herbs including, but not limited to, basil, calendula, valerian root, borage, sage, mint, chamomile, nettle, and oregano. This produce found mouths not just in the volunteers who were encouraged to take as much as they could, but also through a CFA (Community Funded Agriculture) *paniers* program, which provided food and medicinal herbs to a large number of Montreal residents, mostly in the neighbourhood of Hochelaga where Seamus was living at the time. During the 2015 season, Seamus was successful enough in selling produce to reimburse himself for the start-up money he put in and set up a “war chest” of around seven hundred dollars for the farm to use in future years.

In addition to the *paniers*, the second season also saw the purchase and installation of the greenhouse, the construction of a washing station, and the installation of 2 rainwater runoff tubs. Seeing that the farm would be able to continue in his absence, Seamus moved back to British Columbia and left the now functional farm land open for the 2016

season to the pool of volunteers and friends who had been involved in La Grange's first 2 seasons.

On December 26th, 2016, a meeting was held in Margaret and Hugh's living room to discuss the future of the farmland and the 2016 La Grange collective was formed. The farm has continued in Seamus's absence, transitioning over the 2016 season into a proper collective. However, having none among the membership who could commit the sheer number of hours that Seamus was able to, vegetable production at La Grange was scaled back considerably, and the *paniers* program that was responsible for a large part of the farm's income during the 2015 season was discontinued. Efforts were made during 2016 to bring awareness of the project to radical communities in Montreal in the hopes of getting more people involved and to this end La Grange became a QPIRG Concordia solidarity group. This networking was met with limited success and with many of the existing members heavily involved in other projects, work, school or family life, La Grange's de-facto goals for the season wound up being largely oriented towards maintaining the land, infrastructure, and collective bank account.

Events to kick-start involvement in 2016 were planned, such as a film screening in the barn about food issues, but were hamstrung both by members' commitments to other matters and by a lack of barn space. This latter problem was primarily on account of a deal which Margaret had made with a man who was collecting materials for eventual shipment to Haiti to provide disaster relief. This individual was initially permitted a section of the barn to use as storage, but gradually took over the majority of the barn space with various odds and ends much of which, as of this writing, have yet to find their way to Haiti. Financially, La Grange broke even in 2016 through a haphazard combination of sales to food co=ops like Le Frigo Vert and community-based non-profits like the NDG Food Depot, and on-site sales that were conducted by Margaret, who sold La Grange produce in her bazaar.

On April the 8th, 2017 the collective reconvened in Margaret and Hugh's kitchen, welcoming some new members, and plotting a course for the 2017 season.

The Cast Of Characters

There were too many faces to count who have put in time working at La Grange and I never had the opportunity to meet many of the people who had helped during the first two seasons but below are brief introductions of Seamus, Margaret 7 members of the collective who were active during the 2015 and/or 2016 seasons.

Dark Lord Jay: The busiest person I know on welfare. Born and raised in the Pointe aux Trembles neighbourhood of Montreal to parents of Haitian decent. Very active in the anarchist, antifa (anti-fascist), radical media, and APOC (Anarchist People of Color) scenes in Montreal, Jay is a lifelong, hard-core Star Wars fan who can relate anything and everything to Sith philosophy in 6 degrees or less. He did an undergraduate degree in film studies at UQAM and has been involved at La Grange since 2015.

Luke: Ontario born, Luke is an experienced activist who spent time living in British Columbia where he initially met Seamus. Luke has recently become a father and has been concerned for a number of years with learning the skills to be self-sufficient. He makes a living primarily as a carpenter but is handy in more than a few trades and in the 2016 season he was the most experienced farmer at La Grange. He really, REALLY thinks that squash is great and is more than happy to tell you why. We also play Magic: The Gathering together.

Margaret: Seamus's grandmother, Margaret, was born in the UK and emigrated to Canada in 1969. She and her husband Hugh started the Montreal chapter of the community building group the Foundation for Community Encouragement. She also does escorting for prisoners on day passes and regularly participates in the Open Door program, a bible study and sharing circle for former inmates. She is over 80 years old but you would never guess it, as she has more energy than many 30 year olds that I know.

Marianne: Montreal born, Seamus's partner since 2014, and my former roommate, Marianne developed an interest in farming after the 2012 student strike in Montreal, in which she was heavily involved. She began a farming project with some friends that lasted for less than two seasons before dissolving. She met Seamus in 2015 and shared his passion for farming and radical politics and his vision for La Grange. She has large-scale organic farming experience, which she had mixed feelings about, referring to it as "industrial organic". She thinks that sometimes, organic carrots "look like entangled queer bodies" and currently lives in Duncan, British Colombia with Seamus.

Marc: Ontario born, Marc also knows Luke and Seamus from living in Victoria. He had previously studied sociology but found it not to his liking and currently studying to become an osteopath in Montreal. On the side, he is an avid herbalist with an interest in wild edibles and can tell you more about wild plants than almost anyone I know. It is for these latter reasons that I affectionately refer to him as the "Earth Wizard of La Grange".

Seamus: Margaret and Hugh's grandson and the founder of the current incarnation of La Grange, which was started in 2014. He left the project after two years to return to Victoria, BC where he was born. He is an enthusiastic rock climber and a self described workaholic. I have often referred to him facetiously and good-heartedly as "Glorious Leader" even though he probably hates it.

Alex: Alex has an academic background in agronomy and supports herself and her daughter financially by working on various, mostly organic, farms around Montreal. As such, she has extensive knowledge of both large and small-scale organic farming and was active at La Grange in the 2016 season. She attended the meetings but her schedule seldom lined up with mine and, consequently, I hardly ever worked at La Grange with her.

German: A professional photographer originally from Venezuela, German was Marianne's roommate for about a year, and worked at La Grange during the 2015 season.

The Theoretical Frameworks

To elaborate on the theories that will be used to examine La Grange, the concept of prefigurative politics is central to understanding the other themes explored and threads of it will come up frequently throughout this work. Prefigurative politics, a theory that first emerged in the 1970s in the work of political scientist Carl Boggs, and which enjoyed a renaissance during the alterglobalization movement of the 1990s and early 2000s, is a useful framework through which to discuss the intentionality and motivations of La Grange participants. A large part of chapter 3 will be devoted to teasing out the nuances and limits of prefiguration but for the moment it will suffice to use an operational definition provided by Marianne Maeckelberg in her 2009 book *The Will of the Many,* wherein she states that a hallmark of prefigurative political orientation can be seen as the practice of "removing the temporal distinction between the struggle in the present towards a goal in the future; instead, the struggle and the goal, the real and the ideal, become one in the present" (Maeckelberg, 2009, p. 66). Maeckleberg's wording in this definition is important and was chosen so as to illustrate that although prefigurative politics is sometimes defined and discussed in terms of it being a group orientation or a characteristic of a specific social movement[6], it has just as much of a capacity to inform and define politics on a personal or individual level.

Indeed, prefiguration was chosen as a theoretical framework in part because it is a highly adaptable concept in terms of what kinds of activities and ideologies it can be used to describe. Within the context of exploring how a collective space is constructed, prefiguration offers a flexible framework that can make lucid the interrelationships of political intent between the seemingly heterogeneous. Deployed in different ways, prefiguration can also be used to look at some of the tensions that arise in this work such as those between the individual and the communal and between different, and often competing, conceptions of organizing.

[6] This is, for instance, how prefiguration is most often deployed by Boggs.

Prefiguration is also well suited in this context towards discussing anarchism and the efforts at practicing anarchist principles which I have observed during my involvement with the project. Many of the ways in which the vast majority of contemporary societies are organized and power wielded within them, are not informed by these principles. If a world guided by anarchist principles is for the moment out of reach, prefiguration is a way of looking at these efforts that gives them meaning. Rather than these individuals viewing their actions as ineffectual exercises in futility, prefiguration instead allows them to see these actions as generative, a term which will be explored in depth in chapter 3.

Boggs in several of his works discusses the failures of numerous leftist movements throughout various points in history as owing largely to the inability of these movements to reconcile the *instrumental* with the *prefigurative*. Instrumentalism, in Boggs' parlance, refers to movements or practices of movements that concern themselves with "the struggle to conquer and maintain political power" (Boggs, 1977, p. 359). This instrumentalist view, unsurprisingly, often finds itself in tension with prefigurative approaches.

Those in the prefigurative camp often note that the instrumentalist approach demonstrates a tendency to reproduce the structures of oppression that purportedly it aims to abolish, while prefigurative approaches exhibit a "spontaneism [that] can be confined to its own immediacy without the intervention of an 'external element'" (Boggs, 1977, p. 383). Indeed, this is a perennial problem of leftist movements and a discussion of these problematics finds purchase in some of the contradictions that can be seen at La Grange. As such, there will a brief discussion of instrumentalism and prefiguration in chapter 3.

It is also worth noting that prefiguration is a hermeneutical device insofar as I have endeavoured to employ it in this research. At times during this analysis I use an interpretive lens to take a long view of prefiguration. If someone is engaging in an activity that they perceive to have political meaning, then it is not unreasonable to interpret that, at least on some level, that activity is commensurate with some political goal or vision of a better world. This is even more likely to be true if the person or people

in question are activists, as doing an activity in the here and now with a political end goal in mind is more or less exactly what activists do (Saunders, 2013).

This is not to discount the whole host of other or accompanying reasons why a person might be doing something. Maybe they find inherent pleasure in a particular activity. Perhaps there is some manner of cost/benefit analysis at work. The point is that prefigurative analysis is simply another way of viewing and interpreting actors in action that is no more inherently correct or incorrect than explaining actions as the product of play or utility.

Moreover, for good or ill, what anthropologists do with their ethnographic data is often largely hermeneutic. As Vattimo and Zabala (2011) observe: "when cultural anthropology took shape as a discipline, it dissolved the myths of humanity's linear progress guided by the 'more civilized' Western countries and allowed other interpretations to come forward" (Vattimo & Zabala, p. 78). As the anthropologist cannot ever know *exactly* what another person's thoughts are at any given moment, nor how, or in what directions, those thoughts will change over time or be translated into actions, we must often rely on our interpretations of their words and actions if we are to postulate anything at all about them. My interpretation that La Grange is effectively a prefigurative project, even if it does not expressly identify as such, is rooted in the Geertzian premise that social action is meaningful and intentional, in this case politically so. This prefigurative interpretation is a way in which the politically intentional anarchism of La Grange can "find articulation" (Geertz, 1973, p. 17) and one may then view the other considerations of DIY ethos and organic idealism as my ethnographic attempts at thickening this description.

To both ground my research somewhere between Geertz's impossible objectivity and unfettered sentiment (Geertz, 1973, p.30), and to bridge the gap between interpretation and politics, my employment of hermeneutics in this work aims to be in the vein of the work of the aforementioned Gianni Vattimo and Santiago Zabala in their 2011 *Hermeneutic Communism: From Heidegger to Marx.* Although there is no direct

dialogue with Vattimo and Zabala in this thesis, the spirit in which the research was conducted owes much to reflections upon their stated belief that "politics cannot be founded on scientific and rational grounds but only on interpretation, history, and event" (Vattimo & Zabala, p. 2), as well as their discussions of "interpretation as anarchy" and the potential capacity of hermeneutics to provide the oppressed and marginalized with a means by which they may reinterpret notions of "history" and "the world" (Vattimo & Zabala, p. 2).

The DIY attitude that shapes much of the day-to-day activity at La Grange and its heuristic potential will be explored largely through Kevin Wher's synthesis of the classic Marxist notions of alienation and mystification as they are applied to Jurgen Habermas' formulation of the competing social spheres of the *lifeworld* and the *system.* This research will in the end also aim to underscore the affinities shared between prefiguration, anarchist theory and the ethos of DIY insofar as all three are performative, action-oriented processes that place emphasis on doing, and each has the capacity to be instructive and self-actualizing.

Although prefiguration has both roots and expressions in a great many political orientations, the gamut of which I will regrettably not have the room to discuss in depth, one of the orientations that is of particular pertinence to La Grange and which will be discussed at length, is anarchism. Anarchism has meant different things to different groups of people throughout history. To early anarchists in the 19th century it was a reaction to the clergy, aristocracy, and the enclosure of the commons. Around the turn of the 20th century, it was at the frontlines of the pushback against modern industrial capitalism. It played a major role in the Spanish civil war (Ealham, 2010) a critical (but largely unsung) role in the Russian revolution (Skirda, 2003), and anarchist principles of horizontality and decentralization defined a large part of how global activist networks were organized during the alterglobalization movement of the 1990s and early 2000s (Graeber, 2009).

Anarchist theory is broad and anarchism itself has a great number of variances, currents, and permutations that each address specific forms of oppression or which advocate particular practices or organizational tendencies[7] (Mckay, 2009). Of particular interest to this research are the anarchist principles of mutual aid, voluntary association, direct action and autonomy (Gelderloos, 2010), as well as theories relating to anarchist negotiations with power and hierarchy (Gordon, 2008). Many anarchist thinkers also have a good deal to add to any discussion of collectives, non-hierarchical organizing, work, and play, all of which are topics of relevance to La Grange.

Yet despite this rich history and the ideas it produced, many have, and indeed still do, fundamentally misunderstand anarchism. It is often treated as synonymous with unfettered chaos or, as possible anarchist sympathizer J. R. R. Tolkien remarked, "whiskered men with bombs". However, anarchism is not chaos. Etymologyically, its roots are in Medieval Latin anarchia, from Greek anarkhia, essentially meaning "without ruler" (an = without, arkhos = leader). The origins of the ubiquitous "circle A" do not denote disorder, but rather symbolize order (O) within anarchy (A). Effectively, it is the belief that there can be order in the absence of rulers and hierarchy. It is my hope that this final chapter will serve both to clear up some of these misconceptions about anarchism, and to provide a window into anarchism as the underlying political motivation of the project.

A Tale of Two Farms

I was born on the Canadian Prairies and even from a young age, it struck me during our long family drives from Alberta to Manitoba to visit relatives that all of this farmland was a little odd. A view from the Trans-Canada Highway virtually anywhere between eastern Alberta and the beginning of the Canadian Shield[8] in southeast Manitoba gives the impression that nothing wild is left. The relentlessly horizontal landscape of the prairies

[7] To underscore the breath and nuance of anarchist thought, it is perhaps worth noting that Mckay's *An Anarchist FAQ* is 4167 pages long.

[8] The vast area of Precambrian igneous and metamorphic rock surrounding the Hudson Bay that comprises more than half of Canada's land area.

is the punch line of countless jokes and its featureless monotony a frequent topic of grievance for anyone driving through it. All one can see from the road is an endless patchwork of cash crops, with fields beyond fields of uniform canola, corn, barley, soy and wheat[9] standing obediently in plots and rows like untold billions of tiny soldiers[10].

While I was conducting research for this project I had the opportunity during a 2015 visit with relatives in the sleepy town of Boissevein, Manitoba to visit one of these soy and wheat industrial farms where my cousin was employed. The contrast between it and the small-scale agriculture practiced at La Grange could have not been starker.

My cousin showed me all "the toys" at his farm and took me out to the fields in a massive combine harvester with wheels as tall as me. I watched in awe as what my cousin described as "20 feet of spinning daggers" voraciously fed wheat into the behemoth's innards, reaping, threshing, and winnowing huge swaths of golden wheat in minutes what would take days to do by hand. He showed me his farm's self-propelled herbicide/pesticide sprayer, a massive vehicle with a menacing, built-to-kill look about it and outfitted with two enormous retractable metal arms that unfold to rain all manners of chemical death upon invading plants and insects.

On our way back from him showing me the combine in action, I noticed another collection of farm machinery sitting derelict and partially overgrown with grass. Upon inquiry, my cousin informed me that this was their previous pull-behind harvester and tractor. These were apparently still functional but were simply not efficient enough at harvesting to be economically viable. Neither of these derelict machines could have been cheap when they were purchased and I shudder to think of what the price tag on the farm's new combine and sprayer must have been. This for me embodied in no uncertain terms the mentality of industrial agriculture, and even more broadly, capitalism. Under

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[9] According to Statistics Canada, (https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2017012-eng.htm) as of 2016 these are Canada's largest field crops and you would be hard pressed to find a better place that the prairies to see a great, great deal of them.

[10] It turns out that I was not the only one who noticed this parallel between industrial agriculture and militarism. For more see Scott (2012) and Pollan (2006).

capitalism, if you cannot continue to expand and streamline your production, you will die. As Earl Butz, the eminent cheerleader for industrial agriculture would famously say, under the current regime farmers need to "get big or get out".

All this is by way of illustrating that the sheer scope of the amount of food being grown and processed at the farm where my cousin works, itself a fairly modest operation insofar as industrial agriculture goes, was staggering. After seeing it for myself, at the time I found it hard to argue with Pollan's assertion[11] in his 2008 *Omnivore's Dilemma* that modern industrial farmers "measured in terms of output per worker … are the most productive humans who have ever lived" (Pollan, 2008, p. 34).

So why have I bothered to mention this anecdote? Moreover, what is wrong with being among the most productive humans in history?

The answer to the first query is simply "to provide illuminating dramatic contrast". To that end, I will again borrow from Pollan's *Omnivore's Dilemma,* wherein Pollan provides a table that illustrates the key contrasts between the two very different kinds of farms he visited while gathering research for the book, the large-scale industrial corn farm of Grant Naylor, and the organic, "grass farm" of Joel Salatin (Pollan, 2008, p. 130). Just as easily, one could substitute my cousin's farm for the former, and La Grange for the latter, and I have elected to do so:

Cousin's Farm	**La Grange**
Industrial	Pastoral
Annual Species	Perennial Species
Monoculture	Polyculture
Fossil energy	Solar energy
Global market	Local market

[11] I do however, aim to frustrate both this assertion, and the metric it uses, in later chapters.

Specialized	Diversified
Mechanical	Biological
Imported fertility	Local fertility
Myriad inputs	Chicken feed

With three nominal and arguable exceptions, Pollan's altered table holds up fairly well. First, La Grange has not used chicken feed, as we have no chickens. We have used chicken manure, but this comes in at a distant third to on-site compost and locally procured cow manure in terms of organic inputs. Second, perennial species such as raspberries and a good number of medicinal herbs, do exist and are harvested at La Grange but constitute such an extremely small proportion of its output so as to barely be worth mentioning. Third, unless you are of a notion that the vegetables produced at La Grange are grown for the express purpose of grazing, as the groundhog population of La Grange mistakenly but very clearly does, one cannot describe La Grange as pastoral.

Beyond that, everything else checks out. La Grange cannot be said to practice monoculture, at least in the same way as my cousin's farm does, as there are often multiple species growing in any given bed and care is taken to ensure that the same crop is never planted in the same area for more than a single season. Excepting the very occasional use of a rototiller and a string trimmer, no machines or fossil fuels are used and any manipulation done to the soil or the things growing in it is done either with hands or hands using hand tools, both of which get their energy from the sun. La Grange sells its produce either to local food coops or directly to people who come to Margaret's bazaar and is quite content to have nothing at all to do with the "global market". Our crops are diversified and change every year, and all of our fertilizers and inputs are either grown or composted on-site or acquired locally.

In order to sufficiently answer the second question however, the one that is curious about what is wrong with being among the most productive humans in history, I will require a whole other chapter.

Chapter 2 – Paper or Plastic?
Industrial Organic and Other Problems With Food

Beginning in the 1980s global food production became increasingly corporatized and globalized. Rooted firmly in neoliberal discourses and ideologies that emerged in the 1980s, industrial food production has become an economically deregulated international sector where large, multinational agribusinesses have been able to consolidate immense amounts of power and act with impunity in the interests of their "bottom lines". Consequently, there has been growing concern that the welfare of lower and middle-class individuals and environmental and ecological concerns have become increasingly subordinate to shareholder profit and the demands of the market (Sekine, Kae, Bonanno & Alessandro, 2016; Aydin, 2010; Migliorino, 2011; Roberts, 2013). This pattern of privatization and deregulation characteristic of neoliberalism hamstrings, and ultimately aims to dismantle the government safeguards that would protect the lower and middle classes from the unwanted consequences of capitalism (Sekine et al., 2016; Suschnigg, 2012).

All too often, the fallout of the hidden costs or "market externalities"[12] associated with this corporate food regime[13], such as widespread environmental destruction and exploitative labour practices land on the shoulders of those whose well being has already been compromised by savage cuts to government social spending in the name of neoliberal "austerity measures". Moreover, while it appears to be an ongoing debate, there is some evidence suggesting that the foods produced by this increasingly industrialized system appear, according to some studies, to be less nutritious[14] than those

[12] A market externality or "externalized cost" is defined in economic terms by Gliessman as "a negative consequence that is put outside (made external to) the system being considered" and which "involves privatizing a gain and socializing its associated costs" (Gliessman, 2015, p. 347). Gliessman cites the degradation of ecological resources, hazards to human health, and disintegration of social systems as examples of externalities specific to conventional agriculture.
[13] The term "food regime" was coined by Friedmann and McMichael in 1989 and is used to describe the role that agriculture has played in the formation and expansion of capitalism since the late 19th century (Friedmann, 1987; Friedmann & McMichael, 1989).
[14] Ladner, comparing the contemporary supermarket potato with the potato of 50 years ago, found that it has lost 100% of its vitamin A, 50% of its iron, vitamin C and riboflavin, 28% of its calcium, and 18% of its thiamine (Ladner, 2011, p. 97).

produced without recourse to farming methods like monoculture cropping and the use of petroleum-based fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides that have become normalized agricultural practices.

The lineage of these agricultural practices and the first stirrings of what would eventually become our contemporary food system can be traced back to the so called Green Revolution. Although food scholars such as Jennifer Cockrall-King have argued that the stage was set for the Green Revolution in the Cold War climate of the 1950s with the United States exporting its agricultural technology to the "3rd world" in part as an effort to stave off communism (Cockrall-King, 2012), the Green Revolution began in earnest during the 1960s. Beginning in the 1960s the term "Green Revolution" was coined to describe the application of technologies such as "high-yielding crop Varieties (HYVs), fertilizers, pesticides, machinery and irrigations" which were "promoted largely by funding from the West" (Robinson & Carson, 2015, p. 13). Over time, and with the emergence of biotechnology and particularly genetically modified food, such practices also came to be considered under the umbrella of Green Revolution tendencies, earning its more recent iteration the moniker of the "Gene Revolution".

Indeed, the Green Revolution was "accompanied by radical changes in the social and political landscapes of agriculture" and effectively spawned a "new ideology of agriculture, one that shifted the development from farmers' fields to scientific laboratories and argued that scientific innovations could be universally applied" (Basu & Klepek, 2015, p. 237). These technologies were critical to the emergence of widespread food surpluses and played a large role in creating the conditions necessary for large scale, export oriented agricultural production.

Resistance to the kind of neoliberal food regime that was created and the ideologies which spawned it are many and varied, from massive peasant and farmer movements like the Brazilian Landless Workers' Movement and La Via Campesina[15], to "gastronomic"

[15] Altogether representing around 200 million farmers, La Via Campesina (The Peasant's Way) is "an international movement bringing together millions of peasants, small and medium size farmers, landless

groups like the Slow Food Movement[16] (Patel, 2008), all the way down to community initiatives like Community Services Unlimited[17] in South Central Los Angeles (Broad, 2016) and the Food Not Lawns offshoot of the Food Not Bombs[18] movement (Food Not Bombs, n.d.). Organic and "green" foods have become fairly commonplace in supermarkets and grocery stores, but the corporate food industry is such that certified organic foods are often financially out of reach for many consumers (Ladner, 2011, p. 97) and organic certification too complicated and too expensive for many producers, as we will see below.

Increasingly, people are beginning to take food production into their own hands in whatever capacity they can, from community and rooftop gardens, to projects like La Grange.

The (Sorry) State of Global Food Production

As we will see, the current state of global, industrialized food production is deeply problematic on a number of fronts. As alluded to above, there is a growing concern over the problems associated with contemporary food production under globalized capitalism, many of which are explored by authors such as academic, journalist, and activist Raj Patel, anthropologist and environmentalist Sally Miller, and environmental activist and one-time physicist Vandana Shiva.

In Patel's well known 2007 book *Stuffed and Starved*, he is unrepentantly critical of international trade agreements like NAFTA and the socially and environmentally destructive practices of large agribusinesses such as those associated with monoculture

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people, rural women and youth, indigenous people, migrants and agricultural workers from around the world" according to its official website https://viacampesina.org/en/international-peasants-voice/

16 The Slow Food Movement exists as a foil to fast food and "fights for the right to choose food differently, and savour it fully" (Patel, 2007, p. 281). Slow Food aims to preserve traditional and regional culinary traditions and places emphasis on the cultivation of plants, seeds, and livestock that are part of local ecosystems. It originated in Italy in 1986 and currently has chapters in over 100 countries, boasting a membership of around 83,000 according to Patel.

17 A community farm project that formed from the Black Panthers' breakfast program.

18 An anarchist movement whose various chapters offer free meals made largely out of discarded food.

cropping and GMOs, the commodification of germplasm and the treatment of workers in the global south. Notable in particular is Patel's use of the imagery of an hourglass on page 15 (see below) to demonstrate the disproportionate power of a few multinational corporations and the consequences of what he describes as the "creative destruction" of capitalism.

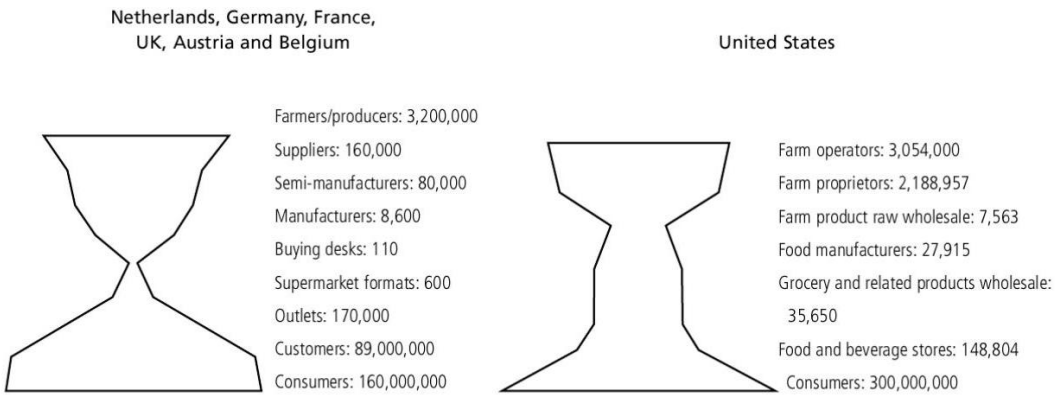

Figure 1.1: The hourglasses: the concentration of power and players in the food system (source: Grievink 2003, US Census 2000. USDA 2007).

The hourglass illustrates the large numbers of farmers and producers of food on the top and the large numbers of consumers on the bottom as they are squeezed in the middle by corporations and middlemen. In this model, the lion's share of the profits go to those corporations who, either themselves or through their subsidiaries, are responsible for farm wholesale, food manufacturing, and grocery wholesale. While the net result for consumers is that the cost of goods become slightly cheaper, as Patel observes "producers aren't meant to be the winners from trade liberalization" (Patel, 2007, p. 51). In fact, the result of these reduced prices for producers is that their income drops and consequently, as Patel notes, "they're able to consume very little at all" (Patel, 2007, p. 51).

A prominent environmental and women's rights activist, Vandana Shiva has been a prolific author on environmental and food security issues since the 1980s. She has written on water issues (2002), genetic engineering and intellectual property and trade policies (1997) and agribusiness, industrial food production and the global food system (2000, 2016).

She has been critical of the effect of export-oriented agriculture and neoliberal policies instituted by organizations like the World Bank on the global South referring to it as a "rape and run" mentality, echoing many of Patel's concerns:

> Since the World Bank is advising all countries to shift from "food first" to "export first" policies, these countries all compete with each other, and the prices of these luxury commodities collapse. Trade liberalization and economic reform also include devaluation of currencies. Thus exports earn less, and imports cost more. Since the Third World is being told to stop growing food and instead to buy food in international markets by exporting cash crops, the process of globalization leads to a situation in which agricultural societies of the South become increasingly dependent on food imports, but do not have the foreign exchange to pay for imported food. (Shiva, 2000, p. 15)

Shiva has also been critical of the industrial agricultural practices of chemical pesticide/fertilizer use and the increased reliance on monoculture and GMO crops, stating that "industrial agriculture is based on external inputs of chemical inputs as well as GMO crops with pesticides built into them" (Shiva, 2016, p. 44). Shiva contends that such conditions create what she describes as a "false productivity of industrial agriculture" wherein beneficial species are harmed and regional biodiversity and soil fertility are compromised. Ultimately, Shiva maintains that "chemical-intensive monocultures produce less food per acre than biodiverse, ecological farms when all outputs are taken into account" (Shiva, 2016, p. 44).

Sally Miller's 20 years of work experience in alternative food as a manager, consultant, organizer, and researcher prompted her to articulate in her 2008 *Edible Action* the distinction that the modern food system creates between those who produce food and those who consume it. By unpacking the historical conditions which led to this compartmentalization her analysis illuminates the role played by some of the most powerful actors in the global food system. Implied in her work is that the actors operating in the space between producers and consumers often escape culpability when food issues are framed in terms of what she refers to as the "producer-consumer split" (2008, p.151). Indeed, as Patel has highlighted above, simply framing the food system in terms of producers and consumers is reductive at best and is at worst dangerously ignorant of those inhabiting the middle of the hourglass. In the end, Miller makes a case for the relocalization of the production and consumption of food through an examination of food co-ops and community garden initiatives.

While these are interesting case studies and analyses, it is worth mentioning that, for all the problems the Green Revolution and industrial food production may have caused, there are some positives that should be briefly addressed before proceeding too far into critique.

The Green Revolution, for its part, did drastically increase the world production of food calories from 2,063 to 2,798 per person (Norwood et al, 2015, p. 27-28), and played a large role in averting the catastrophic Malthusian food crises that were predicted[19] for the second half of the twentieth century. In a 2009 article for the Wall Street Journal, the champion of the Green Revolution and 1970 Nobel Prize winner Norman Bourlag responded to critics of modern agricultural practices by asserting that "if they lived just one month amid the misery of the developing world … they'd be crying out for tractors and fertilizer and irrigation canals and be outraged that fashionable elitists in wealthy nations were trying to deny them these things" (Easterbrook in Norwood et al, 2015, p. 28).

[19] Bourne, referencing Borlaug's mention of the impending "population monster" in his 1970 Nobel lecture, notes the "irony that the father of the green revolution, the man most responsible for destroying the credibility of the neo-Malthusians of his day, was the most ardent Malthusian of them all" (Bourne, p. 76).

While such bombast may not be entirely accurate across the board, Norwood et al. have observed that the increased use of fertilizers that coincided with the rise of Evangelical Protestantism in contemporary Guatemala has been so pronounced that it has led some Guatemalan citizens to attribute the "almost miraculous impact on crop yields" as "God's reward for their conversion" (Norwood, et al, 2015, p. 26). All this suggests that even almost 50 years after it began, there still appears to be no shortage of Green Revolutionaries.

Moreover, in a 2014 article for National Geographic, author Jonathan Foley argues that when it comes to considering how to produce food "it needn't be an either-or proposition" between organic and conventional agriculture. Foley points to a number of innovations that have emerged as a result industrial agriculture which may help to feed the additional 2 billion people that will need to be fed by mid-century. According to Foley:

> Commercial farming has started to make huge strides, finding innovative ways to better target the application of fertilizers and pesticides by using computerized tractors equipped with advanced sensors and GPS. Many growers apply customized blends of fertilizer tailored to their exact soil conditions, which helps minimize the runoff of chemicals into nearby waterway. (Foley, 2014, p.43)

Foley argues that such technologies, when combined with organic techniques of cover crops, mulches, and composting, may be beneficial in using resources more efficiently, ultimately giving us more "crop per drop" from our water and nutrients.

In any case, there remains considerable resistance to industrial agriculture, as well as a growing body of evidence suggesting that the miracles of the Green Revolution may not be quite as miraculous as once thought.

To provide some texture, I have divided the problems engendered by contemporary food production into three broad categories, those of environmental costs, human costs, and the hubris of owning life. I will provide a brief examination of them below. These are by no means exhaustive accounts of any of these problems, the scope and breadth of which involve a level of interconnectedness that would make Dirk Gently[20] swoon, but rather some foundation upon which to start building a case that will address the question of why anyone should care about alternative food projects like La Grange.

Environmental Degradation

The ways in which the practices of industrial agriculture under capitalism have adversely affected the local environments in which they are operate and, by extension, the health of the planet overall, are legion.

One of the main problems highlighted in almost any critique of industrial agriculture is soil degradation or, as some have taken to calling it, "soil mining" or "nutrient mining". Nutrient mining occurs when "nutrient outputs in the form of farm products, crop residues, leaching, gaseous losses and erosion exceed nutrient inputs in the production process" (Smaling, 1993) as cited by Onduru , A. De Jager & G. N. Gachini, 2005, p. 167). It can also refer to the loss of important soil-dwelling organisms whose role in any given ecosystem is to break down dead organic matter into humus. Concerning humus, it is a notoriously difficult substance to clearly define.

Pollan however, provides a functional, layman's definition of humus as "what's left of organic matter after it has been broken down by the billions of big and small organisms that inhabit a spoonful of earth—the bacteria, phages, fungi, and earthworms responsible for decomposition" (Pollan, 2006, p. 147). Indeed, as Sivapalan shows, many of the phenolic and hydroxy benzoic acid compounds that serve to synthesize the humic matter

[20] The titular character in Douglas Adam's *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency,* whose holistic worldview that "what we are concerned with here is the fundamental interconnectedness of all things … [and] the connections between causes and effects are often much more subtle and complex than we with our rough and ready understanding of the physical world might naturally suppose" guides his every action to, in my humble opinion, extremely comedic effect.

present in high quality soil are in large part the handiwork of the myriad fungi and microorganisms that live in the soil (Sivapalan, 1986, p. 62). Moreover, a 2012 study by Verbruggen, Röling, Gamper, Kowalchuk, Verhoef and van der Heijden has shown that

> organic management [of land and soil] enhances the diversity of AMF[21] assemblages, when compared with conventionally managed agricultural fields. AMF communities were richer and more diverse across organically managed fields and were more similar to those of (semi-) natural, undisturbed grasslands (Verbruggen, et al., p. 186, 2010).

In the end, it suffices to say that these fungi and microorganisms essentially convert dead organic matter into the chemical elements required by plant life, those of particular significance being nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. Nitrogen in particular has been recognized as "the single most important nutrient for increasing crop yields across the globe" (Dalton & Brand-Hardy, 2003, p. 772).

This emphasis on nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium owes largely to Count Justus Von Liebig, who in 1840 released his extremely influential *Chemistry in its Application to Agriculture* wherein he suggested, somewhat reductively in hindsight, that plant growth is a simple, straightforward matter of the presence or absence of these aforementioned elements. In the years following the publication of Liebig's findings, this emphasis on these three elements in agriculture led to what Pollan (2006) has described as the "NPK mentality", with N, P, and K being the respective symbols for nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium on the periodic table of the elements.

The logic went that if all we need to do is add nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium to the soil to make plants grow, why bother with the time consuming process of breaking down organic matter into humus provided by these fungi and microorganisms? Why not skip

[21] AMF stands for arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi, a type of mutualist fungi that symbiotically aid plant growth by capturing important nutrients, providing structural strength, and mitigating the stress of droughts by minimizing water loss (Brundrett, 2002).

lengthy steps and use the countless other chemicals which can be applied to plants and soil to mitigate the perennial problems of deleterious or invasive flora, fauna, and fungi (enter herbicides, pesticides, and fungicides respectively). More yield could be produced in less time, with fewer crops lost to other organisms. What could possibly go wrong with this scenario?

As we will see, there are actually a number of things that can go wrong under strict adherence to NPK dogma including soil degradation, water contamination, and ecosystem disruption. Although potassium and phosphorus both pose their own problems, in the interests of brevity, the focus here will be primarily on nitrogen.

Ecologists describe the circulation of nitrogen throughout any given ecosystem as the "nitrogen cycle". In a natural, pre-Liebig nitrogen cycle, most plants, animals and microorganisms have developed adaptations allowing them to efficiently utilize and store small quantities of nitrogen. "Under normal conditions, the nitrogen cycle is essentially in equilibrium and, for the most part, can tolerate change through uptake, storage and use resulting in increased biomass production" (Dalton & Brand-Hardy, 2003, p. 772). However, "large additions, such as those that have accompanied the intensification of agriculture, cause imbalances in the nitrogen cycle and potential leakages" (Dalton & Brand-Hardy, 2003, p.772). Not all of this input of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium can be absorbed by the soil and the runoff of fertilizers and pesticides wreaks all manners of havoc, including contaminating watersheds and causing massive algal blooms, which effectively asphyxiate large areas of water in a process known as eutrophication[22] (Weis, 2012, p. 113). Toxins ingested by all manners of creatures run up the food chain, eventually affecting human health in an almost comical reconstitution of the classic idiom, wherein "feed bites the hand that grows". However, as we will come around to discussing later, this is far from the only insidious effect that industrial agriculture has had on human populations.

[22] The most well-known example of this is the "dead zone" in the Gulf of Mexico.

While there are circumstances occurring naturally which may compromise soil health, the process of soil degradation is "greatly accelerated by reduced soil biodiversity and ground cover in monocultures, repeated cycles of tillage and compaction, and heavy chemical use" (Weis, 2012, p. 109). Industrial agriculture's response to this problem of its own making has largely been the use of what Weis refers to as "biophysical overrides", which in this case is the further application of fertilizers rich in NPK obtained from inorganic sources. As Salonius bluntly puts it, "most agriculture is a soil-nutrient-depleting practice … unsustainable in the absence of exogenous (imported) nutrient supplies" (Salonius, 2007, Introduction section, ¶ 5). The production of these nitrogen-rich fertilizers is yet another toll on the environment, as "fixing nitrogen is a highly energy intensive process … whatever other environmental impacts nitrogen may have, its manufacture [also] contributes to the greenhouse effect" (Dalton & Brand-Hardy, 2003, p. 773).

For their part, Perrings, Kinzig, and Halkos (2014) approach the nitrogen issue in terms of what they refer to as "N-pollution", the environmental damage resulting from the excessive use of nitrogen (akin to the leakages mentioned by above by Dalton and Brand-Hardy), and "N-depletion", the loss of soil nutrient stocks resulting from the insufficient replacement of nitrogen (Perrings et al., 2014, p. 891). Working from a data set of 58 countries with considerable variance in terms of GDP per capita, their findings also suggest a strong correlation between economic disparity and the kind of nitrogen problems faced, and they go on to note that "few will be surprised by the fact that poor countries are generally characterized by N-depletion, or that rich countries are characterized by N-pollution" (Perrings et al., p. 902).

The other key ingredient required by all flora and fauna on earth is, of course, water. The protracted irrigation of large-scale industrial crops requires prodigious quantities of freshwater, much of it pumped around using fossil fuels, presenting a number of complications including waterlogging, nutrient leaching, and salinization[23] (Weis, 2012,

[23] Salinization is the process by which salt residue is left behind when water evaporates or is released from the stomata of plants, the build up of which slowly "salts the earth", affecting the arability of the land.

p. 114). This irrigation pumping is, of course, only one of many industrial agricultural practices requiring fossil fuel inputs. The processing, transportation, and even harvesting of produce on an industrial scale all require intensive use of non-renewable fossil fuel energy.

Considerations of water pollution from the runoff of industrial farming aside, agriculture of any kind is a fairly water intensive endeavour. Bouguerra puts the yearly global consumption of freshwater used by agriculture at 69% compared to 23% used by other forms of industry and 8% consumed domestically (Bouguerra, 2006, p. 143). For its part, the Green Revolution has contributed to this figure and its failure to recognize freshwater as a finite resource led to what Bouguerra dubs a "water orgy", wherein "four to seven times more water was needed per hectare to triple or quadruple output" (Bouguerra, 2006, p. 144). Shiva echoes similar concerns over the inefficient and wasteful use of water that often accompanies industrial agricultural practices:

> Industrial agriculture has pushed food production to use methods by which the water retention of soil is reduced and the demand for water is increased. By failing to recognize water as a limiting factor is food production, industrial agriculture has promoted [the] waste [of water]. (Shiva, 2002, p.108)

Heokstra's research suggests that in many cases the increase in yield between "full irrigation", a strategy focused on yield per hectare and "deficit irrigation", a strategy centered on maximizing productivity per drop of water, is marginal. The premium placed on maximizing yield inclines farmers towards irrigating and fertilizing their land "up to the level at which yields will not further increase by adding more water or fertilizer" (Heokstra, 2013, p. 131-132). Full irrigation makes a certain kind of sense in regions where there is little arable land and plentiful rainfall, but in more arid regions, the results can be disastrous.

Moreover, Shiva highlights the problems that arise when "crops that produce higher nutrition per unit of water use have been called inferior and have been displaced by

water-intensive crops" (Shiva, 2002, p.108). This practice of replacing traditional drought-resistant crops with industrial crops has been a contributing factor in intensifying desertification in some regions and has led to an increase in droughts, particularly in the kinds of arid climates mentioned above that are already prone to these kinds of complications (Shiva, 2002; Sippel, 2015).

Perhaps the most egregious example of water waste goes to the infamous case of the Aral Sea in central Asia. The Soviet Union, as part of a centrally planned initiative to make deserts productive, used water from the Aral Basin to irrigate over 8 million hectares of land, the majority of which was used to grow cotton for export. Consequently, the Aral Basin has shrunk from 400,000 hectares in 1960 to just 26,000 hectares by 2001 – an environmental catastrophe of such magnitude that the disappearance of the Aral Sea is clearly visible from space (Hoekstra, 2013, p. 63). Fish stocks were subsequently decimated and half of the nearby city of Aralsk, Khasakstan has since migrated, leaving poets like Muhammed Salik to remind us that "you cannot fill the Aral with tears" (Shiva, 2001, p. 112).

Another tendency within industrial agriculture that is being shown to have increasingly deleterious effects is that of monocropping or monoculture. The intensified reliance on a small number of commodity crops that characterizes monoculture has obvious repercussions on the biodiversity of any given area where the strategy of monocropping is employed, compromising a crop's resilience against weeds, fungi, and insects that would otherwise be checked by other plants and organisms as they are in a healthy ecosystem. Over the course of our history as a species that practices agriculture, we have developed, largely through selective breeding, a vast number of plant varieties that over time have become fine tuned to specific regions and food systems. An area with healthy agricultural biodiversity means that, in the event of massive crop failures owing to pests, disease, and climate change, "if one variety [of crop] failed, another could survive to replace it" (Benjamin & Virkler, 2016, p. 25).

An example of massive crop failure owing in large part to monoculture farming cited by

Benjamin & Virkler is that of "Ug99" or "stem rust", a fast-adapting fungus that affects wheat. The majority of the world's varieties of wheat have no answer to Ug99 and the monocropping of susceptible varieties of wheat helped the fungus run rampant through Kenya, Ethiopia, Sudan, Yemen, and later Iran. Left unchecked, Ug99 has the potential to "leave one billion people in Asia and Africa without a primary source of food" (Benjamin & Virkler, 2016, p. 25). Predictably, the response to these kinds of complications usually tends to involve the use of more biophysical overrides, often in the form of the heavy chemicals that serve as herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, and disinfectants (Weis, 2012, p. 109).

Moving from purely environmental concerns to those explicitly affecting human populations, many of the findings discussed above also serve to highlight that the kinds of problems engendered by current agricultural practices are indiscriminate, affecting both the wealthy and the poor, often in strikingly different ways. It also suggests that, contrary to many models of "development" which are still applied to poorer nations, economies and environments are two entirely different things, each with their own unique sets of variables and at the end of the day, "focusing on the path of economic development is not of much help in addressing the environmental concerns" (Reddy, 1995, p. 26).

The Human Cost

Again, the social costs of industrial agriculture under capitalism are massive and innumerable and listed below are just some of the most salient examples of the damage it has done to human health, livelihoods, foodways, and even, to an extent, cultural identities.

To start, working from Wallerstein's world system theory, a number of social scientists have made note of the extractive nature of capitalism, wherein goods and resources have the tendency to travel from the "peripheral" or disadvantaged nations towards the "core" or advantaged nations. At first this flow was facilitated by colonialism, but it could be

argued that the contemporary analogue and primary means by which resources and goods are extracted is through trade, with wealthier nations or large corporations defining the parameters of that trade to suit their interests at the expense of peripheral or semi-peripheral nations. Of the goods that travel from periphery to core, agricultural products are among the most common. Both peripheral and core nations have placed an emphasis on producing export crops (Crist, 1989, p. 143), but again because of their political or economic clout, the core nations can manipulate these flows to their advantage, leaving the less profitable, environmentally destructive export agriculture to the periphery as Vanclay (1989) illustrates:

> Part of process of peripheralisation occurs through agricultural imperialism, a form of environmental imperialism, with the centre nations exporting environmentally unfriendly, low value agricultural production to the periphery and semi-periphery, while maintaining high value agricultural production and more environmentally friendly agriculture in the centre. (Vanclay, 2003. p. 91)

Moving on from world-system approaches, Pollan argues in his 2006 *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, that corn is the cornerstone of the contemporary food system and any analysis of said system is remiss without an accompanying analysis of corn and its role thereof. Firstly, corn is one of the primary culprits behind monoculture, owing largely to the fact that "few plants can manufacture quite as much organic matter (and calories) from the same quantities of sunlight and water and basic elements as corn" (Pollan, p. 22). Through the capitalist lens of maximized productivity, it makes sense to produce corn in as large a supply as possible, even at the expense of other, locally occurring crops. Moreover, in many respects and often by proxy, corn (and its cheap calories) has had a large number of negative impacts on human health. Corn, or any number of derivatives of it, is an ingredient that is present in almost any processed food[24], the likes of which have been shown to be far less healthy than foods that have not undergone extensive industrial processing (Martin, 2012). Corn appears in so many guises in processed food mainly

[24] Corn is of course not the only culprit here when it comes to processed, "value added" food. Sugar, potatoes, and wheat, as well as numerous "inexpensive chemical additives" are also involved in these processes (Winson, 2013, p.191).

because its endosperm contains long chains of carbohydrate molecules. Chemists learned that these carbohydrate molecules could be manipulated through industrial processes into a "raw material for processing[25]" (Fussel, 1992, p. 266) which had countless applications as a food additive (Fussel, 1992, p. 265-278). Faced with a quandary of how to turn a profit off a consumer with a "fixed stomach" that is only capable of ingesting fifteen hundred pounds of food per year (Pollan, 2006, p. 94,), companies like General Mills and McDonalds had to "figure out how to get people to spend more money for the same three-quarters of a ton of food, or entice them to actually eat more than that. The two strategies are not mutually exclusive, of course, and the food industry energetically pursues them both at the same time" (Pollan, 2006, p. 95). Corn, with its abundance and it ability to be processed into a broad spectrum of organic compounds, obliged, serving as a raw material with which companies could "add value" to food products[26] (Reau, 2011). Consequently, this food tends to provide less nutrition as a result of the processing, in turn leading consumers to eat more so as to receive a level of nutrition comparable to what they would receive by eating less of an unprocessed food.

It is worth noting that however, that scholars such as Carolan (2011) have observed that the "thick causal arrow pointing from farm subsidies to the obesity pandemic[27]" drawn by Pollan (2007) "overstates the relationship between things like cheap corn and bad diets" (Carolan, 2011, p. 67). Carolan concedes that while there might indeed be a link between plentiful corn and public health, Pollan "smoothe[s] over the complexity of the relationship" (Carolan, 2011, p.67) and that at least part of this relationship owes to the fact that "processed foods [are] extremely profitable – at least significantly more profitable than whole (unpreceded) foods" and consequently, "this profitability creates deep pockets to fund expensive advertising campaigns" (Carolan, 2011, p.69).

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[25] Most notably in the form of cornstarch.

[26] This manner of adding value is sometimes referred to as "capturing value". One can "*capture value* by entering the processing arena—turning farm products into food products adds significant value" (Beau, 2011, ¶ 3).

[27] Carolan is referring here to what he calls the obesity/hunger paradox, where "one quarter of the world is at risk of dying from eating too much, another quarter dying from eating too little, and some at risk of dying from *both* obesity and malnourishment" (Carolan, 2011, p.7).

Moving on, many animals which humans have domesticated for the purposes of consumption[28] and for whom grains like corn are not a staple part of their diets, are increasingly being bred to tolerate eating these grains. This leads to bizarre and decidedly unnatural situations such as the efforts to use plant proteins like corn as a feed for salmon farms. According to a 2016 article on the farm feed website AllAboutFeed, salmon feed was once comprised of up to 60% fishmeal but currently only contains approximately 10% fishmeal, an indication that "the salmon industry is increasingly turning to plant proteins based on soya, wheat and corn, peas and bean concentrates in order to maintain sustainable production levels over the long term" (All About Feed, 2016, ¶ 6). Animals that are raised mostly or wholly on corn lack the diverse diet of those animals found in the wild and consequently the meat from these animals has been shown to be less nutritious (Daley et. al., 2010).

Moving from health problems to issues of livelihoods, the subsuming of small-holder land into ever growing industrial plots as large agribusinesses further consolidate their power presents obvious problems. As a case in point, the flooding of cheap, industrially produced corn into Mexico made possible by the massive overhaul of agrarian policy introduced by the North American Free Trade Agreement or NAFTA, created a bizarre situation wherein for the people of Mexico, some of whom are indigenous Maya who still call themselves "the corn people", and for all of whom corn has been a staple of their diet for nearly nine thousand years (Pollan, 2006, p. 19), it became "less costly to buy industrially produced and imported corn that it [was] to grow the crop locally and on a small scale" (Fitting, 2010, p. 21). This had disastrous effects on small scale peasant farmers, many of whom were forced to sell their land as they could not compete with the prices of subsidized agribusiness corn and in many cases were then forced to head to the cities to find work or seek employment from the corporations who bought them out, sometimes on the very land they used to own. This is just one constellation of cases

[28] The act of eating as much meat as humans do, particularly those in North America, presents its own set of problems. But, as La Grange has not yet taken to raising slaughter animals, even though discussions of having chickens seem to come up every year, I have opted not to include a section specifically concerning animals as food under industrial capitalism.

among many, with the same or strikingly similar stories being played out countless times in countless countries.

A monoculture mentality contributes not just to a loss of biodiversity, but also to the loss of what is often called "Biocultural Heritage". The International Institute for Environment and Development website defines Biocultural Heritage or BHC as "the knowledge and practices of indigenous people and their biological resources, from the genetic varieties of crops they develop, to the landscapes they create". Benjamin & Virkler suggest that numerous studies of the Quecha in Peru, the Ifugao in the Philippines and various indigenous groups in China, Kenya, and Panama "reinforce how closely the traditional knowledge of [these] communities is tied to diverse local plant and animal resources and access to traditional landscapes" (Benjamin & Virkler, 2016, p. 34).

Indeed, the replacement of locally produced crops by a handful of commercial cash crops in any given area where large scale agribusinesses have set up shop has also altered the traditional eating habits and lifeways of the local populations, as the homogenization of crops leads eventually but inexorably to the homogenization of cuisine, a key aspect of any given cultural identity. This is not to say that this homogenization is or ever will be complete and total, as foodways die hard[29]. There are still many places untouched by industrial agriculture where local cuisines thrive, but it certainly stands to reason that as the diversity of the foods available is reduced, the culinary options become diminished as well, culminating in what Patel describes as "choice lite"[30] (Patel, 2008, p. 17).

This lack of real choice can also carry with it serious health risks as Martin suggests in her 2012 study of the nutrition transition of Aboriginal Canadians. As the diets of many Aboriginal Canadian communities shift from traditional foods, "those that are procured locally from the land and sea and whose preparation, and consumption are closely linked

[29] Anecdotally, I recall a visit to the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where the tour guide informed me that among the items most confiscated by customs officials among Italian immigrants were deli meats and dry sausages, which Italian women coming into Canada would often conceal in their hair.

[30] The full quote from Patel is: "the choice between Coke and Pepsi is a pop freedom – it's choice lite".

to expressions of culture" (Martin, 2012, p. 209) towards market foods, "those that can be purchased through the market economy" (Martin, 2012, p. 209) a pattern of health issues has developed. Many of these market foods tend to include high quantities of saturated fats, refined sugars, and sodium, the consumption of which has led to alarming increases in obesity, and chronic conditions like cardiovascular disease, diabetes and certain kinds of cancer in many Aboriginal communities, with considerably fewer instances of these health complications occurring in communities where traditional foods and food practices remain intact (Martin, p. 208-210).

Owning Life and Genetic Erosion

One of the most contentious and enigmatic aspects of contemporary food production has been the use of Genetically Modified Organisms or GMOs. The debate over GMOs in food production has been going on for decades and is far from over. For their part, proponents of GMOs say that there is no scientific evidence that indisputably proves that GMOs are harmful to human health and the environment. They often cite the fact that agriculture itself has always engaged in a kind of genetic modification, hybridizing and breeding new strains of plants that incorporate desirable traits (Newton, 2014, p. 51) and, to an extent, they are not wrong. Since the Neolithic revolution some 10,000 years ago, humans have continuously sought ways to increase yields, and improve the taste and nutritional value of their crops.

In the other corner however, there exists a certain level of perturbation within the food justice and food sovereignty movements with regards to science and technology and their relationship with food. Technological advances have had many profound and often positive effects on food production, from the Chinese invention of weeding to Jethro Tull's seed drill to the three-point-hitch – even the very concept of agriculture itself was a technological advance. Nevertheless, there remain a number of valid concerns food activists posit relating in particular to genetically modified organisms and genome patenting. The bottom line, they argue, is that the consequences of such meddling are not currently known or completely understood and in fact may not fully manifest for

generations to come. Use of GMOs in agriculture is a Pandora's box of sorts, as "once released into the environment, these genetically modified (GM) plants reproduce and outcross to wild relatives and it becomes impossible to recall them" (MFFS, 2007, p. 83). Caution must be exercised when it comes to altering life at the genetic level, for if GMOs are indeed harmful in the long term, warn the anti-GMO activists, by the time we can say for certain that they are, it will likely be too late to do anything about it.

While there are a number of studies conducted which seem to suggest that GMO food is innocuous (Newton, 2014, p. 55), it may yet be too early to say definitively if it is. Moreover, it amounts to an *argumentum ad ignorantiam* to say that the use of GMOs is not a thing to be concerned about because the science that spawned them has yet to see far enough into the future to say with certainty that they are or are not harmful.

In any case, it is worth noting that what is perhaps less focused on within these GMO debates is the prerequisite economic power and ownership of life that is needed to even engage in such genetic engineering. The emergence of genetic engineering ushered along with it the disturbing possibility of industrial patents on life forms. Monsanto, the multinational corporation whose name has become synonymous with genetic engineering in food production, "holds the patents for 90 percent of all commercial GM plant traits" (MFFS, 2007, p. 84) and continues to invest considerable sums of money pursuing the research, development, and subsequent patenting of GM plants and seeds. Monsanto has already had a hand in producing and disseminating the Roundup Ready (RR) GM trait which makes crops resilient to the broad spectrum herbicide glyphosate[31], marketed as "Roundup", Monsanto's flagship herbicide. The RR trait has been shown to contaminate ordinary seed, causing major problems for farmers wishing to produce non-GMO crops, and starkly illustrating how pervasive GM technology can be once it is set loose.

Seed is a hot button issue in its own right, as seed diversity has obvious correlations with biodiversity at large. The fact that "of the 80,000 edible plants used for food, only about

[31] According to the website of law firm Baum, Hedlund, Aristei & Goldman, as of November 2018 there are 27 countries which have either banned or restricted the use of glyphosate or have announced intentions of doing so based on health concerns (Baum, Heldund, Aristei & Goldman, 2018).

150 are being cultivated, and just 8 are traded globally" (MFFS, 2007, p. 78), strongly suggests that the consolidation of power enjoyed by the largest multinational corporations engaged in agribusiness has farther-reaching consequences than just market shares. Such genetic modification can also serve to further bolster the gauntlet of seed patents and restrictive technologies, one of the most salient example being the advent of "terminator" seeds, developed and proliferated by "gene giants" such as Monsanto, DuPont, and Sygenta, which are engineered to become sterile after one season, requiring farmers to purchase new seed every season (Kloppenberg, 2010, p. 154).

Lastly, it is worth mentioning that industrial agriculture, specifically its bent towards monoculture cropping and its manipulation of seed, has so affected the genetic makeup of the flora of our planet that it is now considered to be "the chief cause of the loss of genetic diversity and the most important cause of genetic erosion" (MFFS, 2007, p. 81). Genetic erosion is the term used to describe the irrevocable depletion of the planet's genetic diversity; a notion rivalled in grimness only by the fact that it happens with such frequency that there is a name for it.

The Battle for Organic

As discussed in the opening of this chapter, the resistance to industrial agriculture has manifested in a number of ways across the globe. While there are a good number of people who have never heard of the La Via Campesina or Food Not Bombs, the one movement that has since become a household name goes by the name "organic".

Although one would be hard pressed to find someone in North America who has not heard the term or seen it on a package at his or her local grocery store, it is somewhat of a nebulous term, with many competing interpretations and notions of what it is. It seems that what "organic" is, and what food gets to be called "organic", depends largely on who you ask. As such, this section aims to interrogate the term, asking both anarchists and governments what they think, followed by a probing of the terms origins and then a brief outlining the trajectory of the "organic movement". The hope is that in the end, we can

construct a set of parameters that can be used to describe the agricultural practices used and agricultural produce grown at La Grange.

In an attempt to get a better grasp on this nebulous and embattled word, I first started by asking my friends at La Grange.

> Organic? Well it's complicated. Even in the certified category of organic, there are different definitions. In each country there are different standards and it's partly politically defined. There are some things that change according to scientific data but there are some things that change according to other things, like lobbying. For instance, there's a product that we're allowed to use in organic agriculture that contains some ingredients that are also used in non-organic pesticides. Some farmers feel weird about it, some don't. For some farmers even using organic pesticides is bad because it doesn't fit their vision of what organic is. Then there's this whole thing where farmers and people are like 'it's better to eat local [because] then you know the farmer who's doing the food and it doesn't need to be certified'. But then, there are some certified farmers who are frustrated by that because they feel like some people are cheating. (Alex, interview, 13/01/2017)

> A few years back, for me organic was just vegetables grown without pesticides, using seeds that didn't come from Monsanto, sort of the 'conventional' understanding of what organic food is. But my experience working on an organic farm really changed my appreciation of what we could call organic because in the end it was so different from what happens at La Grange. It was a really large-scale operation with tractors and we were like machines, working so fast, and chopping things down with no connection to the vegetables. They were just rows of stuff. The goal [for this kind of organic farm] is to make a buck out of it and it's really hard. I respect people who do it and I don't wanna critique it too much … but the process my boss was doing was really just labelling it as organic. It *is* still organic, but it's done in such a way that for me it's really no different than conventional agriculture. It's industrial organic. (Marianne, interview, 12/01/2017)

Both Alex and Marianne have worked on large-scale organic farms and on a number of smaller projects like La Grange, yet neither one of them appears to be entirely sure of how to define organic. Moreover, both reflect the fact that every "organic" farmer has their own vision of what organic is. So then, is what it means to be organic in the eye of the beholder? If you asked Pollan's grass farmer Joel Salatin, he would probably tell you that "you'll have to ask the government, because now *they* own the word" (Pollan, 2006, p. 132).

As it turns out, government regulating bodies do not seem to be of much help either. In the Unites States, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) sports a National Organic Program Final Rule that came out in 2002, but tends to see amendments every year or two. For the fledgling organic farmer, getting certified is an onerous and expensive process. In the United States, one can expect the total fees for USDA certification to be between $400 USD - $1000 USD per year (Larkin Hansen, 2010, p. 355), and the process involves cumbersome inspections and no small amount of paperwork. Certification in Canada appears to be even more labyrinthine, as the CFIA (Canadian Food Inspection Agency) handles organic certification through what the Government of Canada website calls "accredited certification bodies". Of the nineteen accredited bodies appearing on the Government of Canada website which provide certification to Canadian organic growers in accordance with the requirements of the ominously named Canada Organic Regime, ten of them are located outside of Canada, with eight coming from the United States, one located in Bologna, Italy and one in Rosario, Argentina (CFIA, 2017). The fact that so much of Canada's organic certification is not even done in Canada even prompted a 2012 article in the National Post referring to Canada's food organic certification system as "little more than an extortion racket" (Humphreys, 2012). As for what exactly it is that certification gets you, according to Hansen, "certification is basically a marketing tool. If certification makes your product more valuable or easier to market, then it is worthwhile" (Larkin Hansen, 2010, p. 355).

But before going too far down organic's ontological rabbit hole, perhaps we can make sense of organic for the purposes of this research not by looking at organic as a material with cash value and marketability, but by going back to its ideological, prefigurative roots. Instead of asking questions like "is this carrot organic?", perhaps it may be more illuminating in this case to ask "what was the intention behind this carrot?". For those who initially began the organic movement, there was once a credo, an "organic ideal" that provided a sort of philosophical foundation for the movement, neatly summed up below by British agricultural scientist and organic farming pioneer Sir Albert Howard:

> Mother earth never attempts to farm without live stock; she always raises mixed crops; great pains are taken to preserve the soil and to prevent erosion; the mixed vegetable and animal wastes are converted into humus; there is no waste; the processes of growth and the processes of decay balance one another; the greatest care is taken to store the rainfall; both plants and animals are left to protect themselves against disease. (Howard, 1940, p. 4)

Although the first stirrings predate Howard, it was the British organic movement of the 1920s – 1940s, of which Howard was an influential figure, which first began to give form to the body of knowledge that would become organic agriculture. Effectively a response to industrialism and in particular the NPK mentality discussed earlier in this chapter, this body of knowledge "took shape as industrial methods reached the countryside" and "first articulated the concerns about food production that would emerge decades later, with greater urgency" (Fromartz, 2006, p. 7).

The simplicity of the NPK mentality was seductive however, and the philosophies of Howard and his ilk remained largely on the fringe, kept alive by figures like J.I. Rodale, an accountant-turned-manufacturer-turned-publisher who upon reading Howard, took up the cause (Fromartz, 2006, p. 19). Rodale began publishing a magazine in 1940 called *Organic Gardening and Farming,* which was responsible for the term "organic" but which remained in relative obscurity along with its lofty organic ideals until they were both picked up by the counterculture of the 1960s. Rodale's magazine started gaining

traction and on April 20, 1969, a group of "agrarian reformers", taking their cues from the Diggers in seventeenth-century England, took over a vacant lot on the University of California campus, declaring their intent to "establish on the site the model of a new cooperative society built from the ground up; that included growing their own 'uncontaminated' food" (Pollan, 2006, p. 141).

The movement took off, with food co-ops being formed as alternatives to capitalist systems of distribution and a proliferation of organic, chemical-free farms. Before long however, the more successful organic farmers found themselves catering to the demands of the market, selling their produce to supermarkets and incorporating some of the methods of their industrial counterparts. Sayre, referencing Julie Guthman's 2004 book, *Agrarian Dreams: The Paradox of Organic Farming in California*, points out that "the organic sector relies on 'an agrarian populist imaginary' to conceal from itself its fundamental implication in the capitalist exploitation[32] of both land and labor" (Sayre, 2011, p. 43). Fast forwarding to the present day, it is hard to argue against the fact that organic farming has more or less come into the capitalist fold, becoming the "industrial organic" observed above by Marianne.

In the end it is not hard to see why so many who find resonance with aspects of the "organic ideal" come to see the word organic as more trouble than it is worth. Many, La Grange included, have chosen either to jettison the organic moniker altogether or to seek some other way of describing what they do.

This research has had to ask itself similar questions. Is the word organic worth the trouble? Is it possible to suture together some of the historical strains of organic philosophy into something that we can apply to contemporary attempts at "the organic ideal" such as La Grange? We can try. But rather than seeing organic solely as an end in and of itself, as markets and governments tend to, it may still be possible, and in the end

[32] Although I have alluded to it at various points in this chapter, another dimension which I have not had the space to adequately address is the role of the bourgeois, whose tastes, deep pockets and willingness to pay more for organic have also contributed to the commercialization of organic in considerable ways. See Guthman (2004) for a more robust account of this.

perhaps even more useful, to see organic as a means, a prefigurative process that aims to stir up the ghosts of the old organic ideal.

Notes on Productivity and Economy

Ontology and philosophy of organic aside, there still remain questions of the efficacy of organic farming methods and its relationship with the tortured, ubiquitous concept of "economy".

Proponents of industrial agriculture can often be found saying things like: "it is seen that increased agricultural output and productivity tend to contribute substantially to an overall economic development of the country; it will be rational and appropriate to place greater emphasis on further development of the agricultural sector" (Macatta, 2016, ¶ 4) or "Since agriculture employs many people it contributes to economic development. As a result, the national income level as well as people's standard of living is improved" (Agricultural Goods, ¶ 11).

These kinds of appeals to save, develop, or resuscitate "the economy" by way of developing business-as-usual agriculture are confused at best and outright disingenuous at worst. Even in supposed neoliberal success stories such Eakin, Bausch and Sweeney's analysis of the "agrarian winner" that was Sinaloa, Mexico with its "maize boom", the authors are still forced to admit that "ecological and social consequences may be of less concern than the analogous story of maize expansion in the USA might suggest, yet as of now, there appears to be little effort dedicated to monitoring and evaluating those potential negative externalities" (Eakin, Bausch and Sweeney, 2014, p. 47). Sinaloa's economy fared quite well as a result of neoliberal reform and Mexico on the whole became "relatively self-sufficient in white maize, albeit maize in the form of processed commercial corn-flour tortillas and high-input, commercially processed maize food products" (Eakin, Bausch and Sweeney, 2014, p. 47). Sinaloa's people and its environmental integrity however, were clearly of secondary importance. As we will discuss in the next chapter, the mentality that grants primacy to economic growth has

much to do with the metric of the GDP.

As alluded to by Reddy (1995) and briefly discussed earlier in this chapter, and despite neoliberal rhetoric to the contrary, economies and ecological systems are entirely different things and a strong economy seldom translates into a sound environment.

Those in the pro-industrial agriculture camp will also frequently point to the sheer productivity of industrial agriculture and GMOs vis a vis the ever-growing human population[33] and will frequently point to what they seem to have convinced themselves is the impending Malthusian apocalypse that awaits humanity if we do not wholly embrace the industrial agricultural model, warts and all (Faires, 2013, p. 80).

As Faires goes on to note however, this assertion that industrial agriculture is more productive is not a given, underscoring the high degree of variability present in the results from a number of studies focusing on the differences between the productive capacities of industrial and organic methods. This difficulty in pinning down with certainty the difference in yield between these two approaches to agriculture also raises some questions about the nature of productivity that will be explored further in later chapters. What does it mean to be productive? What exactly is being produced? What metric are we using to pass value judgements on the level of productivity?

In this case, we can safely assert that industrial agriculture, by virtue of its close relationship with capitalism, views productivity as output (of yield) and profit (for shareholders) that is easily quantifiable (usually with numbers). By contrast "rather than growing bigger plants faster, organic is content with building a higher yield over time through better soil" (Faires, 2013, p. 70). In other words, in organic agriculture yield is secondary to soil quality and productivity means not just counting how much food is produced on a particular plot of land, but how much it can continue to produce in the

[33]The human population is projected to reach 9.7 billion according to a 2015 study by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

absence of exogenous inputs. With such differing goals, it is a small wonder no one seems to be able to come up with a consensus.

Meanwhile, At La Grange…

As mentioned in the introduction, La Grange, as an "intergenerational project" as Marianne puts it, has a history thoroughly steeped in organic idealism:

> There was no question about it for [Hugh and I]. I did a course in 1976 on organic gardening. All the books we had were about organic farming. It was definitely an ideology that we subscribed to because it was wrong to be poisoning the earth with pesticides and chemicals … [Hugh and I were instead] using natural methods of fertilizer like compost, fishmeal and manure. No pesticides, companion planting. We were very doctrinaire about not using chemicals, "le stuff" as the [local] farmers called it. (Margaret, interview, 31/12/16)

To my knowledge, since Margaret and Hugh took over the land, there have never been conventional fertilizers, herbicides, or pesticides applied at the farm. The very notion of using "le stuff" was never under consideration at any point. It is fair to say that as far as any practical considerations worth noting go, La Grange grows its produce organically.

However, as Seamus in his idiosyncratically blunt manner comments: "I feel like the organic movement is an arrogant, self-righteous, white-supremist movement that is based on bourgeois principles and elitist mentalities of health and well-being that should be for everybody but aren't". This fiery quote serves to highlight a distinction that I observed when discussing the topic of organic with members of the project, specifically that between organic as a set of agricultural practices and the "organic movement". The "push for [organic] to become a big commercial thing" as Alex describes, does not sit well with the firmly anti-capitalist disposition of La Grange members. The prevailing attitude expressed was that capitalism had so methodically co-opted the organic movement and so

thoroughly commodified the food produced by it, that they felt no affinity with it as "a movement".

> Agriculture which gets it nutrients from Dow Chemical and Monsanto and shit is destructive and not a good practice for working soil sustainably over generations. But at the same time, not-sustainable are certification bodies which require things which are absurd and let other things through and at the end results in a consumer product that can only be bought by rich people. (Seamus, interview, 12/04/17)

Whatever level of discomfort and disillusion some members of La Grange had sometimes expressed with the term organic, their feelings towards conventional agriculture were considerably less ambivalent. While many of the issues with conventional agriculture that are presented in this chapter were not expressly discussed in the interviews conducted[34], from the very beginning of my time working with La Grange it was clear that the project rejected the capitalist commodification of food and the destructive practices of conventional industrial farming. Yet, while it perhaps admits to having an uneasy truce with it, La Grange clearly does not identify with many aspects of the organic movement. I came to see that the mentality of most La Grange participants was that the type of agriculture practiced at La Grange was neither organic, nor conventional. What is more, I came to understand that speaking of La Grange through either lens failed to capture the essence of what the project was about. It became clear to me that if I was searching for something approximating a collective identity at La Grange, I would have to look elsewhere than to this tired debate for insight.

The above being said being said, if agriculture and food politics, for all their faults and contradictions, were nevertheless an entry point and a concern, however peripheral, for the members of La Grange, then it is my hope that this chapter has served a similar function within the context of this thesis. Bearing this in mind, I urge the reader to view

[34] This was largely because these tacit feelings towards conventional farming practices were so obvious to me after spending time at the farm that I neglected to even ask – a shortcoming of this chapter owing mainly to my inexperience as a researcher.

the debates and worldviews discussed above as a starting point from which to enter into a larger discussion of politics.

Chapter 3 - In Saladarity:
Prefiguration, Production, and Play

The goal this chapter will be first to examine some of the academic discussions of prefiguration in terms of form, function, and temporality, so as to develop a vocabulary which can be used to hone in on what manner of prefiguration can be said to occur at La Grange, what forms it takes, and what exactly it aims to prefigure.

The concept of prefiguration has a rich history that many argue predates the widely accepted date of "coining" by Boggs in the late 1970s. As such, a brief look back at these pre-Boggs instances of prefiguration is in order before turning to a discussion of the various meanings that have been applied to the term by political scientists, anthropologists, and scholars of social movements. As these different formulations are often either read as or cast as being in competition with one another, part of this chapter will also be an exercise in testing whether or not there is any degree of theoretical compatibility between these different formulations by attempting to apply them in tandem to a specific project, in this case the La Grange Farm Collective.

While most conceptions of prefiguration concern themselves predominantly with notions of what are often referred to as "means/ends equivalency" or "means/ends unity", many discussions of prefiguration, and as I will argue in chapter 4, anarchism, are also to some degree or another couched in terms of the political relationships between individuals and larger social groupings. These social groupings can vary widely in scope and can refer to particular activist projects anchored in a specific time and location such as La Grange or the European squats and social spaces as studied by Yates (2015) and Ringel (2012), larger social and political movements such as the New Left of the 1960s as discussed by Breines (1982), and the prolifically researched alterglobalization movement (Juris, 2008; Graeber, 2008; Maeckelbergh, 2009). However, as individuals engaged in political activity are often ultimately doing so with the goal of affecting some manner of change in the behaviour of a larger social grouping, and social/political movements and societies are comprised of individuals, I will argue that these scales can, and very often do, bleed

into one another, making it very difficult to examine one point on the scale without examining the others.

In the end, the hope for this chapter is to use these many perspectives to establish a "good enough" understanding of prefiguration that it can operate as a reference point for later chapters discussing the closely related topics of the DIY ethos in chapter 4 and anarchism in chapter 5. Lastly, I will conclude this chapter by attempting to contextualize these distinct but interrelated conceptions of prefiguration by way of grounding them in the ethnographic research conducted at La Grange.

Go Prefigure

Although there were instances preceding its inclusion in the lexicon of contemporary political discourse, it is generally agreed that the term prefigurative politics first concretely emerged as theory in a 1977 article titled *Marxism, Prefigurative Communism, and the Problem of Workers' Control* by political scientist Carl Boggs, wherein Boggs introduces the prefigurative tradition as "the embodiment, within the ongoing political practice of a movement, of those forms of social relations, decision-making, culture, and human experience that are the ultimate goal" (Boggs, 1977). Boggs attributes its origins to nineteenth century anarchists and saw expressions of prefiguration in the syndicalists and council communists of the early twentieth century and the New Left of the 1960s and 1970s.

Haiven and Khasnabish argue that its roots in fact go further back than this, noting the presence of prefigurative aspects in the Protestant peasant uprisings of the Early Modern period and in many of the Indigenous civilizations of North America (Haiven & Khasnabish, 2014, p. 245). Moreover, Haiven and Khasnabish point out that the "prefigurative turn" in contemporary radical politics also owes a great deal to "feminist, radical pacifist, anti-racist, queer, and environmental activism" (Haiven & Khasnabish, 2014, p. 246). Gordon (2017) also notes that the concept of prefiguration appears both in Christian theology and in a particular strand of authoritarian Marxism espoused by

Marxist scholar Andre Gorz in the 1960s. These various genealogies of the term serve to both foreshadow and underscore the multiplicity of the term itself.

Indeed, as mentioned previously in the theory section, prefiguration was chosen as a framework in large part because of its capacity to examine broad spectrums of activity on multiple scales and from multiple viewpoints. But the flexibility, or perhaps what some might even call the ambiguity of the term, has not gone without its share of criticism. Scholar like Yates (2015) and Franks (2014) have expressed concern that particular conceptions of prefiguration may be focusing too much on one or more facet of prefiguration at the expense of others, with scholars such as Gordon (2017) even suggesting that the term be jettisoned altogether or replaced with some other, less rarefied means by which to describe the prefigurative orientation. These discussions and debates however, have yielded some interesting distinctions (see table below) between different kinds of prefiguration that may be useful in examining this concept within the context of a project like La Grange.

Prior to an analysis of these different formulations however, a useful starting point will be to partially demystify prefiguration by way of contrast. While we will see that there are a number of views regarding what exactly prefiguration is, there are some juxtapositions which should be addressed regarding what it is not. To this end, we will begin with the definition of prefigurative politics provided by Leach in the *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements*:

> 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. (Leach, 2013, p.1)

In one sense then, prefiguration can be contrasted with utilitarianism. Where utilitarianism employs its moral calculus to justify or reject the ends of any given means/ends equation, prefiguration offers an alternative approach in that the means and

ends are often ideologically aligned. For instance, a farmer who follows the "organic ideal" we discussed last chapter, will take the time to weed their crops by hand and make their own compost rather than soak their plants with herbicides and fertilize them with chemicals because they know the former methods are good for the soil they work, while the latter will gradually destroy it. In a world that enjoys cheap, unsustainable energy, it might be cheaper, faster, or more efficient to use herbicide and chemical fertilizer to grow his crops, but the farmer acknowledges that they are unsustainable and wishes to one day see all food produced without them so he dons his garden gloves and saves all his eggshells. As Leach goes on to say, prefiguration entails a "commitment to means – ends consistency [that] reflects what Weber called a "value- rational" logic of action, in which action is guided by values rather than instrumental efficiency" (Leach, 2013, p. 1).

However, while the term has come to be seen as somewhat of a counterpoint to instrumental approaches or "the struggle to conquer and maintain political power" (Boggs, 1977, p. 359), it is interesting to note that Boggs himself has, in his 1977 essay *Revolutionary Process, Political Strategy and the Dilemma of Power*, posited that one of the major shortcomings of what he sees as the three main archetypical, emancipatory strategies of the 19th and 20th centuries, namely Leninism, structural reformism, and anarcho-communism, has been the failure of these strategies to integrate these two dimensions of prefiguration and instrumentalism (Boggs, 1977, p. 359). This is to say that Boggs has not done away with instrumentalism as a constitutive aspect of social change, but rather that instrumentalism without prefiguration has "either created new types of domination or simply adapted to established ones" (Boggs, 1977, p. 359).

A similar prefigurative/instrumental duality can be seen in Franks' analysis of the tensions present in competing anti-fascist praxes, with consequentialism or "achieving a predetermined outcome … as effectively as possible" (Franks, 2010, p. 44) sitting in for instrumentalism. Franks also adds an ethical dimension to the equation, stating that a gauge for measuring how effectively these two approaches converge is the degree to which they can create and maintain "*relationships* and *characteristics* that have an intrinsic value (such as the virtues of compassion, integrity, wisdom and bravery) as well

as resources that assist individual and social flourishing, but are not inherently desirable" (Franks, 2010, p. 45). In other words, this suggests that the intrinsic, prefigurative values of a group can still be the primary focus, but this does not necessarily foreclose the possibilities of acquiring the resources required to maintain a project or to realize specific short-term or consequential goals.

Another take on prefiguration can be seen in the work of authors such as Breines (1982) or Cornell (2010) writing about the prefigurative aspects of New Left of the 1960s and 1970s. Cornell, studying the Movement for a New Society[35] (MNS), saw that the movement sought to "prefigure" its goals in its everyday practices, with the MNS's introductory pamphlet stating that "our goals must be incorporated into the way we organize, [and] thus must be egalitarian and non-centralized" (MNS in Cornell, 2010, p. 236).

Breines uses prefigurative politics to describe the "essentially anti-organizational characteristics" of the spontaneous grass roots movements that were often in tension with national organizations (Breines, 1982, p. 6). Breines is also quick to point out that these grass roots movements were not disorganized, as "movements are organized in numerous obvious and often hidden ways", but rather exhibited a "wariness of hierarchy and centralized organization" (Breines, 1982, p. 6).

Breines' discussion of prefiguration is notable in particular in that it provides prefigurative politics with another foil, namely what she refers to as "strategic politics", an approach to social change that emphasized organization-building as the best way of achieving the end goal of structural political change, even if it meant building alternative institutions that took their cues from centralized, hierarchical models (Breines, 1982, p. 30). We will return to Breines later in this chapter but for the moment, it will suffice to

[35] Described by Cornell as "a mix of Gandhians, anarchists, and unaffiliated democratic socialists" (Cornell, 2010, p. 236), MNS was formed in 1971 and eventually disbanded by its membership in 1988. According to Cornell MNS "transmitted the practice of revolutionary nonviolence from the 1960s to the 1990s, synthesizing it with ecology, feminism, and anarchism" and its members were involved in a variety of social struggles during this period, including the "antiwar, antinuclear, feminist, gay liberation and ecology movements" (Cornell, 2010, p. 231).

say that prefiguration distinguishes itself from other approaches in that:

1) Prefiguration aims to achieve some manner of what is referred to as means-ends equivalence (Yates, 2015) or means/ends unity (Gordon, 2017).
2) While the focus within prefigurative approaches is on intrinsic values and their embodiment in the pursuit of political goals, this does not necessarily mean that prefiguration is unconcerned with instrumental benefits, but rather that they are of secondary importance.
3) Prefigurative approaches tend to manifest more commonly in forms of political action and organization that operate outside of centralized, or hierarchical institutions.

More recently, Gordon (2017) employs a temporal lens to discuss what exactly can be prefigured and offers a distinction between what he describes as the two prefigurative temporal framings of *recursive* prefiguration and *generative* prefiguration. For Gordon, a temporal framing is critical to a clear understanding of what is being prefigured in any given circumstance and that to discuss prefiguration without this framing is problematic in that it:

> Entangles two different notions of ends: as expressions of intrinsic value ('an end in itself'), and as desired future situations ('an end result'). While the former may be immediately achievable (e.g. though anti-hierarchical organising), the latter's intelligibility depends on a *temporal framing* that connects past, present and future. (Gordon, 2017, p. 2)

Citing numerous examples from Christian theology, Gordon contends that the concept of prefiguration appears frequently in Christian religious texts and is in fact central to the Christian worldview (Gordon, 2017, p. 3-5). These kinds of prefigurative conceptions constitute a *"recursive* temporal framing in which events at one time are interpreted as a *figure* pointing to its *fulfilment* in later events, with the figure cast in the model of the fulfillment" (Gordon, 2017, p. 4).

By contrast, Gordon points to the temporal framings of generative prefiguration that he argues "appear earliest and most consistently in the anarchist tradition" (Gordon, 2017, p. 6). On the heels of the fall of the Paris Commune in 1871, the Jura Federation was formed in response to heightened tensions between Marxists and anarchists within the International Workingmen's Association (Guerin, 2005, p. 140-141). Gordon posits the circular issued by the Jura Federation as one of the earliest written articulations of generative prefiguration, particularly their assertion that "the International [Workingmen's Association], being the future human society in embryo [should] stand here and now as a faithful reflection of our principles of liberty and federation and to eschew from its ranks any principle tending towards authority and dictatorship" (Guerin, 2017, p. 142). Generative prefiguration is thereby seen by Gordon as those instances "wherein the future is seen as the product of the affordances and contingencies preceding it" (Gordon, 2017, p. 10).

To put it another way, where recursive framing already establishes a set future condition that has existed in the past and will somehow exist again in the future, generative framing does not necessarily make any prophecies regarding what the future holds, save that we can prefigure a future by way of generating embryos of it that are guided by the principles and values we wish to see. Recursive framing is resigned to a future, while generative framing leaves room for agency.

Breines also points to a question posed by Quaker activist Staughton Lynd in a 1965 SDS pamphlet on participatory democracy, wherein Lynd asks of those in the New Left attempting to prefigure participatory democracy in the United States: "is what's intended moral gesture only, or a determined attempt to transform the American power structure?" (Lynd in Breines, 1982, p. 59).

This question, while valid, belies a tendency often seen in detractors of prefigurative orientations to see these two dimensions of the moral and the transformative as mutually exclusive. It may be a more difficult venture to simultaneously make both "a moral as

well as an organizational statement" as Breines suggests (Breines, 1982, p. 59), but one could certainly question whether or not it is helpful or even accurate to view this relationship through a zero-sum lens.

This contrast between action as utility and action as prefiguration can also find application within Habermas' system/lifeworld as it is formulated by Wher (2010), a framework we will return to in the following chapter. In the current economic system, I am unfortunately, a utilitarian. I weigh the costs of selling my labour for capital against the benefits of eating food next week and decide that it is in my rational self interest go to work today. However in the lifeworld, provided there is still some uncolonized space left in it, I may choose to spend some of my labour planting carrots so that I can eat them next month. I would like to see a world where I have the agency to simultaneously choose to not have to go to work, and to not starve, so on this particular day, I call in sick and spend the day in the garden. It might take me longer to get some food, and I will probably have to be a utilitarian again while my carrots grow, but in this scenario, I have effectively used prefiguration to decolonize my lifeworld.

This scenario might seem silly and is perhaps even a bit reductive, but if enough people decide to spend their days growing their own food instead of selling their labour for capital, eventually a critical mass occurs wherein nobody needs to be a utilitarian anymore in order to eat.

Limits of Prefiguration

Yates (2014) expresses concern that using "means/ends equivalence" of the kind discussed by Maeckelbergh (Maeckelbergh, 2009, p. 66) in the definition provided earlier as the sole qualifier for prefiguration "is simply not precise enough in any of its permutations" and argues that "prefigurative politics should not be simply a denotative term for many movement activities, but a working analytic concept". (Yates, 2014, p. 18). Instead, he proposes reformulating the qualifiers as a combination of five processes, namely: "experimentation, the circulation of political perspectives, the production of new

norms and conduct, material consolidation, and diffusion". (Yates, 2014, p. 2).

It is also worth mentioning that prefiguration can in some cases be a privilege. One's socioeconomic position dictates, to a degree, what kinds of prefiguration are possible and to what extent they can be practiced. Often, individuals are forced into engaging with the utilitarianism of contemporary capitalism. Many individuals, those in marginalized positions in particular, often do not have the time to engage in such idealism and are more concerned with putting food on the table and having a place to live.

This is sometimes the case at La Grange, as the barriers to participation discussed in chapter 5 illustrate. Although some of the reasons why people cannot be as involved as they would wish have to do with obligations in which members have the agency to decide whether or not to participate, such as obligations to other activist projects or social events, in many cases they do not. As we will also discuss in chapter 5, money and time[36] are the primary limiting factors in involvement. Many members have to work to pay rent and eat or provide shelter and food for their children and herein lies a contradiction of sorts – people can work for free at an anti-capitalist project like La Grange only after they have sold their labor to capital to meet their basic needs.

For my part, and in the interests of reflexivity, I have tried throughout this research to remain cognizant of the fact that my privileged position of being able to "play in the dirt" for my thesis, my lack of offspring, and the fact that – at least for now – I need not spend an outrageous amount of time selling my labour, means that I can often afford to be involved in the project more than others.

Nevertheless, prefiguration can be empowering. For activists in particular, Graeber (2011) states that contemporary existence can be quite bleak. Many veins of postmodern

[36] Which some would say is also money, as it seems that there is much about living under capitalism that can in some way or another be traced back to money or the lack thereof, but this is another discussion altogether.

thought seem resigned to hopelessness[37], the emancipatory potential of communism seems to be more or less defunct, "the sudden sense of almost endless possibility" that was felt by many involved in the global justice activism during the fever pitch of the alterglobalization movement from 1998-2002 came to a halt in the wake of 9/11 and the subsequent declaration of a "permanent war mobilization[38]", and many "burned out, gave up, emigrated, bickered, killed themselves, applied to graduate school, or withdrew into various other sorts of morbid depression" (Graeber, 2011, p. 2).

Instances of depression and burnout are unfortunately all too common among activists. Haiven and Khasnabish put it rather succinctly by saying that "we turn to social movements not merely because they offer a means to transform our world but also because they offer a means of coping with the relentless and cascading humanitarian, ecological, social, and political tragedy" (Haiven & Khasnabish, 2014, p. 119). Breines echoes this perspective within the context of the New Left, saying "personal liberation, the escape from loneliness, meaninglessness, and manipulation were attained through collective political action" (Breines, 1982, p. 45).

Though it is often the case that involvement in prefigurative social movements can provide a measure of hope or optimism for their participants, Gordon maintains that this optimism cannot be sustained by prefiguration indefinitely in the absence of observable, concrete social transformation, arguing that "the absence of revolutionary promise and awareness of converging planetary crises have together cast transformative politics into a crisis" (Gordon, 2017, p. 12). For his part, Gordon suggests that prefiguration can be safely done away with and suggests an amalgamation of Abiral's "anxious/catastrophic hope" (2015) and a modified version of Ernst Bloch's "concrete utopia" (1995), as potential starting points in constructing a replacement for prefiguration that could both "suggest generative, rather than recursive temporality" and potentially "encourage affective dispositions other than reassurance" (Gordon, 2017, p. 12).

[37] Baudrillard's (1994) contention that consumer society and the simulacrum have won in their colonization of all "reality" and Althussuer's interpellation come to mind.
[38] Graeber here is referring to the war on terrorism.

The malleability and applicability of prefiguration, which in chapter 1 is described as one of the strengths of the concept, is also in a sense its weakness. As we have seen, for many scholars the untethered way in which prefiguration is often discussed requires some degree of reification if it is to be of use. What is more, if you can plug pretty much any worldview into the prefigurative equation, does this compromise its emancipatory potential? I would suppose that the answer to that question depends on whether you are applying some manner of moral or ethical weight to prefiguration or simply using it as an analytical tool.

If one is applying the former, then indeed one of its problematics is that the logic of prefigurative politics can cut both ways. If for instance, John Doe is a white-power fascist, his prefiguring the Aryan-only, totalitarian state he envisions by assaulting minorities in the street is not something that I, or anyone involved at La Grange for that matter, would advocate or consider to be a positive thing - yet this can just as readily be seen as an example of prefiguration.

While prefiguration is often employed to analyze the activities and orientations of groups whose goals are generally regarded as progressive, such as aboriginal empowerment in Townsville, Australia (Petray, 2012) or the Civil Rights Movement in the United States (Boyd, 2015), this is not always the case. Studies like Futrell and Simi's 2004 *Free Spaces, Collective Identity, and the Persistence of U.S. White Power Activism,* use aspects of the prefigurative model[39] to discuss the role of prefiguration in perpetuating both local scale "indigenous-prefigurative" spaces such as "family homes, Bible study groups, informal parties and crashpads" (Futrell & Simi, 2004, p. 17) and "transmovement-prefigurative-spaces" such as those found in the online white power community and in "intentional Aryan communities and music festivals" (Futrell & Simi, 2004, p. 17). Futrell & Simi argue that these indigenous-prefigurative spaces serve to normalize white power ideology and identity within the White Power Movement while transformative-prefigurative-spaces "create network connections that link otherwise disconnected local networks into broader webs of white power culture" (Futrell & Simi,

[39] In particular those of Polletta (1999) which will be discussed in chapter 5.

2004, p. 38). In the end, such studies suggest that there is no intrinsic political agenda associated with prefigurative politics, despite the anarchist and countercultural origins of the concept and the tendency that social movement scholars have towards using the concept to examine left-of-the-center social movements.

Despite its shortcomings and competing definitions, it remains that the concept of prefiguration has entered the lexicon of social movement scholarship and, barring the establishment of some new theory to fill the theoretical vacuum its absence would create, for the moment it does not appear to be going anywhere.

What Does it all Mean?

Predicated on the decidedly constructionist notion that, for good or ill, the activities and organizations in which people participate, to one degree or another, are transformative, James C. Scott, in his *Two Cheers for Anarchism*, asks:

> What if we were to ask a different question of institutions and activities than the narrow neoclassical question of how efficient they are in terms of costs (e.g., resources, labor, capital) per unit of a given, specified product? What if we were to ask what kind of people a given activity or institution fostered? (Scott, 2012, p.62)

He suggests that, as an alternative index to the GDP (Gross Domestic Product), we could measure the strengths and shortcomings of a given activity or institution using what he refers to as the GHP (Gross Human Product). Scott's GHP would gauge to what degree:

1) A work process enlarges human capacities and skills (or is heuristic).

2) Those working that process judge it to be satisfying.

It would follow then that a high GHP is desirable, especially if one considers that living in a country with a high GDP does not necessarily mean you will be engaging with

institutions that are concerned with the enlargement of your capacities, nor that you will necessarily be participating in activities which you may deem satisfying.

In an attempt to provide some measure of coherence to the variously contested, yet frequently overlapping, definitions of prefiguration, the table below[40] outlines some of the primary cleavages that may help to partition that which is prefigurative from that which is not. Beginning with the taxonomic distinction provided by Breines (1989) between prefigurative and strategic politics, we also borrow from her the respective distinctions she affords in terms of grouping, structure and decision making. Scott's (2012) GHP makes an appearance, as does his contrast between the vernacular and the official as means of maintaining order. Lastly, Gordon's temporal distinctions are included, as are the goal orientations discussed by Boggs (1977), Yates (2015), and Franks (2014).

	Prefigurative Politics	**Strategic Politics**
Grouping	Community	Institution
Structure	Horizontal Decentralized Acephalous	Hierarchical Centralized Chain of Command
Decision Making	Consensus Based Participatory	Top Down By Proxy
GHP	Heuristic Empowering	Patronizing Mechanical
Order	Vernacular	Official
Temporality	Generative	Recursive
Goal Orientation	Primarily Intrinsic, Secondarily Instrumental	Categorically Instrumental

[40] The criteria of grouping, structure, decision making, GHP, order, temporality, and goal orientation present in the table were those which I felt were most consistently addressed or puzzled over in the literature on prefigurative politics that was reviewed for this thesis.

If we were to then apply the above contrast to La Grange, we would see that, as an unintentionally politically prefigurative project, La Grange tends to fall under the left column, with perhaps some exceptions regarding decision making that will be discussed in chapter 5. It is also worth highlighting that although this chart may be largely reflective of the political tendencies of La Grange, I have not observed La Grange consciously or actively identifying themselves as a prefigurative project. However, there is considerable overlap between some of the criteria in the left column - particularly with regards to structure, decision making, and power - and anarchism, a political orientation which almost all La Grange members would identify with to some degree or another.

Prefiguration at La Grange

Having hopefully unpacked the term somewhat, what do the individuals at La Grange have to say about prefiguration? Only a handful of those I had interviewed were familiar with the term beforehand, but once it was explained, most indicated that they felt resonance with it, and colored this resonance with a number of different hues, particularly with regards to the farm. Marc explains:

> To the extent that I would describe anything that I do as political at this point, or maybe not even me but other people looking in on my life saying 'ohh this person is politically active', I feel like it's all prefigurative politics and that's something that would apply to my involvement at La Grange … but for me, politics of any kind are social questions and as long as I live in a civilization like this one I will never be free … and a lot of people I think would say my politics or my perspectives are escapist because I don't expect to get free, I don't think it's possible to get free or live a legit, anarchist liberty in this sort of civilization. (Marc, interview, 15/12/16)

Marc's cynicism appears to be at least partially informed by the tacit impetus towards ideological and practical purity that anarchists and indeed activists of all stripes will occasionally get caught up in, and he appears to be aware of it. Sometimes this phenomenon is one that is solely self-imposed, but oftentimes this is the result of external

expectations[41]. Regardless of the cause, this kind of mentality can lead to bouts of unhelpful, and often damaging, self-flagellation if left unchecked. This much should be obvious, but nevertheless it is worth pointing out that actualizing prefigurative politics in terms of *always* having your actions commensurate with your ideal world is not always possible. Whether you cleave to the organic ideal, the anarchist ideal, or the DIY/self-sufficiency ideal, chances are that if one rigidly measures how they are forced to act under contemporary capitalism against these ideals, they will often come up short. Sometimes, I would argue, a measured dose of cognitive dissonance can be a good thing. Not every problem can be fixed immediately, as Dark Lord Jay explains:

> Revolutions have failed because they couldn't grow their own food and it's the same as with other aspects of autonomy. If everything you do is what the system has taught you, your revolution won't really work and you might as well not waste that fucking energy cause you're just gonna wind up killing a bunch of people for nothing … and at this point in [the lives of many of the older anarchists involved in La Grange], it's time to actually live the shit we've been talking about for 15 years … but Seamus had too many ambitions [for the project] for one summer. In the long run, now I'm now feeling more positive about La Grange. Sometimes it feels like we didn't do what we set out to do because Seamus had these huge revolutionary goals that were gonna happen in 4 ½ months and [laughing] revolutions don't happen in 4 1/2 months. (Dark Lord Jay, interview, 02/12/16)

Here Jay is both evoking a generative temporal framing of prefiguration at La Grange, and asserting that absent hope need not necessarily follow from seeing your long-term goals unrealized. After all, these things take time. If Rome was not built in a day, as the saying goes, then it stands to reason that it cannot be dismantled in a day either. Jay seems to be suggesting that the real trick is to be consistent with your moral compass, but mindful of where you actually walk. To put it another way, even if you do not live to see the revolution in your lifetime, if you have engaged with the world around you

[41] "How can you call yourself an anarchist if you take welfare from the government?" is a good one. "How can you say that you support organic agriculture when you still buy most of your food from the grocery store?" is another.

prefiguratively, you have enacted your politics. The personal is political as Luke explains:

> If you really believe a political belief, is it integrated into your life … it reminds me of Sartre's existentialism. We are the drivers of our own destiny through the choices we make right? I don't believe that what I'm doing at La Grange has much of an effect outside of me, but it does allow me to support myself without contributing to a shitty system. I don't think I'm really affecting the shitty system, at least not yet, but I am, to a marginal degree, allowing myself to live without being a [part of the] problem. (Luke, interview, 08/12/16)

A common thread in all of these responses is the tendency to speak of prefiguration on a personal level. It would appear, both from these interviews and from my ethnographic experience working alongside these people however, that while many of the members of La Grange see themselves as enacting prefiguration on a personal level, they also appear to remain aware of how their prefigurations are situated within larger contexts. Moreover, individual prefiguration at La Grange takes myriad forms, often with the personal and the political so imbricated that distinction between the two is neither easily discernable, nor particularly useful. Although these individual motivations carry particular practical, social, or even spiritual dimensions, there is an underlying, if often tacit commitment to creating and expressing a shared sense of political orientation and praxis. But the question remains: is the La Grange collective, as a collective, a prefigurative project?

The delineations between who has volunteered at La Grange and who is a member of the La Grange collective have never been clearly or officially established, so it is difficult to even clearly define what membership is. Having said that, the degree to which an individual participates in the project seems to be the de facto criteria for membership. If somebody shows up a handful of times during a season, they can be considered a volunteer or a peripheral member, whereas those who make regular trips to the farm are effectively core members.

As founder of the current La Grange, Seamus's vision of the project when it first began was, as we will discuss further in chapter 5, rooted in the desire to use the farm as a space to build community. While he was at the helm, he made daily trips to the farm in his van, bringing along anyone who was interested in joining him. Often those who came along would camp on site and work the next day, with drinks around the bonfire at the end of the day being a fairly regular occurrence. In terms of a sense of community being fostered, this was done as much by the fire as it was in the fields. Unfortunately, since Seamus's departure there have been a grand total of 2 bonfires. This lack of community was noticed most keenly by Margaret:

> That aspect [of community] was something that I don't think we succeeded at very well this last year, except for the last day, because we were all together. We didn't manage to come at the same time as each other, and we got a lot of good work done but in groups of twos and threes … We succeeded at the crops, but we didn't succeed in the spirit of togetherness and supporting other people like we did with [the Anne Claire fundraiser]. (Margaret, interview, 13/12/16)

The support that Margaret is referring to is the fundraiser event we held for Mik'Maw land defender Anne Claire. Regarded by all involved as the single event in La Grange's history which encompassed everything that the project stood for, the Legal Defence Fundraiser for Anne Claire remains likely to be the yardstick by which the success of events held in the space will be measured for years to come. In almost all of my interviews, folks speak fondly of this evening and recall it as being the single most successful thing La Grange has done to date.

Below I have included from my fieldnotes an unvarnished account of the evening in question which was written after the event. It is my hope that this vignette will be for the reader both a window for into the character of the goings on at La Grange, and an example of what prefigurative politics can look like on the ground.

"The Event"

Seamus and his partner Marianne were the primary organizers for the event and they spent a great deal of time planning the logistics and organizing performers.
There were many performances that evening, including several talks, a film screening, a puppet show, spoken word performances, and the main event – a presentation from Anne Claire and Miles Howe about Elsipogtog and resistance to hydraulic fracturing or "fracking" projects in Kent County, New Brunswick that occurred in the Spring, Summer, and Fall of 2013. Preparing the space for this event was a Herculean task that took most of August and some of September.

The barn, which had been the storage space for 30 years worth of accumulated odds and ends, took close to 3 weeks and countless volunteer hours to clean up and organize. Free food, much of it being produce grown at La Grange, was organized, cooked offsite, and brought to the event, a raised stage area was installed in the back of the barn, floodlights were fixed to the rafters with deck screws and yellow polypropylene rope, and a sound system, projector screen and film projector were procured on loan from various QPIRGS (Quebec Public Interest Research Groups) to facilitate the evening's performances. Cinder blocks were fetched, and in some cases unearthed, from various places around the farm and were washed off and coupled with a half dozen of the highest quality 2 x 12 planks we could find to create makeshift seating in front of the stage. Upon realizing that there was to be a thunderstorm during the evening of the event, tarps were installed over the washing station where the food was being served.

It was indeed a deluge that evening and one of my self-appointed tasks was to periodically remove the water accumulating in the center of the aforementioned tarp by pushing up on it from below with a broomstick so it did not collapse on the food. I mused to myself more than once that evening that this was a fitting, if somewhat humorous example of the DIY ethos of "making do with whatever works" in action. I was also tasked with manning the door, answering questions about the farm, taking donations, and

selling copies of Miles Howe's new book on his experiences at the anti-fracking blockade entitled *Elsipogtog: The Anatomy of a Struggle.*

This was a memorable event for all who were present, not just on account of the turnout but also for the fact that the location had created a different dynamic than many were used to. The space had always been conscious of its location both on unceded First Nation land and several miles up the road from the Laval Penitentiary, the CSC (Correction Service Canada) Federal Training Center and Immigrant Detention Center (Canada Center De Prevention). Hosting a community event with free locally grown food to support a First Nation land defender's legal fees allowed La Grange expression for all four of what were its main political commitments in one evening: community building, food sovereignty, indigenous support and anti-prison work. At its height there were over 100 people, young and old, who made their way out to La Grange in a thunderstorm to attend the event. Over $1300 was collected for Anne's defence, and $100 was donated to Mohawk anarchist Clifton Nicholas's new film project, an as of then unnamed retrospective on the 1990 Oka Land Defence.

Several times during the evening's performances the sound of the rain hitting the aluminum roof became loud enough that several unscheduled brief intermissions were needed and the sound levels required constant attention. Aside from this minor inconvenience, the evening went off without any problems. During the intermissions people milled about in constantly changing groups, eating from the mismatched plates and discussing politics and current events. I myself had the opportunity to catch up with Miles who had been my mentor/editor for the handful of articles I wrote for the Halifax Media Co-op and whom I hadn't spoken to since I last lived in Halifax almost 4 years previous. Later in the evening I had a lengthy talk with a Spanish couple that were couch surfing in Montreal and wanted to know the history of the farm and what anarchist social spaces they should visit while in town.

There was a palpable atmosphere of community that evening that was perhaps even helped by the rain. There is something about severe weather that always seems to bring

people together and there was something about the character of that location on that particular night that had created a different dynamic between those who had participated. There were many people whom I had already known but the change of scenery from the kinds of venues in the city where events such as this are usually held made for an ambiance that one cannot recreate in the city and that fostered a different way of relating to those present.

By the time the performances were all finished, the rain had ceased and some of the organizers and the guests who had planned to stay the evening had started a bonfire in the fire pit which someone had the foresight to cover with a tarp before the rain came. We finished cleaning up the barn and, satisfied with the evening, we closed out the night having drinks around the fire and discussing plans for the next season.

The next morning while cooking breakfast, we received a text from Miles who informed us that he and Anne had heard from Anne's lawyer while they were driving back to the Maritimes. Her charges were all dropped.

After the event

We were all enthused and energized by this vindication of our efforts. We ended the season on a victorious note. We had, as a collective, through considerable, un-monetized work, generated a genuinely prefigurative scenario wherein we had created a moment not just for ourselves, but for the world we wanted to see. And we clung to it.

Each season since then we have attempted to organize a similar event and each season we have failed[42]. Plans had been discussed for movie screenings, acoustic shows, and farming workshops but time restraints, fluctuating membership or inconsistent levels of

[42] This is not to imply that there were no causes which La Grange members felt were worthy of holding an event for. There was talk for instance of holding a fundraising event in solidarity with the Dakota Access Pipeline protests, but these plans proved to be overzealous. Seamus and Marianne had spent months organizing the lion's share of the logistics for the Anne Claire event and in the end, none of the members had the time to commit to such an undertaking.

involvement from what were previously core members of the group, combined with a lack of accessibility to the barn as a potential venue and, in the end, La Grange has still not put on another event that is even remotely on par with the fundraiser.

The problems with the barn are in fact ongoing. The season following the event, Margaret had agreed to let a gentleman named Wentzell store items that he had been collecting that were destined for earthquake relief in Haiti. Margaret had expected this to be a short-term arrangement and allotted him several square meters of space on the barn floor to store said items, giving him a key to the barn. Over the course of the season, this rapidly expanding collection of odds and ends grew to take over the stage that was built for the event, a large portion of the available space on the ground level, and eventually the entire back end of the second floor.

One day, when another of Margaret's Haitian friends was over, she happened to overhear Wentzell conducting a cell-phone conversation in Creole wherein it was revealed that not all of these items were in fact destined for Haiti, something we had long suspected, as none of us were able to imagine a scenario where a crate of electric chandeliers or a dozen or so cold sealing doors would be of much use for people recovering from an earthquake in Haiti. It became fairly obvious that Wentzell had been buying and selling some of these items, effectively using Margaret's barn as a warehouse for his merchandise.

After some time, Margaret was finally able to acquire Wentzell's cell phone number. Jay, himself of Haitian descent, agreed to call Wentzell and discuss how, why, and by what date Wentzell should have his inventory removed from the barn, although as of this writing, large areas of the barn and several areas of the field remain occupied by Wentzell's inventory.

Playing in the Dirt

There are always plans afoot and the participants at La Grange are committed to the work they do, even if it the project as a whole does not always accomplish its goals. However,

while the political and community building dimensions of the project are not always successful, the educational benefits of "playing in the dirt" are many.

There is evidence suggesting that play is beneficial for society as a whole (Wong & Logan, 2016, p. 16), as well as ample data suggesting that play has a positive effect on the "social, cognitive, physical and psychological well-being" of individuals (Wong & Logan, 2016, p. 17). Scott echoes this, describing play as "deeply instructive" and identifying it as essential in the development of physical coordination, emotional regulation, capacity for socialization, adaptability, sense of belonging and social signaling, trust, and experimentation (Scott, 2012, p. 63-64).

There is also evidence suggesting that play contributes to a kind of autonomous self-ordering and even has direct, educational benefits. In interviewing a number of faculty and staff at schools and child care facilities concerning the playing habits of children, Charko, Fraser, Jones, and Keoni Umangay found that "play itself was motivation enough for self-regulation of behaviour" (Charko et al, 2016, p. 63) and that "where the learning feels playful, students are fully engaged and receptive to learning" (Charko et al., 2016, p. 64).

Although the participants at La Grange could hardly be described as children, there is an undeniable playfulness that is a part of the spirit of La Grange, finding expression in the DIY ethos that will be discussed next chapter. While the politics of the space are important to those involved, a recurring theme throughout both my participant observation and the interviews conducted is that people chose to become involved in large part because it is fun, and because they learn from their experiences. In a sense then, part of what La Grange prefigures is a space where one can learn by playing, a kind of heuristic prefiguration defined in large part by the degree to which "its form, its purposes, its rules - can be modified by the mutual desires of the people pursuing and inhabiting it" (Scott, 2012, p. 59).

C. T. Sorensen, an architect for the Copenhagen Workers' Co-operative Housing Association observed that local children seemed to be fonder of trespassing into construction sites and playing with building materials than the were of playing in conventional playgrounds. Following this observation, in 1943 he designed the Emdrup playground in Copenhagen, Denmark. Instead of conventional, premade playground structures such as swings and slides, the park consisted of tools, building materials, and an open space in which children could build their own park. Although the "adventure playground" concept was not without its difficulties[43], its success led to a number of similar arrangements elsewhere in Denmark as well as in Stockholm, Switzerland, and Minneapolis (Ward, 1973, p. 88-90).

> The adventure playground is a kind of parable of anarchy, a free society in miniature, with the same tensions and ever-changing harmonies, the same diversity and spontaneity, the same unforced growth of co-operation and release of individual qualities and communal sense, which lie dormant in a society whose dominant values are competition and acquisitiveness. (Ward, 1973, p. 90-91)

In many respects, La Grange functions as an adventure playground for grown ups. There are certainly political and social dimensions at work in the motivations of the participants and even if these efforts do not always crystalize, "looking for an ideal state is always what creates a lot of conflict" as Seamus remarks. In the end, reaching some manner of instrumental objective is perhaps of less importance to the project than the act of creating a space for people to voluntarily engage in activities that they find meaningful and enjoyable, and which are commensurate with their political beliefs. The metric of value for the activities conducted at La Grange cannot be solely measured in terms of farm yield or number of successful events held, and it perhaps makes more sense to consider the success of La Grange by its Gross Human Product. In this sense at least, La Grange is surely a prefigurative venture.

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[43] On page 89, Ward recounts the complications at "The Yard" in Minneapolis, where at first children hoarded wood and secreted away tools so that they could build the biggest fort. Once the material supply was exhausted and the park was on the verge of closing however, the children spontaneously organized a salvage drive and redistributed the materials and tools, working together to build new structures.

That being said, studies like Hetherington's 2005 *Cultivating Utopia* have observed that this playfulness exhibited on the part of projects like La Grange is a contributing factor in the tensions between conventional and "organic" farmers. This owes in part to what is described by Hetherington as an "ethical one-upmanship" wherein many organic growers are seen by conventional farmers as inhabiting a "moral high ground in food production", by extension insinuating that "conventional practices are morally deficient" (Hetherington, 2005, p. 50-51). To the degree that conventional farmers *are* primarily concerned with instrumental goals, many find it irksome that some aspects of organic practice are not, seeing adventure playgrounds like La Grange as privileged experiments which could never hope to feed the masses in the way conventional farming does (Hetherington, 2005, p. 50-51). In this sense Hetherington and his conventional farmers have a point – there is certainly a degree of privilege involved in projects like La Grange.

However, it is also worth noting that, as discussed in chapter 2, it is for reasons like above that La Grange is uncomfortable throwing their lot in with the organic movement. Despite their beliefs that organic practices are preferable to conventional practices, they recognize the limits of these practices and in many ways wish to distance themselves from the pretensions of organic growing. As Seamus comments "I don't believe that organic agriculture or urban agriculture will … change the world, per say, in a big way".

For good or ill, La Grange may not have much of a retort to Hetherington's conventional farmers. It is a hobby farm of sorts. But, if it is a hobby farm, it is one more preoccupied with growing relationships and alternative political orientations than in cultivating vegetables. In the end, the degree to which this is or is not a worthwhile endeavor depends to a large degree on whether one places more value on GDP or GHP. I have observed that La Grange, for its part, tends towards the latter.

Chapter 4: DIY or Die:
"The Art of Fucking Up Constructively"

> I think DIY is kinda a pop way of saying [you are] doing something with the means that you have available and so I think La Grange was more DIY than many other projects even before I showed up, mostly because of the ethics of my grandma. If something needs to happen, you're gonna do it with what you have and you're gonna do it yourself, because you don't have the means to do otherwise. (Seamus, interview, 12/04/17)

DIY Demystified

The concept of DIY or "Do it Yourself" is not exactly a new idea. For much of human existence people have been "doing it themselves", growing or gathering their own food, building their own shelters, and creating their own stories.

Many anthropologists have produced works suggesting that hunter-gatherer societies are by and large organized along egalitarian lines, among the most well known being the classic works of Pierre Clastres' *Society Against the State* (1987) and Marshall Sahlins' *The Original Affluent Society* (1972). Through analyzing still existing hunter-gatherer societies, these works implied that egalitarianism was a more likely state of nature than the Hobbesian war of all against all, although it bears mentioning that there are obvious and well documented problematics inherent in presuming that contemporary hunter-gatherer societies can serve as an analogue for Paleolithic or even pre-agricultural societies (Knauft et al., 1989). Nevertheless, while these debates continue over what can be said empirically about human nature, what seems to be the general consensus among social scientists is summed up by Knauft who cautiously ventures that "a strong tendency toward egalitarian behaviour over a significant portion of human evolution is likely" (Erdal et al, 1994. p. 181).

Working from this premise, these egalitarian tendencies were also likely to apply to knowledge production and dissemination. It follows then that if knowledge was likely distributed in a more egalitarian fashion in the past than it is currently under modern capitalism, it was not until the introduction of centralization and industrial practices and technologies that the skills and practices involved in DIY became their own separate category from what could otherwise be referred to as survival skills or common knowledge.

To be fair, since humans gradually, and at separate times over our evolutionary history, developed the physiological (opposable thumbs) and cognitive (comparatively well-developed brains) requirements to possess and retain beneficial skills, there has arguably always been a degree of specialization regarding trades or proclivities within human societies, even egalitarian ones. That being said, industrialization, and later capitalism, served to magnify this tendency towards the pigeonholing of skills and knowledge. As technology rises in complexity, so does the knowledge required to operate and maintain said technology, resulting in more specialization. In this sense, DIY is often tied to technology and a group or individual's relationship with it.

The more skills are compartmentalized and, to borrow from Marxist terminology, the further one is from the product of one's labour, such as through industrial practices like the division of labour, the less one understands the workings of or appreciate the nuances involved in the production and maintenance of things we often take for granted such as food, transportation, housing, and so on. It is against this backdrop that the contemporary appeal of DIY makes sense and it could be argued that the desire to reinstitute a measure of autonomy by learning how to produce and maintain these things, is the beating heart of the DIY ethos.

There has been much academic work produced focusing on specific examples of DIY activities such as Spencer's (2008) work on zine culture, independent record labels, and DIY music production, Culton and Holtzman's (2010) analysis of the DIY trappings of punk subculture and "free space" on Long Island, New York, Shepard's (2010)

examination of Queer DIY culture and gay liberation community building in the 1970s and even the Trapese Collective's (2007) DIY handbook which outlines everything from DIY self-help to how to build a haybox[44].

While these are all are interesting case studies and overviews of DIY on the ground, more theory-oriented approaches to the topic were sparse within the literature reviewed[45]. Sociologist Kevin Wher's 2012 *DIY: The Search for Control and Self-Reliance in the 21st Century* was one of the few pieces of literature which aimed to expressly apply the work of social theorists to create a framework within which to discuss the kinds of activities which are often considered DIY, at least by those participating in them.

Wher attempts to address the question of why people are interested in DIY in a world where there are specialists available to address whatever need may arise. To wit, Wher synthesizes the Marxist concepts of alienation[46] and mystification[47] with Jurgen Habermas' concept of the colonization of the lifeworld.

In Habermas' view, Wher explains, social lives can be viewed as inhabiting two different spheres. The *system* concerns matters of economic production and politics and is "characterized by bureaucracy, rationality, and instrumental means-ends calculations" (Wher, 2012, p. 8) and the *lifeworld* which concerns matters such as home, play, and sexual reproduction and which are "characterized by shared values, norms based in morals or traditions, and personal relationships" (Wher, 2012, p. 8). Where colonization of the lifeworld occurs then, is when the characteristics of the *system* bleed into the realm of the *lifeworld.*

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[44] "A haybox is essentially a well-insulated box within which pre heated food may be placed so as to "maintain temperature and significantly reduce cooking energy consumption" (Trapese Collective, 2007, p. 32).

[45] It is for this reason that there is a salient absence of theoretical academic dialogue with Wher's work appearing here, and why this chapter is considerably shorter than others.

[46] From the products of one's labour.

[47] Of the way commodities are produced.

Through abstractions such as money and power exerted by laws and regulations, people tend to feel disconnected or alienated from many aspects of their lives and feel a loss of control and a compromising of their agency – the "stripping of the autonomy of the individual" that Seamus spoke of in the introduction chapter. In Wher's view then, DIY can then in part be seen as an intentional response to this colonization. As we will see later in this chapter, this kind of reassertion of agency has clear relevance to La Grange and the political orientation of the majority of its participants.

To provide an operational definition of the DIY ethos, Wher offers a basic, contemporary explanation of DIY as any instance "when ordinary people build or repair the things in their daily lives without the aid of experts" (Wher, 2012, p.1) and DIY organization as "like minded people who agree on unwritten rules, living in cooperation without need of laws or enforcement" (Wher, 2012, p.46).

These definitions describe the DIY spirit of La Grange quite succinctly and the latter also points to one of the primary factors in the success of any given DIY project – that of like-mindedness. Part of how La Grange has been able to function with a minimum of conflict and in relative harmony has been owing to the fact that most of the participants at La Grange since 2014 have had a political orientation or "affinity"[48] guiding their conduct, namely anarchism. As such, before addressing DIY on the ground at La Grange, it is worth spending a brief moment to discuss the very clear overlap between anarchism and certain elements of DIY practice.

Anarchism and DIY

While the topic of anarchism will be more thoroughly discussed in the next chapter, it is worth mentioning here that it has had a long and storied relationship with practices which could quite accurately be described as DIY. Jeffery Shantz in fact argues that this

[48] According to Gordon, "The term refers to a small and autonomous group of anarchists, closely familiar to each other, who come together to undertake a specific action – whether in isolation or in collaboration with other affinity groups. The expression stems from the Spanish *grupos de afinidad*, which were the basic constituents of the Iberian Anarchist Federation during the Spanish Civil War (Gordon, 2008, p. 15).

relationship dates all the way back to the very first anarchist, Pierre Joseph Proudhon[49] and his ideas of people's banks and local currencies (Shantz, 2009, p. 20).

While people can certainly identify with the DIY ethic or engage in DIY practices and not consider themselves anarchists, in my personal experience, one would be hard pressed to find an anarchist who does not partake in at least one activity that would fall under the rubric of "Do It Yourself"[50]. Moreover, projects rooted in anarchist principals have, throughout history and on various scales, aimed to provide necessities such as food[51] and housing[52], and services like education[53] and even health care[54] without direct reliance on capitalism or the state. There are contemporary examples of anarchist publishers[55], anarchist media projects[56] and countless "A-Zones"[57] and social spaces[58].

As will be discussed, one of its defining principles is autonomy. A precondition of autonomy is at least some degree of self-reliance and self-determination and as such, for many anarchists, the act of doing things for yourself makes perfect sense within the context of their beliefs. Wher even goes so far as to describe the anarchist view of how society should be ordered as "DIY government".

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[49] Proudhon was the first political philosopher to identify his politics as "anarchist" and it was he who coined the term.
[50] Zine making, dumpster diving, and bicycle repair are activities that many anarchists engage in which would certainly fall under the umbrella of DIY.
[51] Food Not Bombs is an anarchist project that began in Boston and has since spread to countless North American cities. Food Not Bombs members take discarded food, make meals out of it, and provide free servings, usually in poor neighborhoods. (Food Not Bombs website)
[52] OCAP (Ontario Coalition Against Poverty) devoted a great deal of time to creating and promoting public housing projects. Luke was a member for several years when he lived in Toronto.
[53] Francisco Ferrier's Modern School in early 20th century Spain (Marshall, 454) sought to offer a rational and non-coercive alternative to church and state run education of and went on to inspire similar schools in the United States (Marshall, 502) and elsewhere.
[54] There are countless anarchist self-help groups in Montreal dealing with everything from alcoholism to PTSD to depression.
[55] AK Press and PM Press come to mind.
[56] The famous Indymedia of the alter-globalization movement was largely run on anarchist principles and there are a number of collectives who focus of media production including the Montreal based collective SubMedia, which Dark Lord Jay is a member of.
[57] Trumbullplex in Detroit, is a cooperative living space, temporary shelter, and lending library.
[58] La Deferle in the Hochelaga neighbourhood of Montreal and until its closure in 2013, La Belle Époque in Verdun.

For his part, Jeffery Shantz (2009) describes a kind of practical or "everyday" anarchism that has traction with the political orientation and DIY ethos of La Grange. Shantz views anarchism as more than just "a political or revolutionary movement that 'enters into' specific social struggles" and studies anarchism from a perspective that emphasizes "the immanent anarchy in everyday practices of mutual aid and solidarity" (Shantz, 2009, p. 3). Anarchism, much like La Grange, aims to "build upon ways of living and relating that are already present in people's everyday lives rather than reflecting aspects of a future post-revolutionary society" at the same time that it "engages these practices from a political or revolutionary perspective that seeks a broader anti-authoritarian transformation of social relations" (Shantz, 2009, p. 3).

DIY at La Grange

> This is what I wanted to do, I like to be outside you know? I like to work physically. But – and I found this out when I was at the University of Victoria in sociology – I just start going stir crazy if I don't have a physical expression for the ideas that I'm thinking and my perspectives on the world. (Marc, interview, 15/12/16)

DIY (do it yourself) ethos was encouraged from the very beginning of the project. All of the individuals involved seem to have a shared understanding that DIY praxis by its very nature entails making a lot of mistakes. I can personally attest to the fact that this dedication to DIY as a guiding principle works very well at La Grange as an entry point for individuals who are unfamiliar with the specifics of agriculture and who may be unsure of what skills they could offer to the project or have some anxiety over how they could contribute to the work being done.

Wher (2012) also draws distinctions between three main categories of people who engage in DIY practices: DIY individualists, DIY coordinators, and DIY lifestylers. Individualist DIY concerns those individuals for whom "doing it yourself" is largely an isolated affair that is often viewed as a hobby that they find pleasure or satisfaction in or as a means to save money. DIY coordinators are those who consciously embrace a DIY ethos and who

share their enthusiasm and knowledge with other individuals of similar disposition. DIY lifestylers are those who embody the philosophy of DIY in as many aspects of their lives as they can, and for whom DIY is explicitly political and consuming or using something that they themselves did not create is a last resort.

There can of course be some overlap with regards to these distinctions and over the years, La Grange has seen all three types of DIYer, sometimes even in the same person over the course of time and circumstance. The acts of growing one's own food or building farming infrastructure from scratch can be pleasurable and rewarding activities that many people who have been involved in the project have taken to for personal reasons. Concerning the second group, it seems that almost anyone that sticks around for long enough at La Grange eventually becomes a DIY coordinator of sorts, sharing skills and knowledge with other participants and mindfully practicing DIY within an intentional group context. However, perhaps the most applicable manifestation of DIY activity at La Grange falls under the category of lifestyle DIY. The majority of the most involved members over the years have been anarchists for whom the practice of DIY is a tangible expression of their political views:

> Growing food has been my *joie de vivre* and it's something I've been passionate about for a very long time - since I was a teenager. When I was a teenager I started getting interested in politics, and the idea of freedom is very appealing when you're a teenager, as it still is [for me] as an adult. I realized that independence, which is one definition of freedom, means not being dependent. So, to not be dependent on the economic system or the state, one must be able to provide certain basic things for oneself such as shelter and food. Thus, I've spent most of my life cultivating those two skills – how to provide shelter and food. (Luke, interview, 08/12/16)

If it can be broadly stated that one of the goals of DIY is to foster some measure of self-sufficiency through knowledge and skills that one earns the hard way – through trial and error, then a definition given by one of the members of La Grange describing DIY as "the art of fucking up constructively" is an apt one. It could be argued that part of what creates

investment in a space is the degree to which one can learn from that space and grow with it. As long as I have been studying and working at La Grange, there has always been a facetious, even whimsical approach to making mistakes. There is also a propensity for making do with whatever is around. The utility of this should not be understated due to the fact that, because of the immense quantity of items[59] in both the bazaar and the barn, there are always lots of materials around to make do with. Lastly, while this does not necessarily hold true across all projects that would identify as DIY, the emphasis on organic energy inputs is crucial to the identity of La Grange as a project that largely defines itself in opposition to the many harmful and unsustainable practices of large-scale industrial agriculture.

As such, DIY at La Grange can be broadly discussed under the three following points which I have observed through my time there:

1) Learn by doing. A hallmark of many DIY endeavors is the tendency towards kinesthetic learning. While this can be an excellent and deeply rewarding method of acquiring skills and knowledge, it also entails making a considerable number of mistakes. In a sense, divested from the maximum-output-at-all-costs mentality and tunnel-vision efficiency that characterize altogether too many of the spheres of production under modern capitalism, the mistakes made at La Grange need not always be considered a bad thing. Rather than viewing errors as compromising productivity, there is an atmosphere at La Grange that instead sees a mistake as an opportunity to learn something.

2) Bricolage. If "agriculture is living art" as Marianne suggests, then farming as bricolage describes the philosophy at La Grange quite accurately. The practice of making do with what is available is an aspect of DIY that certainly finds expression at La Grange. A surprising number of the tools and even infrastructure

[59] As mentioned briefly in the introduction, Margaret's barn and bazaar are filled to the brim with what some might consider junk. For members of the collective however, these odds and ends are a valuable DIY resource.

at La Grange are comprised of or make use of literally whatever is lying around[60]. Sometimes this is a matter of financial necessity or immediacy. More often than not however, the impetus to reuse bits of junk instead of buying more tools or materials from the hardware store is guided by a principled rejection of capitalism, consumerism, and market exchange.

3) Maximization of organic inputs. Aside from the use of a backhoe and rotary tiller to ready the land during the initial season, and the occasional use of a gas-powered string trimmer[61], lawnmower, and chainsaw, almost all of the farm labor done at La Grange since 2014 was done with hand tools. All of the fertilizer used was either cow/chicken manure or compost and to the best of my knowledge, no herbicides or pesticides were ever applied to any of the crops since this most recent iteration of the farm has been in operation, save for what drifts in from the adjacent golf course to the south/southwest or the neighboring industrial farm to the east. What pest and weed control there was beyond hand weeding, manual insect removal and stirrup hoeing took the form of ground covers[62], companion planting[63] and herbal deterrents. Even a considerable quantity of the water used for watering the plants comes from the two water tanks that collect the rainwater runoff from the barn.

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[60] For almost two full seasons, the most used machete at the farm was an aluminum joist that was bent and sharpened on one side and fitted with a wood, Styrofoam and duct tape handle. The vegetable washing station is wooden frame supporting a bathtub found in the storage area of the barn and the accompanying drying rack is made from discarded vinyl mesh from a Montreal street fair. Even the rests for the plastic roll-up on the sides of the greenhouse are pieces of straight, stainless steel wire bent into shape with pliers and a vice grip and - lest they poke holes in the precious greenhouse plastic - blunted at the end with duct tape.

[61] String trimmer is the official nomenclature for colloquially known “weed wacker”.

[62] A technique involving the laying of plastic tarps or cardboard over the desired area and leaving it for an extended period of time, choking out the weeds by denying them sunlight and water.

[63] The agricultural technique of planting certain crops together which benefit each other by each deterring a particular pest for the other or using specific nutrients which the other does not. Perhaps the most famous example of companion planting is the “Three Sisters” (winter squash, maize, and climbing beans) of North American First Nations. The beans would climb up the corn stock and the nitrogen fixation of the beans would aid the growth of the corn, while the squash controlled the weeds and deterred pests, simultaneously creating a microclimate with its leaves that helped to retain soil moisture. While this has been attempted numerous times at La Grange, these efforts have seldom been particularly effective.

The DIY ethos also creates the space for people to pursue the activities they find fulfilling. Anecdotally, I recall one day during my first season where it was extremely hot and a number of us were weeding some of the beds. I had been at it all morning and so I felt no reservations about stopping, finding a spade, a car wheel hub, and some rocks and making the small fire pit mentioned above instead of weeding. I did not tell anyone what I was doing, I just did it. Nobody was upset or bitter that I took an hour off of weeding to pursue something that I wanted to do and, in the end, everyone was happy that we now had a fire pit that we could cook on, as the bonfire pit was used to burn chemically treated wood and was unsuitable for cooking.

Moving on, one cannot discuss DIY at La Grange without mentioning Viateur. Viateur was Margaret's handyman of sorts and they had an arrangement wherein Viateur had his own workshop next to the barn where Margaret had allowed him to store his tools and where he would spend his days repairing bicycles that he sold at the bazaar. In return, Viateur would assist Margaret and Hugh with whatever odd jobs needed to be done. Viateur was a very DIY person. He was fond of making and repairing the farm tools that broke with whatever he could find lying about. Such refurbished tools often did not last very long before having to be repaired again but "The Sword of Viateur", a makeshift machete, saw almost two full seasons of use before the blade finally gave out. More often than not however, Viateur's DIY creations lasted less than a week.

This speaks to the fact that in practice, DIY does not always end well and, while rewarding, is seldom the easiest way to do things. One day at La Grange during my first season, Seamus had to go to the hardware store to pick up some things and told Dark Lord Jay and myself that he was planning on cleaning out the trench next to the greenhouse that functioned as the septic outflow taking dirty water out to the even larger trench between La Grange and the farm next door.

Neither of us were particularly knowledgeable about septic systems but figured it was a fairly straightforward task and, after all, DIY is how things work at the farm and we

thought it would be fine to "fake it 'till we make it" as the saying at La Grange goes. Unbeknownst to us, Viateur had done his own DIY job on the septic ditch and had placed rocks in the ditch so that the water level of the septic flow was level with the large buried PVC tube that sent the water to the larger ditch and away from the vegetables growing in the greenhouse.

Dark Lord Jay and I had taken Seamus's instructions to the extreme. After cleaning out the weeds and other rotting vegetation from the ditch, we proceeded to remove all of Viateur's rocks. We were puzzled by the fact that the flow had almost completely stopped and so we kept digging the septic ditch deeper in the hopes that this would bring the flow back. By the time Seamus had returned he was shocked to see a giant mound of smelly dirt next to a pile of grungy rocks and a now completely non-functional septic ditch.

Calmly but clearly somewhat annoyed, Seamus proceeded to inform us of the importance of Viateur's rocks and how digging deeper was actually the opposite of what we should have been doing. The three of us spent several hours thereafter fussing over this, trying to get the flow going again but nothing worked. This was almost three seasons ago and the ditch still does not empty fully to this day. This was also particularly bad news at the time as there was a recent outbreak of West Nile Virus in Laval and having a ditch full of rancid standing water was a paradise for mosquitos, the primary vector of West Nile Virus. This is a prime example of what Wher describes as "doing it yourself badly".

After a time we shrugged it off and went on to do some other tasks, giving up on what Seamus had eventually come to call the "West Nile Incubator". Several weeks later Viateur fell into a coma in his back yard and died. It was unknown if this was caused by West Nile Virus or Viateur's unhealthy habits[64] but Both Dark Lord Jay and myself still carry with us the possibility that we "did it ourselves" so badly that we may have actually contributed to someone's death. The makeshift wheel barrows and tools that Viateur had

[64] He was a chain smoker and was apparently a heavy drinker when he was not at the farm.

created over the years were respectfully laid out in commemoration of him and a framed picture of Viateur still hangs on the wall above the cashbox in Margaret's bazaar.

On a less sombre note, is worth mentioning that La Grange been privileged as a project in that it enjoys economic autonomy on account of one of the members owning the land, meaning that there is effectively no rent to pay for use of the space. As it stands, La Grange does not currently require outside funding for its upkeep as the few expenses it does have and the costs of any new infrastructural additions are covered through the selling of its produce.

This being said, Wher somewhat bleakly reminds us that "all DIY behaviour is locked within the confines of what is possible within our society, and none of us can fully escape" (Wher, 2012, p.6). La Grange still has to pay for the electricity or gas we use to power our tools. When a tool finally breaks completely or there is a material required which we cannot or do not have the time to create ourselves, we buy it from the hardware store. The money we generate still comes from a form of market exchange when we sell our produce to organic food outlets or through a now discontinued vegetable basket program that Seamus had organized[65]. The water we quench our thirsty plants with which does not come from the sky or from our rainwater tanks, comes from the Usine De Filtration De Sainte Rose and makes its way to us through infrastructure paid for with tax dollars.

Capitalism and its logics are ubiquitous and it is indeed almost impossible to be completely self-sufficient in the modern world. Even the waves of "back to the land" movements in the United States during the Great Depression and the 1960s had to enter into market exchanges at one point or another. One could even make the argument that the concept of DIY cannot even really have meaning without a system like capitalism as its foil.

[65] Although the paniers program was successful and brought a good deal of revenue to the project, it was deemed unfeasible to continue the program after Seamus left. None of the members who had access to a vehicle could commit to transporting the baskets on a weekly basis, and the clientele for the program were mostly in the neighbourhood of Hochelaga, where few of the members lived.

However, DIY at La Grange is not perfect. It can be a cumbersome way of functioning and it does not always produce the best results. The DIY ethos[66] practiced at La Grange may be guided by a desire to sidestep capitalism, reclaim some of the commons and decolonize our lifeworlds, but despite our best efforts, capitalist market exchange is still a thing which La Grange must at times enter into and it would appear to be impossible to wholly decolonize and completely redefine our relationships with the land. This is not lost on La Grange's participants as Marc illustrates: "I don't expect to get free. I don't think it's possible to get free or to live a legit, anarchist liberty in this sort of civilization".

The above being said, the project does what it can to be "DIY-enough" and although the duality remains of La Grange simultaneously reproducing and challenging capitalism and colonialism, in the words of Dark Lord Jay, "we do what we can with what we have and that's all we can do".

> Self-sufficiency [is] inherently anti-capitalist in the sense that it's one thing being anti-capitalist but you just take all of your resources and pay them into the system because it has monopolized and very deliberately destroyed all of our non-capitalist infrastructure. Over the course of centuries [it has been] systematically dismantled for the purposes of centralizing the economy into the hands of private ownership. The commons in England used to exist and was systematically dismantled … this kind of project is reclaiming some space from capitalism. (Luke, interview, 08/12/16)

For all of its lofty ideals and inevitable shortcomings, La Grange and its participants are doing what they can within a system that is in no way hospitable to their goals. As Seamus remarks, "there is a lot stacked against collectives … it's hard work keeping them going". DIY at La Grange is nearly always a messy affair, but at the very least, it provides an outlet for day-to-day political expression in a tangible and observable way.

[66] Which admittedly is, at times, also an ethos of simplicity.

Capitalism is not likely to fall tomorrow, but for today at least at La Grange, the chou[67] must go on.

[67] Not a typo but homage to the vegetable puns that La Grange members are so very fond of.

Chapter 5 - Anarchism and La Grange: How to Grow Your Own Collective

In this chapter, the goal will be to examine the political philosophy and practice of anarchism and its relationship with La Grange, both in terms of the project as a collective, and as a set of principles, practices, and tendencies that underscore individual involvement.

My purpose in doing so is simple. If there were to be a baseline political ideology that almost all the members of La Grange would be comfortable identifying with, it would be anarchism. Anarchism, an ideology that has always tended towards defying a simple definition, has many different meanings depending largely on who you ask, and entire volumes have been dedicated to understanding what it is, what it means to the people who practice it, and what variations exist (Marshall, 2008; Bonanno, 1996; Gordon, 2008; Shantz, 2009; Milstein, 2010; Mckay, 2009; Gelderloos, 2010). One could even make the case that there are as many anarchisms as there are anarchists. As such, while not the central focus of this chapter, a brief discussion of anarchisms past and present and a brief overview of the main tendencies within it is in order, so as to ground the reader in a knowledge of this often poorly understood political philosophy.

From here, as we have done in previous chapters, we will attempt to formulate a lexicon with which we may discuss instances, successes, and failures of anarchism as it is practiced at La Grange. To this end, we will examine some of the core principals of anarchism that are generally shared among its many permutations and examine some of the terminology and practices which are of relevance to La Grange, particularly with regards to decision making processes, organizational structure, and the negotiation of power dynamics. Through all of this, the intent is to ascertain to what degree La Grange could be considered an anarchist project, what this looks like in practice, and how this overlaps with the concepts addressed in previous chapters. It is also my hope that through this process we will uncover some of the idiosyncrasies of La Grange and learn how it functions (or, at times, does not).

Lastly, this chapter will use this foundation to enter into discussions concerning, autonomous or "free spaces", formal and informal conduct, and play.

Anarchism 101

As discussed in the introduction, anarchism is a broad and dynamic constellation of ideas, philosophies, and tendencies, the complexity and breadth of which may seem daunting to the uninitiated. As a way of better grasping anarchism, Uri Gordon in his 2008 *Anarchy Alive!* suggests that it be understood in three key ways. First, as a *social movement* that is "composed of dense networks of individuals, affinity groups and collectives which communicate and coordinate intensively, sometimes across the globe, and generate innumerable direct actions and sustained projects" (Gordon 2008, p. 3). Second, as a *political culture* that "animates these networks and infuses them with content" (Gordon, 2008, p 3-4). And lastly, as a *collection of ideas* which are "fluid and constantly evolving", the content of which "changes from one generation to another, and can only be understood against the background of the movements and cultures in and by which they are expressed" (Gordon, 2008, p. 4).

It is presumably for this last reason that many anarchists tend to draw a distinction between "classical" and "contemporary" anarchism[68]. While his placement of these categories along the left-right political spectrum is perhaps somewhat dated[69], Runkle (1972) observes that classical anarchist positions tend to fall under one of three main branches, specifically; individualism, mutualism, and collectivism. Individualism has its roots in German anarchist Max Stirner's egoism and its primary focus is on individual liberty. Collectivism is associated more with what is sometimes referred to as "social"

[68] Classical anarchism is limited to the works of the classical anarchists, and thereby is unable to account for more recent developments in the "backgrounds and cultures" of contemporary anarchist theory and praxis.

[69] Runkle places individualism on the right and collectivism and mutualism to the left of this. Without even getting into multi-axis political spectrums, there are anarchists and libertarians from all three of these branches that exhibit a tendency towards disassociating themselves from both the left and the right. There are also individualists who, if pressed, would likely identify more closely with the left than the right, and collectivist projects which would fall on the right of the traditional spectrum.

anarchism and encompasses such approaches as syndicalism, which focuses on the "collective power of trade unions" (Runkle, 1972, p.10) and anarchist-communism, which shares with Marxism the principle of "from each according to ability, to each according to need" but which seeks ways of enacting this principle without resorting to dominance and coercion. Mutualism, much like its creator Pierre Joseph Proudhon, contains elements of both individualism and collectivism and is variously described as both.

In her 2010 primer *Anarchism and its Aspirations*, Milstein proposes a way of looking at the aims of anarchism which has tangible correlations with the politics of La Grange. Milstein argues that a general way to make sense of many of the permutations of anarchism is to view them as a series of complex and ongoing negotiations between the individualist aspects of liberalism on the one hand, and the communalist aspects of communism on the other. Through this lens, one of the aims of anarchism is to foster and encourage the positive qualities of these two ideologies, specifically the personal freedom afforded by liberalism and the egalitarianism of communism, while mitigating the negative aspects such as the social and economic stratification built into liberal capitalism and the autocratic tendencies of past communisms.

As I hope has been impressed upon the reader at this point, one may think about, differentiate between, and attempt to compartmentalize the broad gamut of tendencies associated with anarchism in a seemingly endless number of ways. We will return later in this chapter to some of these distinctions, particularly during the discussion of the individual and the collective, but for the moment it is perhaps more useful to look not at what makes these tendencies different, but rather what they have in common.

(Some) Anarchist Principles at La Grange

Coming back to anarchism specifically, other baseline principles which most anarchists would likely agree on are those outlined by Gelderloos in his 2010 book *Anarchy Works*: mutual aid, voluntary association, horizontality/autonomy, direct action, revolution, and

self liberation. While all of these, with perhaps the exception of revolution[70], can be applied to La Grange to some degree or another, three of these, namely mutual aid, voluntary association, and horizontality/autonomy, were officially agreed upon as core principles of La Grange at a planning meeting for the 2017 season on April 8, 2017. As such, it is worth quoting Gelderloos' descriptions of these three principles in their entirety, as they are quite succinct:

> **Mutual Aid**: People should help one another voluntarily; bonds of solidarity and generosity form a stronger social glue than the fear inspired by laws, borders, prisons, and armies. Mutual aid is neither a form of charity nor of zero-sum exchange; both giver and receiver are equal and interchangeable. Since neither holds power over the other, they increase their collective power by creating opportunities to work together.
> **Voluntary Association**: People should be free to cooperate with whomever they want, however they see fit; likewise, they should be free to refuse any relationship or arrangement they do not judge to be in their interest. Everyone should be able to move freely, both physically and socially. Anarchists oppose borders of all kinds and involuntary categorization by citizenship, gender, or race.
> **Autonomy/Horizontality**: All people deserve the freedom to define and organize themselves on their own terms. Decision-making structures should be horizontal rather than vertical, so no one dominates anyone else; they should foster *power to* act freely rather than *power over* others. Anarchism opposes all coercive hierarchies, including capitalism, the state, white supremacy, and patriarchy. (Gelderloos, 2010, 3-4)

I should follow this by clarifying some terms and what exactly they mean in the parlance of contemporary anarchism. Perhaps the most important task in this regard is to define the term "collective", which crops up frequently in this thesis (and is indeed present in the name of the group which I am focusing on). For clarification, I will be borrowing from Uri Gordon's definition of collective, which he describes as essentially a more

[70] Although as Dark Lord Jay correctly points out, "lots of revolutions failed because they didn't grow their own food" and there is wisdom in sorting out how you plan on feeding people *before* the revolution.

permanent or enduring 'affinity group'. The term 'affinity group' describes a small, autonomous group of anarchists who share a similar perspective or tendency (otherwise referred to as *affinity*) and are usually, but not necessarily – at least not at first, familiar with one another, who come together to undertake a specific action (Gordon, 2008, 22). Collectives then, are such groups that stick around, or are formed to engage in ongoing activities. They tend to remain relatively small, rarely exceeding 15, and form close ties, usually through regular and sustained engagement, ideally in the form of face-to-face communication.

Consensus is a form of horizontal decision making that is often used in these kinds of collectives. There are numerous variations on the basic concept, but most models involve "collaboratively generating a proposal, identifying unsatisfied concerns, and then modifying the proposal to generate as much agreement as possible" (Hartnett, 2011, p. 2). This approach, followed strictly, requires frequent meeting and can be a cumbersome and time-consuming process. Bookchin (in Mckay, 2009) even argues that in some instances, the consensus practice of standing aside[71] can actually wind up being coercive. It is for these reasons that many kinds of "modified" consensus[72] exist which can be tailored to the group.

Moving on, it appears from my observations over that last two years and the ethnographic data collected, that La Grange is not only a project that shares a number of tendencies with anarchism, but one that is also subject to similarly complex and dynamic negotiations between the individual and the collective as the one described earlier by Milstein. On the one hand, as Seamus envisions it, "La Grange is supposed to be a platform where folks can express their own agendas". On the other hand, it has been a

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[71] Standing aside is when one disagrees with the general proposal but does not disagree strongly enough that they will "block" consensus.

[72] Brown (2012) explains: "For many groups, coming to a complete and unified consensus is not considered feasible. These groups modify what it means to have consensus. Consensus Minus One, for instance, means that if only one person blocks a decision, the decision will still stand. In these situations, at least two people must block a decision in order to stop it from moving forward. Other modifications include Agreement-Seeking (using consensus techniques to generate a proposal, and using a vote if consensus cannot be reached), 90% Consensus (a super majority), and 2/3 Majority Rule" (Brown, 2012, p.1)

collective, at least in name, since Seamus and his uncle Donal founded it in early 2014. The fact that it calls itself a collective implies a communal aspect to it but La Grange, as a collective project, was for a time somewhat unsure exactly of what it was, as Seamus inhabited such a large part of the space.

It was his grandparents Margaret and Hugh whose land it was on and he had the vision, the time, the drive[73], and the previous experience in agriculture that inexorably led to him to take on the de facto role of coordinator. However, things have changed since he left, and one of this thesis' main aims is to trace the journey of sorts that La Grange underwent to become a "real collective" in the eyes of its participants, past and present. Although Seamus had intended the space to be founded with other people and along collective lines, due to the other cofounders discontinuing their involvement in the space, it effectively became his project. When a project starts out as a single person's idea or vision, it is inherently not a collective venture. In this regard, Seamus's involvement was problematic in terms of La Grange functioning as a truly collective project.

> One of the things that stops 'collectives' like SubMedia[74] and La Grange, like it was originally, from becoming collectives is that when a collective is started by a group it's easier for it to remain controlled by a group but when it's started by one person that wants to then turn it into a collective, it's difficult because the responsibility always rests on that one person's shoulders because they have more invested and they just know more about it. So it's difficult to make that transition … At this stage though, because Seamus has left and the project is continuing … I'd say we've been moderately successful at transitioning into a collective. And that's the thing – if a group is started by an individual and that group wants to transition into a collective, the only sure-fire way to do that is if the individual leaves the group … if the group's not able to survive that individual leaving then it probably wouldn't have survived anyway. (Luke, interview, 08/12/16)

[73] As we will see later, I mean this in both the ambitious and the fuel-combustive sense.
[74] A well-known anarchist media collective that Dark Lord Jay points out had only 1 member for 10 years.

The 2016 season at La Grange was essentially a year of transition wherein the project went from being a collective in name only to a project that functioned upon intentional collective principles. This was not lost on Seamus and, aware of the likeliness of this happening and the necessity of his eventual discontinuing of his involvement with the project, Seamus told himself from the start that he "would do it two years, full time, to make the project happen and then would step back". His intent from the beginning was not to step back as far as he did[75], but he has not ruled out coming back at some point to "plug in in the ways that I want. Involving more folks from the prisons, making political alliances, using the social space, you know?"

Decisions, Decisions, Decisions.

Before properly discussing meetings and decision-making structure of a given group, an important consideration should be if the group is organized formally, with clearly defined codes of conduct regarding membership, decision making, and position, or informally, where these kinds of matters tend to be sorted out spontaneously as the need arises. This distinction between formal and informal organizational is especially important to address when discussing the structures of activist and anarchist groups, as the schism is a recurring theme. The debate has deep roots in the history of anarchism that go back to the Marx/Bakunin rift briefly mentioned in chapter 3 (for more on the Marx/Bakunin rift see Gouldner (1982)). These tensions of how anarchists should organize were seen numerous times with different actors in different historical conditions. The formal/informal argument led for instance to the rejection of Nestor Mahkno's anarchist platform in 1920's, post-Russian Revolution France (Skirda, 2003) and was one of the primary catalysts in the formation of the Iberian Anarchist Federation, created in response to the perceived bureaucracy of the CNT in pre Civil War Spain (Ealham & Preston, 2010). However, one of the most often discussed critiques of spontaneity and anti-hierarchical organizing within activist circles[76] takes the form of Joreen Freeman's *1970 Tyranny of Structurelessness* and its 1979 counterpoint the *Tyranny of Tyranny* by Cathy Levine.

[75] All the way back to British Columbia.

[76] I have in my own involvement in activist projects seen this debate crop up more times than I can remember.

Here it may seem reductive to apply arguments and analyses intended for large scale social movements concerning specific social struggles[77] to significantly smaller projects with different aims such as La Grange, but it is my hope that there may still be some academic worth in doing so.

Freeman's article was written in 1970 when, in her view, the women's liberation movement was at a crossroads. The movement had made considerable strides in "consciousness raising" during the 1960s and had achieved a measure of success in injecting the mainstream with an awareness of feminism and women's issues but seemed unsure of how to proceed. The thrust of Freeman's argument was that this was a period where it was necessary to begin more concrete movement building – particularly with regards to national organizations and political parties.

In *Tyranny of Structurelessness*, Freeman outlines what she sees as the dangers of an organizational approach she describes as structurelessness[78]. Freeman argues that informally structured groups are just as susceptible to unbalanced power dynamics as formally structured ones. This imbalance within informal groups can often appear in the form of sub-groups of politically like-minded individuals who form friendships over the course of their organizing. Given that these individuals tend to "talk to each other socially and consult each other when common decisions have to be made, the people involved in these networks have more power than those who don't" (Freeman, 1970, p. 2). Where groups have not established clear guidelines that dictate how and by whom power is wielded, Freeman suggests that there is no shortage of informal distinctions that may fill this void and contribute to or detract from one's sociopolitical capital and leverage within the group, which in Freeman's case includes variables such as economic class, marital status, sexual orientation, and educational background, among others (Freeman, 1970).

Panning in on La Grange, Freeman's discussion, couched as it is in movement building and large-scale organization, would seem to have little relevance – La Grange after all

[77] In this case the women's liberation movement.
[78] Freeman actually argues that structure is an inherent quality of any grouping of people but refers to those groups without formal structure as "structureless" nonetheless.

has no pretensions of becoming a national organization or participating in mainstream politics, nor is it necessarily concerned with the kinds of consciousness raising discussed above. However, these discussions do raise some relevant questions. Is organizing with a formal hierarchy more effective or efficient than organizing in an acephalous or "informal" manner? Echoing the kind of query posed numerous time throughout this work, by what metric is effectiveness or efficiency measured? Where does La Grange fall on this spectrum and how exactly are power dynamics negotiated by the collective?

As for Freeman's position, she makes some shrewd observations of some of the problematic inter-group dynamics that can manifest during political organizing, but many of her overall arguments concerning what she describes as the "political impotence" of informally structured groups are somewhat flawed. As she herself points out, these kinds of problems are not unique to informal groups and indeed her entire argument is predicated on the notion that creating official, hierarchically organized, national structures or engaging in party politics is in fact the best way forward and as such, many of her arguments uncritically take this for granted. She does not actually clearly state what exactly she means by this political impotence, leaving one to assume that this impotence lies within the realm of perceived shortcomings in organizing nationally or engaging with party politics. However, this lack of engagement with such politics is often a defining characteristic of informal organizing. It would seem then that this impotence points less to a failure of informally organized groups with regards to securing allies in mainstream politics or gaining access to a national stage upon which to express their views, and instead raises questions of intentionality on behalf of informally organized groups. If this "impotence" is intentional or, what is more, actually born of a distrust or and absence of belief in the effectiveness of the kinds of politics Freeman is tacitly endorsing, is it really that impotent?

Levine counters this by suggesting that the kinds of small informal groups Freeman is describing are in fact intentional political collectives which are, at their core,

> a reaction against the over-structured, hierarchical organisation of society in general … because it deprives us of control, like the rest of this society; and instead of

> recognising the folly of our ways by returning to the structured fold, we who are rebelling against bureaucracy should be creating an alternative to bureaucratic organisation. The reason for building a movement on a foundation of collectives is that we want to create a revolutionary culture consistent with our view of the new society; it is more than a reaction; the small group is a solution. (Levine, 1979, p. 5)

If what Levine is describing here sounds familiar at this point, it is because she is basically describing prefiguration. If a collective intentionally avoids hierarchy, bureaucracy, and rigid structure in their own organizing and prefers to associate with other groups of similar disposition, it is not necessarily because they are incapable of engaging politically with the world around them – they are simply aware of the fact that the politics of hierarchy, bureaucracy, and rigid structure has already been done and it has not worked out very well for a considerable number of humans. They would rather try something different, living their politics on their own terms and in a manner consistent with the world they want to see.

So then, in exploring this debate between Freeman and Levine, we can see that what is in question is not just a matter or formality and informality, but also concerns scale. Freeman is interested in the expansion of movements into larger entities, while Levine winds up making a case for groups of smaller scale. We will return to this distinction in a moment, but first, if we take as a given that at least part of what defines scale concerns how much space is inhabited, this then leads us into a discussion of space, as collectives like La Grange require space, both physical and metaphorical, in which to operate.

A Brief Consideration Concerning Space

The word “space” is a curious one. In modern English at least, it is used so pervasively that it runs the risk of becoming as vacuous as the incalculable three-dimensional realm existing beyond the atmosphere of the planet we live on.

When realtors negotiate with clients, a concern for both parties is floorspace. The place where workers work by themselves is called the workspace. Lefebvre (1992) speaks of the production of it, Marxists geographers like David Harvey speak of the distribution of it, and astrophysicists speak of the nature of it.

I have observed the La Grange Farm Collective discussed in interviews and during my fieldwork variously as a "community space" by Margaret, an "autonomous space" by Dark Lord Jay, a "precarious space" by Alex and a "weird space" by Marianne. Seamus, speaking of the tendency for "radical communities to fall into this lens of anti-oppressive, safe space", suggests instead that "we need to create dangerous spaces where interesting interactions and alliances can actually happen". It appears that we are all rather far from consensus on the matter of space.

As a starting point, one of the seminal explorations of it within the realm of activism and social movement theory, was Francesca Polletta's 1999 essay *"Free Spaces" in Collective Action*. As a step towards stripping away some of the ambiguity surrounding "free space", one of Polletta's most enduring contributions was her typology of free space structures. Here, Polletta identifies three structural forms which free spaces can take: transmovement, indigenous, and prefigurative.

She goes on to state that "the character of the associational ties that compose them, respectively, extensive, dense/isolated, and symmetrical, helps to explain their different roles in identifying opportunities, recruiting participants, supplying leaders, and crafting compelling action frames" (Polletta, 1999, p. 2). While Polletta's analysis of "action frames" and "leadership recruitment" are perhaps of little relevance to La Grange, the symmetric ties she speaks of which are indicative of prefigurative free spaces may be of some use. Polletta defines these symmetrical ties as those that tend to exhibit "reciprocity in power, influence, and attention"[79] (Polletta, 1999, p. 11).

[79] She does however make the caveat that, as we discussed last chapter With Simi and Futrell, something approaching prefiguration can also be seen in right wing groups where the focus is decidedly not on "reciprocity in power, influence, and attention".

She does engage with scholars such as Hirsch (1995) whom she interprets as suggesting that the structural isolation from dominant ideology that characterizes many "free spaces" is the primary catalyst for mobilization, in turn arguing that cultural content plays an equally important role (19). While recognizing the limits of scale inherent in applying the same analyses of free spaces to both farming collectives in Canada and Turner Hall anti temperance mobilization, Polletta's argument does at least suggest that examining the cultural content of a free space is still a fruitful academic endeavor and in turn elicits the question of whether or not there is a cultural content to speak of at La Grange. If indeed there is, what is it?

Mapping out the cultural content of any group of people is often a tricky business that always runs the risk of being overly reductive or emphasizing some aspects at the expense of others. That being said, if growing organic food is ostensibly what La Grange does, and DIY is how it does it, then it can be argued that the political culture, borrowing from Gordon (2008) again, which "animates" La Grange and "infuses it with content", is anarchism. La Grange, both as a collective, and as a group of individuals, attempts to conduct itself through mutual aid, voluntary association, and autonomy. It does not always, succeed at doing this, as we will see below, but we can nevertheless speak of La Grange as a prefigurative free space vis a vis Polletta's criteria at least insofar as it makes efforts to conduct itself in a way that is as horizontal as possible, and which aims for the reciprocity Polletta describes above.

However, Polletta says of prefigurative groups that they "are difficult to sustain, not only because the requirements of fully egalitarian decision making are difficult to square with the demands of quick response to environmental demands" and that their "insistence on symmetricalities throws into relief the asymmetries of conventional relations and model alternatives, but also undercuts the groups' prospects for survival" (Polletta, 1999, p. 12).

In some respects, she is correct. Fully egalitarian decision making can be a time-consuming process. Considerable time needs to be devoted to meetings and waiting for consensus or for a time when everyone is available to meet can slow things down. At its

most effective, La Grange was able to find a balance between keeping everyone informed and involved in decision making processes and reserving the agency of individuals to make decisions of their own. At its least effective, it has allowed its participants to learn from their mistakes.

Notes on Meetings, Conflict, and Barriers to Participation

It can be broadly stated that the effective sharing of information, ideally in the form of direct, face-to-face meetings is an integral part of the health of any given collective and a lack of information sharing places obvious limits on consensus. At La Grange, meetings where all members have been present have often been few and far between, especially in the 2016 season, which saw only three official meetings. Much of the planning, organization, and sharing of information was done electronically by group email in previous seasons and through the lagrangecollective listserv that was created for the 2016 season. Updates were sent after major work was done so that members would know the progress of certain crops or what tasks still needed doing. The ability to share this kind of information via the internet also tugs questioningly at the ambivalent relationship that many of the participants, as anarchists, have with technology[80].

As the resident anthropologist, documenting events and jotting down notes was something I was usually doing anyways and so I gradually fell into the role of minute taker at meetings. It was usually myself sending updates after particularly productive days, with Margaret sending out brief updates in her customary 20 point font on the days when I was not present. The list also included a number of people, including Seamus and Marianne, who were not in the province of Quebec but had been involved in previous seasons, many of whom were pleased to see the project continuing and who enjoyed reading the periodic updates. This abstract place of the internet then became our de facto meeting place, and when coordination for an event or a work day, it happened as much

[80] As of this writing, part of the day to day communication in terms of organizing rides and work days was switched over to the phone app "Signal", which raised some concerns over accessibility. I wanted to explore this relationship with technology more thoroughly but unfortunately had not the space. I will briefly discuss this Signal conflict in the appendix but chose not to include it in the main body of this thesis as it occurred after my self-imposed fieldwork cutoff date.

online as it did face to face or by phone, particularly during the 2017 season. While not ideal, this was the best the project could do to keep communication open and equal in the face of the numerous barriers to participation experienced.

This project is far from the only one in member's lives and many members work, have children, are enrolled in university, or are involved in other activist projects that keep them busy and prevent them from committing as much time as they would like to the La Grange project. Factor in that a one-way commute to or from the farm from the island of Montreal is between 45 to 60 minutes by car when traffic conditions are favorable, which anyone who has spent time driving the highways in and out of Montreal can tell you is a fairly rare occurrence, and 1.5 – 2.5 hours by public transit depending on where you live in Montreal and whether the multiple busses and/or subways required connect in a timely fashion. While the price tag of $7 with a monthly Société de transport de Montréal (STM) pass, and $14 without (the pass is not effective in Laval) to get to and from the farm from Montreal island can certainly be restrictive for many, time it seems is also a resource that not everyone at La Grange has. For the most part this can be mitigated by effective communication and coordination[81] where people are kept abreast of what needs doing and what URGENTLY needs doing. More often than not in 2016, when things were dire, at least one of the members made the time. Nonetheless the need was felt by many for a greater emphasis on meetings, as Luke observed in saying "We need more intentional organizing for sure. Basically, shit just happened, and it worked, but it could have just as easily not worked."

As mentioned above, one of the other major barriers to involvement has been transportation. La Grange has, in the past, set aside a "war chest" dedicated to helping to defray the costs of transportation to and from the site. Not everyone it seems was made aware of the existence of this fund however, and throughout the last season it was seldom used to pay for STM fares. That said, for the most part, transportation for the 2016 season was mostly done through car-pooling of sorts. Both Luke and Marc had vehicles and would usually make at least one trip to the farm per week. For my part, I can only recall

[81] Even if it does not always happen face-to face.

three instances during the last season where I went to the farm using public transportation. Since then however, Marc sold his truck, and Luke is unsure of whether or not he will have to move for his partner to find work as a midwife once her schooling to that end is finished near the end of April[82].

La Grange is "staffed[83]" so to speak, entirely on a volunteer basis[84] and, as Luke puts it: "Nobody owns it per se. Nominally, Margaret owns the land, but she doesn't own the project". Members[85] are free to put as little or as much time into the project as they want to or can afford to, and may discontinue their involvement without consequence at any time they like. A shared desire to see the project flourish is a primary driver of the cohesion of the group and, whenever possible[86], major decisions made by the group are done as horizontally as possible with consensus as the goal. That being said, my experience at La Grange has suggested that this relative harmony also owes much to the interpersonal chemistry of the members.

Conflict at La Grange has been minimal and there has not been an issue that has arisen since my participant observation began in the 2015 season that has caused what Dark Lord Jay describes as "crippling drama". There was "beef" during the early 2015 season between Seamus and Jack[87], a friend who was to be his partner in the project, but in the end Jack decided that she did not want to be involved anymore and, asserting her capacity for voluntary association, left. Jack and Seamus were not on talking terms for quite a while after this, and Seamus, the self-professed workaholic, took on a lot of extra

[82] The collective has had two new members join as of the 2017 season who own vehicles, Marc has declared his intention of purchasing another truck, and Luke's partner found work and Luke will be staying for 2017. This will make the total number of vehicles owned by La Grange members at 5, the highest count of any season to date.
[83] There is no official recruitment process at La Grange and in almost all cases the new volunteers came to the project because they were interested in farming and heard of La Grange by word-of-mouth.
[84] Although a small stipend was offered to several individuals through what was referred to by Seamus as an "apprenticeship" in the 2015 season.
[85] As of this writing, "membership" at La Grange is a somewhat nebulous term but, for now can defined as "anyone who came to the 2017 planning meeting, or wanted to come to the meeting but could not for whatever reason".
[86] Some executive decisions that are not of any particular ideological consequence, such as deciding to plant a crop or to spend funds on necessary materials, are often undertaken by individuals without official consent of the collective.
[87] The exact nature of this "beef" was never fully volunteered to me and so I never asked. It was by many accounts a fairly severe falling out, and Dark Lord Jay, close friends with Jack, was caught in the middle.

responsibility, burning out a couple of times. But, in the end, the integrity of the project remained largely intact.

There were minor gripes over mismanagement of crops[88] or miscommunication[89] but, as Seamus remarks, "looking for that perfect, ideal state is really what creates a lot of conflict" and La Grange has never been the type of project that lets the perfect be the enemy of the good. There is also a conscious effort made to keep egos in check and, as Dark Lord Jay recalls, "it's a bit of luck that we didn't get into self-righteousness [in the collective]. We ended up being a good group of people for that."

Perhaps one of the largest ethical quandaries we encountered as a group was how to react to the groundhogs that had taken refuge on La Grange from the adjacent golf course and the industrial farm, where they would be killed on sight. These groundhogs caused us no end of grief and had an extremely frustrating habit of taking small bites out of large amounts of tomatoes and cucumbers, effectively ruining entire beds. A trap was purchased and when a groundhog was captured, it was often driven many miles from the farm and released. After losses to the crops accumulated and the trap seemed to be ineffective at sufficiently reducing the number of groundhogs, coupled with an instance where a skunk had been trapped by accident, was left too long under a tarp to prevent it from spraying people, and consequently died from some combination of desiccation and/or overheating, there was talk of bringing slingshots or pellet guns to kill them off. Some were vehemently opposed to this and, after we discussed it, all of us were conscious of how stark the parallels were between killing off the life on "our land" that was problematic or that we could not find a use for, and the genocidal legacy of colonialism that we all agreed was pretty awful and which we defined ourselves largely

[88] The after-the-fact consensus was that it was a bad idea in 2016 to not "stagger" the production of our greens by seeding different sections of certain beds in intervals so as to have them ready to harvest in batches instead of all at once. Many of our greens "bolted" from not being harvested in time and were inedible.

[89] Such as Margaret spending about $200 in the 2016 season to have a local farmer use his tractor to till a bed that we had never intended to use.

in opposition to. In the end, we eventually we all decided to just let them be for the time being, making a big show of scaring them off whenever we saw them[90].

Power Relations at La Grange: More Carrots, Less Sticks.

A common misconception about anarchism is that anarchists reject power. This is patently false. The anarchist project does not aim to abolish power – such a thing is both absurd and impossible. To be against "power" in a vague and unqualified sense would also mean to be against the empowerment of the disenfranchised and marginalized, whose struggles anarchists tend to support. Rather, anarchism seeks to alter the forms that power takes and to level it whenever possible. To put it another way, anarchists are not against power, but they do tend to be against the powerful, particularly if they are powerful at someone else's expense. To make sense of this, there needs to be a distinction between different types of power. Eco-feminist Starhawk (1987) provides such a distinction by delineating three distinct modes power can take, which is elaborated and discussed at length by Gordon (2008).

The first sense of power is 'power over' (Gordon, 2008, p. 50-52) which is fairly straightforward and refers to the power to dominate in a Weberian sense, where one imposes one's will over another through force, coercion, manipulation or authority. This, anarchists and members of La Grange would argue almost unequivocally, is undesirable in the extreme[91].

The second sense of power is 'power to' (Gordon, 2008, p. 52-54) which can be described as personal or collective empowerment and the building of capacity to do something like grow your own vegetables, learn French, or play the sitar. The dark side of 'power to' is that it is a precursor to 'power over'. I need the 'power to' bomb

[90] However, there was talk at the April 8, 2017 meeting about setting snare traps and making gopher stew by one of the newer members and of "smoking them out" by Luke. There were no consensus-breaking objections on either front and so the fate of the groundhog population of La Grange remains to be seen.
[91] Discussions of how, why, and under what circumstances "power over" would be morally acceptable to anarchists are both beyond the scope of this paper and not of relevance to this particular analysis.

someone before I can exercise 'power over' by bombing somebody into submission or threatening to bomb them until they capitulate to my will.

The third formulation of power Starhawk posits is what she refers to as 'power among', referred to by Gordon as 'power with' (Gordon, 2008, p. 52-54), and it has some important applications in describing the power structure at La Grange so I will quote here at length:

> Influence without force, coercion, manipulation or authority is a very broad area of power that is normally left unexamined. But there are manifold cases in which people get each other to do things without there being a conflict of wills or interests between them – and these are still cases in which some form of power is being wielded. However, these forms of power are so distant from the central meanings of power-over that they require a separate category. This establishes the need to talk about a third, cooperative form of power, where individuals influence each other's behaviour in the absence of a conflict of wills or interests. This is the idea of power-with, or power as non-coercive influence. (Gordon, 2008, p. 54)

At La Grange, power ebbs and flows and nobody there seems particularly worried about this, as it occurs at some level or another every time a project is undertaken and we trust each other enough to be fairly certain that when power is wielded at La Grange, it is not likely to be of the unpleasant, 'power over' variety[92]. To illustrate, Seamus is more knowledgeable about the goings on at the farm and has a much greater skill set when it comes to growing plants and so less experienced farmers like Dark Lord Jay and I would often defer to his judgment on the finer details concerning such matters. This is not to say he has more power than me, nor that there is a hierarchy necessarily being established, but rather that he is exercising 'power with' by using his superior knowledge to empower me and Dark Lord Jay, which we in turn would use 'to empower' the space. So in this framework, power need not be a negative thing, as power is not necessarily a zero sum game when treated in the "power to" or "power with" sense.

[92] Unless perhaps, you are a groundhog.

However, if someone were to actively be seeking power and authority at La Grange, that would be a different story altogether. Were Seamus to have conducted his de facto role of coordinator like a heavy-handed tyrant, the members of La Grange would have, myself included, discontinued our involvement and likely suggested some unpleasant places for him to visit and some unpleasant means by which to get there.

While certainly there was recognition of Seamus as one who is more knowledgeable at farming during the 2015 season, it is important to note that others have skill sets in different areas and, on a good day, all manners of knowledge and power get passed back and forth.

All this ebbing and flowing and lack of centralized leadership might not always be the most efficient means of production but even thinking of La Grange in such terms kind of misses the point. As mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, for most of those involved, La Grange is a political project that grows food, not a farm with political undertones and, more often than not, the efficient production of food is of secondary importance. As explained by Marianne: "except for a few people, almost everybody in the project became involved in this agriculture because of a political understanding of the world, as opposed to coming into agriculture and then *maybe* becoming politicized".

The collective impetus – the proverbial carrot - is to make the space an empowering and productive one for all involved and for those doing so to do so voluntarily, sharing their relevant knowledge and skills, with no sticks required. Thus far, this seems to be going fairly well, as conflicts have been minimal and there is a genuine sense of "saladarity"[93]. Again however, we must bring this back to the question of scale.

An argument could be made that La Grange is able to have some success in organizing along these lines and negotiating power in such ways because in a group of 15 or less,

[93] This is not a typo but rather homage to the produce and farm related word play that La Grange members are fond of signing off on listserv emails with. "In saladarity", "beet the system", "squash capitalism", and "turnip the volume" are among my favorites.

keeping power horizontal is a good deal more manageable than say, the municipality of Laval or holding spokescouncils[94] to organize mass protests. This is even more so the case when the group in question shares an intentional political culture. But again, the scale that concerns us here, indeed the scale which anarchism is most interested in, is less than 15 people[95].

A Brief Aside on Playing in the Dirt

Politics and theoretical considerations aside, the members of La Grange also do what they do because, in point of fact, they enjoy doing it. Often referring to our jaunts out to the (relative) countryside of Laval to sweat it out as "playing in the dirt", this reflects the fact that while La Grange exists upon a foundation of political intentionality, the visceral act of toiling about at the farm is, for the most part a rather pleasurable and satisfying one. After all, as Pollan pragmatically reminds us, "for most of us today hunting and gathering and growing our own food is by and large a form of play" (Pollan, 2006, 280). Pollan is not wrong in saying this, but it is worth mentioning that play and pleasure do not necessarily preclude serious political commitment, at least not all the time. As the quote famous in anarchist circles goes: "if I can't dance, it's not my revolution[96]".

Most of La Grange's members are involved in other activist projects of one stripe or another, and not all activist endeavours are "fun" affairs. Constant obligations and meetings, extended interactions with people whom you dislike and who may be of substantially, even agonizingly, different political leanings than you. There is much

[94]Spokescouncils were a method of large-scale decentralized organizing where affinity groups select a representatives or "spokes" who would attend a meeting with the representatives. These spokes "act conduits for information: they explain what their group is intending to do, bring proposals, and convey information and proposals back to the group for it to consider collectively" (Graeber, 2009, p. 37). In several of Graeber's (2009) ethnographic accounts, it is implied by Graeber's interlocutors that the consensus process for spokescouncils is significantly more cumbersome than reaching consensus with affinity groups.

[95] Gordon states that "the most oft-mentioned constituent of anarchist organising is the 'affinity group', which he posits is usually "roughly 15 people" (Gordon, 2008, p. 15-16).

[96] This quote is often incorrectly attributed to, but undeniably inspired by, the ever-quotable Emma Goldman. It was more or less paraphrased from an amusing incident in her autobiography *Living My Life* (1931) wherein her comrade takes her aside at a dance and informs her that it is unbecoming of a revolutionary to dance with such reckless abandon.

running to and fro performing all manners of errands, all the while balancing the free labour you give to your politics with the stark realities of living under a contemporary capitalism that will have its pound of flesh. For an act that can be as prefiguratively rewarding as "playing in the dirt" often is, it is also, for the most part, a fair deal of fun for those involved.

All this being said, it takes a degree of mental gymnastics to find the fun in necessary activities required by projects like La Grange, such as digging out a septic ditch after 3 days of rain or hauling giant boxes of produce on the subway. In the end, it is clearly an unrealizable assumption that any given activity can be fun all the time. What is more, this assumption is not unlike Pollan's interlocutor bemoaning the hubris and pointlessness of thinking you can grow anything (even fun) any time you like, anywhere you want. It is ultimately an entitled position that is considerably out of touch with the hegemony contemporary capitalism enjoys over notions of what "work" and "play" are, particularly if you happen to find yourself on the margins of it. The assumption that everything should be fun – even while playing - is not one that is taken by anyone who has stuck around at La Grange, as evidenced by the fact that even if nobody wanted to drain the ditch or haul bins full of tomatoes on the subway, it got done. Nevertheless, there remains a playful character to La Grange. There is something to be said, perhaps even something emancipatory, about deciding for yourself what is work, and what is play.

Does Anarchy Work?

The perennial question which has occupied both proponents and detractors of anarchism is whether or not it could "work". Could it feasibly replace current systems of government and large-scale social organization without creating a set of conditions which could be characterized as poor, nasty, brutish, and short? The debate around this question has wound up being, somewhat unsurprisingly, polemical. Below is a brief window into the kinds of arguments that often wind up happening and how they tend play out. Anarchists, for their part, will often say not only that it *could* work, but that anarchism, or some close approximation of it *has* worked. Some will even argue that some of the

activities that people engage in today under contemporary capitalism such as neighbourhood barbeques or gift giving, or which have been institutionalized by the state like libraries are horizontal or anarchic in nature.

The counterpoint, as it usually goes, is that there is no contemporary example of a large-scale anarchist society that has sustained itself for any reasonable period of time. This may be true, anarchists will often retort, but there are numerous examples of embryonic anarchist societies and even examples of institutions or services that have come to be considered under the purview of the state such as educational institutions like Fancsisco Ferrer's' Escuela Moderna or even armed forces like Nestor Mahkno's Black Army which functioned effectively under anarchist principals well enough until they were hamstrung, dismantled or otherwise violently destroyed by the state or capitalism or some combination thereof. It may seem to be written as hyperbole, but Graeber's (2004) fictional debate between the anthropology-savvy anarchist and the skeptic is one I have seen play out almost verbatim countless times:

> Skeptic: Well, I might take this whole anarchism idea more seriously if you could give me some reason to think it would work. Can you name me a single viable example of a society which has existed without a government?
>
> Anarchist: Sure. There have been thousands. I could name a dozen just off the top of my head: the Bororo, the Baining, the Onondaga, the Wintu, the Ema, the Tallensi, the Vezo...
>
> Skeptic: But those are all a bunch of primitives! I'm talking about anarchism in a modern, technological society.
>
> Anarchist: Okay, then. There have been all sorts of successful experiments: experiments with worker's self-management, like Mondragon; economic projects based on the idea of the gift economy, like Linux; all sorts of political organizations based on consensus and direct democracy...

> Skeptic: Sure, sure, but these are small, isolated examples. I'm talking about whole societies.
>
> Anarchist: Well, it's not like people haven't tried. Look at the Paris Commune, the revolution in Republican Spain...
>
> Skeptic: Yeah, and look what happened to those guys! They all got killed!
> (Graeber, 2004, p. 38-39)

Graeber's anarchist is not wrong. There is no shortage of documented societies which exhibit anarchist tendencies, nor any lack of examples of anarchist projects and initiatives which have existed in the shadow of the state. It is even generally agreed among most anthropologists that for the majority of human existence, we existed in the absence of a state or other such centralized governing body. But, as Graeber points out, the anarchist can never "win" this argument.

> Because when the skeptic says "society," what he really means is "state," even "nation-state." Since no one is going to produce an example of an anarchist state—that would be a contradiction in terms—what we're really being asked for is an example of a modern nation-state with the government somehow plucked away: a situation in which the government of Canada, to take a random example, has been overthrown, or for some reason abolished itself, and no new one has taken its place but instead all former Canadian citizens begin to organize themselves into libertarian collectives. Obviously, this would never be allowed to happen. (Graeber, 2004, p. 39)

But I digress, as the point of this chapter is not to definitively answer this grand question. Rather, this chapter is mostly concerned with whether or not anarchism works in the small scale, specifically, in a peri-urban farming project like La Grange. So then, does anarchism work at La Grange? The answer to this question depends again on the metric one is using to define what "works" and what does not.

In terms of La Grange as being a perfect microcosm of how anarchism could function on a societal scale, the answer is no. We still require input from the capitalist system to survive, much as we try to mitigate the degree to which we do. Not everything can be solved through DIY and ultimately, we use money that we earned through the selling of goods to, for example, buy materials that we need. When a hoe is finally beyond the recuperative powers of DIY repair, there is no recourse but to go and buy another from the hardware store. When it does not rain for a week and the rainwater runoff system is dry or not functioning, we are forced to rely on infrastructure provided by the municipality of Laval to water our plants, lest they die. The food we produce does not constitute a particularly large percentage of the caloric intake which we require to survive.

Again, there is no perfect way for a clean break from the capitalist system and the world and the spaces that comprise it are so overwhelmingly controlled and regulated by state structures that permanent, unfettered autonomy is extremely difficult, if not impossible. Barring a revolution or some other form of massive social and political change which could create conditions more amenable towards such notions, ideological purity in this regard is simply not attainable. As Luke mentions, "the system is just not set up in a way that makes it easy for collectives. If you go to a bank and tell them you want to start a co-op or a collective project, they look at you like you have three heads. But if you tell them you want to start a company - well then, right this way sir!"

Nevertheless, as Graeber pointed out earlier, the propensity of those interrogating anarchism to demand a concrete example of a stateless-state misses the point in the same way that Freeman's earlier assumption does. If one starts from the premise that using a large-scale, centralized, hierarchical structure is the most effective means of organizing groups of people, then it should come as little surprise that deviations from this should be viewed as failures. This is the wrong question to be asking and the debate, when framed this way, is rigged from the start.

But what if instead, we consider whether or not La Grange and its ever fluctuating and imperfect anarchism “works” in terms of its GHP? Through this lens it does quite well, even when it fails. Perhaps even especially when it fails. If the anarchist utopia is, at least for the moment, unattainable, and the alternative is to not even bother trying, then a concept like Scott’s Law of Anarchist Calisthenics makes sense.

The backdrop for Scott’s parable is a traffic intersection in Neubrandenburg, Germany where he lived in the summer of 1990. In the evenings at this particular intersection, there was barely any traffic and the flat landscape allowed for one to see an approaching vehicle from miles away. However, even at night, the traffic lights were timed for traffic earlier in the day when vehicle traffic was more pronounced and this particular set of lights routinely took upwards of 5 minutes to change. Despite this, every night Scott observed citizens dutifully waiting for their turn and, on the rare occurrence that someone chose to cross the street in defiance of the lights, they would inevitably be scolded by the fifty or sixty people present. Working up the courage to go against the grain, he began to imagine what he would say in response to this scolding on the day that he finally just crossed the street:

> You know, you and especially your grandparents could have used more of a spirit of lawbreaking. One day you will be called on to break a big law in the name of justice and rationality. Everything will depend on it. You have to be ready. How are you going to prepare for that day when it really matters? You have to stay 'in shape' so that when the big day comes you will be ready. What you need is 'anarchist calisthenics.' Every day or so break some trivial law that makes no sense, even if it's only jaywalking. Use your own head to judge whether a law is just or reasonable. That way, you'll keep trim; and when the big day comes, you'll be ready. (Scott, 2014, p. 4)

If we can consider, as some of La Grange’s members clearly do, that producing your own food is an act of defiance against the modern food system, however symbolic or insignificant, then it is in a sense a kind of anarchist calisthenics. The same could be said

of DIY as defiance of consumerism, the refusal to wield "power over" when one could wield "power with" as defiance of the politics of authority, and the conceptual negation of work in lieu of constructive play as defiance to the monopoly exerted on what gets to be defined as "work". Against the totalizing systems of social control we inhabit, imperfect acts of defiance – even beyond the GHP benefits and for the sole purpose of staying in fighting trim - are a welcome alternative to resignation, apathy, and dormancy. In this sense at least, anarchism at La Grange "works".

Conclusion

At the outset of this thesis, I posed two questions which guided my research. The first sought to understand the factors and political motivations that have come to influence La Grange's direction as a collective. As I hope this thesis has impressed upon the reader, there are a great deal of moving parts involved in a project like La Grange. People come and go and individual involvement waxes and wanes, contingent on any number of variables particular to that individual. In hindsight, this question now seems somewhat naïve, for much like the political underpinnings animating the project, La Grange is dynamic and what "makes it tick" so to speak, defies a simple explanation.

In chapter 2 we looked at the human and environmental costs of conventional, industrial-scale food production and the possibilities offered by organic farming, weighing the costs and benefits of both, before attempting to situate La Grange along this spectrum. For the most part, food production at La Grange appears, despite itself, to be firmly rooted in the tradition of the "organic ideal", yet the material conditions are such that the full realization of this ideal is often out of reach.

As we look to a future with few immediate signs of population growth abating, the grave question of how to continue to feed humanity persists. While initiatives like La Grange may offer some insights into how we may engage with the production of food differently, under present conditions, such projects are highly unlikely to possess the capacity to fix the world's problems with food on their own.

In chapter 3 we explored the various dimensions of prefiguration, interrogating its usefulness as analytical tool for examining political movements and social groupings. While it has its uses with regards to exploring a group's motivations, aspirations and practices, on its own it paints an incomplete picture. Moreover, we saw that the flexibility of prefiguration is both a blessing and a curse. It allows us to view cross sections of these motivations across a broad spectrum, but it does so with insufficient depth and precision.

Yet, despite its shortcomings, it appears that social movement scholars have yet to coalesce around a suitable alternative that could do the conceptual work that prefiguration does. It is my hope that this chapter and the discussions and critiques contained within may help work towards finding this alternative and will, at the very least, be useful as a reference point for future scholars wishing to engage with or build upon the concept.

As we saw in chapter 4, the efforts at attaining a measure of self-reliance through the practices of making do and "doing it yourself" inform a large part of the attitude towards the day-to-day work conducted at La Grange. Often times this is born of necessity, but for many at La Grange such activities also provide a means, however imperfect, for them to actively reject consumerism. DIY can also be an engaging and immersive way of acquiring new skills and knowledge, and even "doing it yourself badly" has the potential to be instructive.

However, in a vacuum it is unlikely that a cultural phenomenon like DIY would even exist. For doing it yourself to have the meaning it does, requires individuals having a certain degree of alienation from fundamental elements of the human experience such as the production of food. In this sense the DIY ethos is both symptomatic of the "stripping of the autonomy of the individual" as Seamus puts it, and deeply entangled with it. While it offers ways to live minimally within the shadow of a consumption driven system like capitalism, by its very nature it faces limits in terms of its capacity to challenge that system in a concrete and transformative way.

Finally, in chapter 5 we examine the history, principles, and aspirations of anarchism, a philosophy which I have found resonates with many of those involved at La Grange. Anarchism has a rich and fascinating history and has, throughout that history, developed a great deal of seemingly disparate currents and tendencies. At its core however, anarchism asks us to consider what could be possible if we were to approach things like social organization and the wielding of power with a minimized reliance on hierarchy and coercion. It urges us to reflect on what we are forfeiting when we abdicate our autonomy and what is lost every time we submit to authority. These are important questions, and it

is my hope that the considerations outlined in this chapter will help to nurture such discussions.

Anarchism is often critiqued as being impractical and unrealistic. Indeed, one is forced to concede that the current prospects for a worldwide anarchist utopia do appear rather grim - with the caveat that this likely has less to do with anarchism's practical or theoretical shortcomings, and more to do with the nature of imperial hegemony. Nevertheless, it can be said that in many cases holding a worldview such as anarchism, while still living in the world organized by nation states and driven by zero-sum abstractions like money, requires a certain degree of cognitive flexibility. But for many anarchists, these contradictions come with the territory. The existing power structures and paradigms are simply not amenable to anarchist thought and where they are not dismissive, they are openly hostile.

I have observed however, that many anarchists continue to hold onto and act upon these principles not because they are hopelessly naïve, but because the alterative to doing what you can to live your beliefs within the confines of circumstance, is to do nothing at all, a prospect considerably less likely to bring about any kind of meaningful social transformation. So it is at La Grange, where the project might not always accomplish what it sets out to do, but is content to try and fail rather than do nothing at all. At the end of the day, as Seamus puts is, La Grange is but one "node of resistance" among many that would be required to see a different world come to pass.

This brings us then to the second question posed in the introduction: what is the world La Grange wants to see? Again, this question seems naïve in retrospect, as over the course of my involvement with the project I have come to understand that there is no one thing that makes La Grange tick – everyone has different reasons for involvement. It follows then that there are as many perspectives on what that world would like as there are participants in the project. However, echoing the alterglobalization movement's motto of "one no, many yesses", having these nuances in perspective does not necessarily preclude working with others against a common enemy. Nor does it follow that being in a political

collective necessarily prevents individuals engaging in particular activities within that collective which they find to be personally satisfying or educational.

All this being said and lofty political rhetoric aside, it bears mentioning that there are more reasons than just politics that bring people to the project. For one, many have commented that there is something palliative, perhaps even cathartic, about "getting out of the city" and spending a day at the farm, even if it is technically still "in the city". For individuals like Dark Lord Jay who are not seeking out "the right yoga for me", La Grange is a place where one can engage in healthy, physical activity. Others have emphasized the heuristic aspect of the project and have come to the farm to hone their farming skills in a way that is only possible by "playing in the dirt" and through direct and sustained engagement with an actual farm.

Herein however, lies one of the limits of what can be taken from La Grange and my analysis of it. La Grange is, in many respects, a privileged project. Its members live in the welfare state that is Canada, a part of the world where if you fail to produce their own food, you will not starve. While this is certainly not to discount the heuristic potential of play, in the interests of reflexivity it is worth stressing that play is only play in the relative absence of consequence.

This research is also limited in the sense that it may not speak to similar projects operating under different circumstances. Not every DIY farm project enjoys the benefit of not having to pay rent and collective projects do not always enjoy the level interpersonal cohesion and lack of crippling conflict that La Grange does. As such, other similar projects might require more energy spent focusing on producing revenue or mediating interpersonal conflicts – they may not have the time to play.

For all its flaws and shortcomings however, my time working and playing at La Grange has impressed upon me the uniqueness of the space. While the exact nature of world La Grange is working towards may be complicated and ever changing, perhaps even

unknowable, from a certain perspective La Grange stands as a world of its own, one that is distinct from the golf course and the industrial farm it is sandwiched between.

Within this world, the rules are different. Here, one may work towards developing an altogether different relationship with the land and the creatures that inhabit it. One may learn in the absence of authority, self-regulate in the absence of coercion, and act out principles that may be entirely unwelcome in other worlds. One may also, if they are so inclined, grow vegetables.

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