

Fostering Connections Amidst and Beyond the Pandemic:
Community-Based Research and Food Sovereignty in Fredericton, New Brunswick

Véronique Hamel

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By: Véronique Hamel

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Signed by the final Examining Committee:

_____ Chair
Amy Swiffen

_____ Examiner
Satoshi Ikeda

_____ Supervisor
Mark K. Watson

Approved by _____
Kregg Hetherington, Graduate Program Director

_____ 2021

_____ *Pascale Sicotte, Dean of Faculty*

ABSTRACT

Fostering Connections Amidst and Beyond the Pandemic: Community-Based Research and Food Sovereignty in Fredericton, New Brunswick

Véronique Hamel

Although there is a strong call for engaged and decolonized research in cultural anthropology, very few structures are in place in universities to train and encourage graduate students in carrying research projects that take up these challenges. Born from the successful research collaboration between a Master's student and Hayes Farm, a community farm in New Brunswick, this thesis aims to prove that change in research practices is both needed and possible. The research team used a community-based research approach and digital methods, including interviews, surveys and appreciative inquiry, to investigate how the community farm model could foster food sovereignty in New Brunswick. In parallel, a prominent focus was brought to the collaborative research process itself and to the nature of relationships, which are placed at the center of the Hayes Farm's mission. A feminist ethics of care and an action-research framework were used to make sense of the research's process and results. Key findings include that a community farm can best advance food sovereignty through its role as a connector and a healing space for the community, and that the relationships that are created and enacted through collaborative research are as much important as the outcomes that it produces in terms of knowledge.

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CONTRIBUTION OF AUTHORS

This thesis is one of the outcomes of a collaborative project. Hence, the majority of the ideas presented here are the result of a sequence of researching, discussing, drafting, brainstorming, analyzing and editing as a team. While the majority of the more “academic” tasks, like the literature review, the initial articulation of the theoretical framework, the data collection and the writing of the first draft of each section, were carried out by the main researcher, it would be hard to identify exactly how we influenced each other out in the process.

However, for sake of clarity and fairness, the precise ideas, words and writing contributions of every co-researcher are acknowledged as such. When ideas, suggestions or comments are directly attributable to a research partner, it is written as such in the main text (e.g., “as Alice said...”). When their speech is reported in the text, it is treated the same way as quotes from other sources. Finally, the parts that were specifically written by co-researchers appear in boxes separated from the rest of the text to avoid all confusion with authorship.

IMPORTANT NOTE: All names except the main author’s one are pseudonyms. This includes the names of the co-researchers.

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PROLOGUE: THE STAGE IS BEHIND THE CURTAINS

This research project comes out of a long process that is often overlooked: the behind-the-scenes work of setting up a collaborative, community-based research (see for example McArdle 2002; Frankham and Howes 2006; Snoeren, Niessen and Abma 2011; Wicks and Reason 2009). The research project that I am presenting here is not the same project I was intending on doing three years ago when I applied for the Master's program at Concordia, nor is it the same I proposed to potential research partners in the fall of 2019 when we first met in person. Of course, it is also not the same project that we were thinking of doing as a research team before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Finally, it is not the research project that was presented in our proposal in the fall of 2020 either, as public health restrictions and family situations continued to change the course of our research beyond what we could imagine in any given moment.

Hence, inspired and empowered by Shawn Wilson's delicate and heartfelt storytelling approach in *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (2008), I start this thesis with the story of the long journey that led to it, and that extends beyond it as well. This story should explain why I ended up in Fredericton, New Brunswick, and not somewhere else; why our research project centers on a specific community farm; and why it tries to tackle subjects as big as food sovereignty and the nature of relationships. Throughout the text, I keep oscillating between "I" (the author of this thesis, or rather its humble storyteller) and "we" (the research team). This might seem frustrating for an academic reader, but it is necessary as most of the ideas presented here came out of our interactions as a research team and the research project was carried together by everyone throughout. However, the sections specifically authored by other members of the research team are clearly acknowledged using separate boxes through the text.

Setting Out on the Research Journey

My research journey started in the fall of 2018, while I was preparing my application for my admission into the Master's in anthropology at Concordia. When looking for a research topic, I first thought of continuing on a previous research project I had conducted with Vermont Abenakis and the Seeds of Renewal Project (further SoR Project). This project, coordinated by Dr. David Barnes, aims at revitalizing Wabanaki agriculture through tracking and reclaiming ancient seeds from the traditional territory of the Wabanaki Confederacy. More than just a seed bank, the SoR Project works towards recreating a coherent Wabanaki food system by growing traditional food from reclaimed seeds, rediscovering and sharing the knowledge about preparing this food and bringing back the ceremonies that held this food system together. A little naively, but also goodheartedly, I wanted my Master's research to also be useful to the people I would work with, so I had a couple discussions with Dr. David Barnes to see if I could help with the SoR Project once again.

The first time I worked with the SoR Project, I offered to give back to the community by helping to find ancient, potentially Indigenous seeds in Southeastern Quebec and by translating traditional Abenaki, Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqey recipes from French to English. When I contacted Dr. Barnes in 2018, he was still "chasing" ancient Indigenous seeds for the SoR Project and was trying to extend the Project into the Canadian Maritimes (it was mainly operating in Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine and Quebec at that point). He thus proposed that I team up with Elizabeth Davis, his book editor and organic agriculture expert, and start chasing seeds in the Canadian Maritimes. At first, Elizabeth and I were pretty like-minded about this research project and enthusiastic about collaborative research that could really have an impact. After having written co-researchers and co-writers agreements, we departed for a week-long prospecting adventure in the

Canadian Maritimes in November 2018. The goal was to establish a first contact with eventual research partners and to connect with potential informants.

The trip went well, and not even a week later I was submitting a SSHRC funding proposal based on this initial research project. I considered that this collaborative research was off to a good start. I met again with Elizabeth later that winter and we started organizing a second field trip for the spring, first during the spring break and then by mid-May. In the meantime, though, Elizabeth had become more involved in local agricultural politics in Ontario and it grew impossible for her to join, so we finally dropped the project and departed each on our own way from there. The only contact I had with her for a while was a bad connection phone call that ended abruptly and to which I was not even able to reply: she did not answer her phone, her voicemail was full and she did not return my emails. Although I must admit that I was frustrated with how things were changing at that moment, when I moved past my frustrations, I realized that this twist of event was an opportunity for me to be more creative with my research project and less tied to seed chasing. However, to my surprise, Elizabeth called me back in the fall of 2020 to check in with me and to let me know that she was ready to pick up our research project where we left it two years ago! As my own project had departed from our initial one, I shared with her the archives I had from what we had done together and wished her good luck with continuing the project.

In the fall of 2019, after having lost hope in working with Elizabeth and being constrained by the ultimate timeline of my university program, I decided to travel to the Maritimes by myself and started to reach out to some people who might be interested in Indigenous seeds. Amongst the many contacts I had collected over the internet and through different connections, I found a business card that I had picked up at the ACORN (Atlantic Canadian Organic Regional Network) Conference on my trip with Elizabeth during the previous fall. The business card was from Hayes

Farm, an organization I did not know of at the time, and so I decided to look them up on the internet.

Hayes Farm is a teaching farm located in the city of Fredericton, on the North Side of the Saint-John River. Launched in 2018, Hayes Farm is a project of New Brunswick Community Harvest Gardens (further NBCHG), a grassroots non-profit that was born in 2010 and that also operates two community gardens and a seed library project in Fredericton. Although Hayes Farm has become an organization of its own, it is still operating under the umbrella of NBCHG, to a point where it is hard for most people to discern where one organization starts and where the other begins. While NBCHG's mission is to "grow food, grow minds and grow community" (NBCHG 2021, <http://www.nbchg.org/about-us/our-mission-objectives/>), Hayes Farm's specific goal is to inspire, empower and train New Brunswickers into practicing small-scale sustainable agriculture, developing a resilient food system and honoring Indigenous land use and foodways. As such, Hayes Farm's main function is to be a teaching farm, offering internships, workshops and activities about regenerative agriculture, gardening, food transformation and craftsmanship to name a few.

The crew at Hayes Farm (board members, employees, interns and volunteers), under the supervision of the farm manager, also collectively produces a wide variety of sustainably grown vegetables for the local population that are distributed through market stands, donations and vegetable boxes. The latter are offered through both the community-supported agriculture (CSA) model directly at the farm and the pay-what-you-can model via the farm's partner organizations. NBCHG has a board of directors and is funded through membership fees, grants and donations. Hayes Farm also complements its budget with the revenues generated from selling the farm's products and with its internships' tuition, although this part of its budget is minimal. Being membership-based, NBCHG holds general annual meetings, whereas Hayes Farm uses a variety

of methods to get input from the community (“bean polls”, design charettes, blackboards, surveys, etc.). The land and the buildings at Hayes Farm do not belong to NBCHG, but rather to Robert Anderson, who inherited the farm from his aunt Mary Hayes, the last member of the Hayes family who lived on the farm, and who wished that the land continue to serve farming purposes.

I was immediately hooked by the farm’s story and mission statement, especially since they gave special importance to Indigenous land and foodways and expressed a concern for embodying and living up to the Peace and Friendship Treaties. I took a chance and wrote them a long email (long emails were to become my signature later on). I was genuinely surprised when I received a very enthusiastic email from Alice, the farm coordinator, even greeting me in French! We quickly organized an informal chat and tour of the farm, which turned out to be fruitful, as Alice and the Hayes Farm team were interested both in my research project and in connecting directly with Dr. Barnes for a guest lecture for the following growing season. In my trip around New Brunswick, Gaspésie, Maine and Prince-Edward-Island that fall, I also met with other engaged organizations and individuals who were really interested in connecting, and generally positive about participating in a collaborative research project.

Thus followed a series of iterations of more or less tangible research project proposals that I discussed with Dr. Barnes and that I submitted through email to the potential research partners I had met in the fall. One of these propositions was an idea of putting together a collaborative website on Wabanaki agriculture and seed-saving that we could craft in partnership with all interested organizations. Apart from Dr. Barnes, the only answers I received to those proposals were from the Hayes Farm team, that was more enthusiastic about doing something concrete on the farm and less about a website project, and from Micmac Farms, a wonderful farm and trout hatchery run by the Aroostook Band of Mi'kmaq in Caribou, Maine. When I received the answer

from Micmac Farms though, my collaboration with Hayes Farm had already grown enough that I considered I should center my research there and so I kindly told them I could not be as involved with them anymore.

Setting Down the Bases for Collaboration

At this point in the research story, I think it is necessary to properly acknowledge the role that serendipity plays in this research project. It would be hard to explain in detail why, of all the wonderful people I met over two years, only my connection with Hayes Farm turned into a successful collaboration that lasts until today and became this lively research project. With everybody leading busy lives, this research journey has of course been full of missed opportunities that could have turned into promising projects had the stars aligned differently. I must also pay tribute to all the trust, enthusiasm, proactivity and flexibility that the Hayes Farm team showed me since the beginning of our communications. Even in times when I personally was too busy with studying and teaching to reach out to them, Alice took the time to write back to me to keep the conversation going and check in on upcoming developments. I am infinitely thankful for that, and for all the time and energy that my research partners have put in this project since the beginning of our collaboration.

In January 2020, when we started sketching more clearly what our collaborative research project would be about, Alice connected me with a research group at the University of New Brunswick called RAVEN (Rural Actions and Voices for the ENvironment). We thought at first that this connection would be a great fit, since RAVEN focused on telling stories from rural New Brunswick and a part of their work focused on Indigenous stories. We tried a couple times to set phone calls either two-by-two or as a group, but eventually this collaboration failed as the different parties agreed that this partnership was not a good fit anymore. I admit that I did not understand at

the time what led to this conclusion, but what I know is that many emails were sent back and forth between different individuals and that information was unequally distributed. Hence, I do not fully know the reasons that pushed this collaboration to an end. The collaboration with Hayes Farm, and with its umbrella organization, New Brunswick Community Harvest Gardens (NBCHG), did survive that episode nonetheless. We were able to meet over the phone as a group, write down meeting minutes, and then organize an in-person meeting in Fredericton in March 2020 with other interested potential collaborators.

The March meeting proved very successful. We were able to discuss and write down our goals, aspirations and common interests for this research. Around the table, we had Dan, farm manager and core instructor at Hayes Farm, or the “boots-on-the-farm” person as he likes to describe himself; Helen, co-chair of NBCHG and symbolic mother of the Hayes Farm project and the farm crew; Nicole, Garden Director at NBCHG and symbolic grandmother of all the kids who roam around on the farm; Alice, Hayes Farm’s program coordinator and incredible mastermind; and finally John Cormier, Wolastoq Grand Chief and Hayes Farm’s important partner. Jennifer, the communications coordinator at Under One Sky, Fredericton’s off-reserve friendship center with which Hayes Farm partners for delivering pay-what-you-can vegetable baskets, could unfortunately not attend the meeting. The meeting was lively, friendly and inspiring, although I was meeting most of these people for the first time. Everyone came to the table with a good heart and with a lot of enthusiasm about what we could do together. I left the meeting with extensive notes that I had to turn into openly shared meeting minutes and the homework to draft a research question that I would then submit back to this emerging research team for edition and revision.

During this meeting, we also had the opportunity to briefly discuss some issues related to doing research with Indigenous people. I briefly presented the OCAP® principles (ownership,

control, access, and possession) as well as the guidelines stated in chapter 9 of the TCPS (Tri-Council Policy Statement) as a starting point for a dialogue on collaboration with Indigenous partners, acknowledging that we would have to figure out a way to live up to those principles while conducting a collaborative research that would include both Indigenous and settler partners. I shared my concern that it seemed difficult in our situation to ensure full ownership of the research data by a Wolastoqey organization or the Grand Council itself, as all collaborators would need access to the data in order to work together. Grand Chief Cormier, although he was personally enthusiastic about the project, honored the protocols of his people and took the question to the clan grandmothers before making the decision to join the project or not.

Our current research team solidified out of this meeting, with Alice, Helen, and Nicole participating in all the other research meetings we held remotely since then. However, this in-person meeting was in early March 2020, and at that point nobody could envision the pandemic and the turmoil that would unfold not even a week after I arrived back in Quebec and resumed my work and studies after the spring break. Once again, it is Alice who reached out to me first and checked-in on how we should go further with the research project despite the pandemic. While we were all optimistic at first that the pandemic and the social distancing measures would slowly go away, we came to question the whole research project when New Brunswick and other provinces of the Maritimes decided to close their provincial borders, making in-person research almost impossible.

Indigenous Relationships in the Making

Meanwhile, after conferring with the Wolastoqey Clanmothers, Grand Chief Cormier wrote back to me in early April to let me know that the grandmothers had declined to take part in the research project. The Clanmothers made their decision on the basis that they refused to be co-

owners of the data generated through this research because they were the sole owners of their traditional knowledge¹. From there, our research team entered a series of discussions about whether we should offer them to participate again in the project on better terms or not, and if so, what we could do to work in that direction. I personally felt that we should respect their refusal as a final answer and not insist further. I had just finished reading *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Nation-States* (2014), in which Andrea Simpson talks in length about the political power of refusal and how it embodies Indigenous sovereignty. However, it was very important to Hayes Farm's team that the connection and partnership with the Wolastoq Grand Council remain undisrupted by this refusal to participate in the research project. While nobody was trying to force the issue with the Wolastoq Grand Council, Hayes Farm's team still wanted to communicate their understanding and desire to continuing building a positive and trusting relationship with them. My research partners hence proposed for me to contact Anna, a graduate student at Carleton University working closely with the Wolastoq Grand Council and writing her PhD on allyship. They thought that, by discussing with her, I could figure out what we did not do right in our approach with Indigenous people and find what we could do to make a collaboration with the Wolastoq Grand Council work in the future.

I must admit that, for a long while, I was not able to gather the courage to contact Anna, first because I felt anxious and self-critical about having done the very mistakes I wanted to avoid as a young anthropologist working with Indigenous people; and second, because working towards trespassing the Wolastoqey Clanmothers' decision also felt utterly wrong. However, I had to reconsider reaching out to Anna and seeking her advice for working through possible partnerships

¹ It should be noted here that the Clanmother's decision is totally aligned with the guidelines stated in the chapter 9 of the TCPS2. Indeed, all the knowledge and data gained out of research with Indigenous people inherently belongs to them and thus, rather than talking about co-ownership of the data, we should have discussed and elaborated research agreements that took this right for granted.

with Indigenous organizations after Jennifer from Under One Sky, Fredericton's off-reserve friendship center, joined one of our research meetings in June. This meeting went bad in all ways possible: I was in a noisy environment with spotty internet connection and no webcam; we could barely hear each other correctly; I confused the friendship center's name with the similar name of another farm I had visited in New Brunswick (Open Sky Co-op); I lacked context about what Under One Sky was doing and, for her part, Jennifer lacked context about where we were in the research project (we were discussing the specific methods that we could use, none of them being explicitly Indigenous). As a result, Jennifer left the meeting with palpable frustration, considering that this project was of no interest for her organization and worse, potentially harmful.

At that point, I felt I had broken enough things - especially precious relationships that Hayes Farm had developed slowly and carefully over time - that it was more than time to start trying to patch things up. I wrote Jennifer back, and I finally contacted Anna for the first time. It took a while before we were able to set a meeting together, but eventually both meetings happened. I was able to talk with Jennifer over the phone, and I started by apologizing for the lack of sensitivity and knowledge I had about her organization and Indigenous methodology. Much to my surprise, Jennifer was not upset or resentful and was actually happy to reconnect with me. She agreed though that, before involving any Indigenous individual or organization in the research, we needed to learn more about Indigenous methodology. I still had a lot of work to do on my own and so she kindly sent me back to do my homework so that I could come up with more appropriate and tangible propositions for collaboration.

As for Anna, I had a very lengthy and difficult discussion with her in which we went through the colonial biases of anthropology and the examination of my own motives in doing this research and wanting to work with Indigenous people. To me, this felt like being hammered again

with the same warnings and accusations that I heard in loop throughout my academic training in anthropology and that just yielded more guilt and discomfort. However, at the end of the discussion, Anna proposed that we invite her to one of our research meetings so we can discuss how Indigenous-settler relationships could be rethought at Hayes Farm altogether. This second group meeting was very insightful yet challenging for many of us. I remember feeling abashed and baffled during the whole conversation, as if I was looking at myself sitting at the picnic table next to the barn at Hayes Farm with the rest of the team and not being able to get over the idea that I had somehow achieved to embody the worst of colonialism in my interactions with different members of the Indigenous community.

One thing I realized at the meeting was that coming to people with a good heart was not enough to build respectful and fair relationships if we left our colonial legacies unexamined and if we were not ready to work on ourselves before and through working with others. I think we also all understood that building trust and meaningful relationships between settlers and Indigenous people takes tremendous time, patience and generosity, and that setting up the bases for genuine and respectful collaboration was a delicate and long-term endeavor that was beyond the scope of our current research project. The latter could only be part and parcel of bigger processes, discussions and projects between Hayes Farm and the Wolastoqey community, and more generally between settlers and Indigenous peoples. Gratefully, things are now moving slowly in the direction of setting up a Wabanaki Advisory Circle committee on Indigenous representation, sovereignty, and allyship at Hayes Farm.

Research Amidst Uncertain Times

When I read back the emails we exchanged during the pandemic and think about the different conversations I had with my research partners, my supervisor, my friends, my husband,

my family and fellow anthropology students, I can only note how challenging and unsettling that time had been. The overall mood, at least for me, was uncertainty. As a research team, after having considered many different scenarios for conducting research amidst the pandemic, we decided to continue collaborating remotely until New Brunswick “borders” would reopen, which at first we thought would not take so long. But as the months passed, the “Atlantic Bubble” remained closed to other Canadians, and as discussions of a second wave of COVID-19 started saturating the news in July 2020, my faith in the possibility to move freely to New Brunswick and to feasibly conduct research before the end of the fall semester plummeted. Nevertheless, my research partners in Fredericton remained optimistic about our research project and the possibility to carry it through in person, way more than I was at the time.

Although we did realize giant steps remotely in terms of research design, crafting a viable, useful and agreed-upon research question, identifying potential research participants and choosing methods we could use to answer our research question, personally, I was not able to sit down and write a single line of the research proposal throughout the whole summer of 2020. My motivation was at its lowest in years, and my enthusiasm about the research project had turned into a constant feeling of angst: was I doing the right thing? was this research worth pursuing? would it end up being just another missed opportunity? was I just wasting my time and the one of my research partners? Of course, the less time I was spending on the research project to dodge that unpleasant state, the more it felt like I was going nowhere; of course, this situation was anything but healthy or productive.

By mid-July, fed up of waiting endlessly for New Brunswick borders to reopen, I decided I would give myself an ultimatum: either I moved to Fredericton for the rest of the summer and the fall and endured the regulations and the quarantine, or I changed my whole research project

altogether. This was a very delicate and heartbreaking decision to take. As much as I wanted to honor my engagement with Hayes Farm and wanted this research project to actually happen, leaving for New Brunswick without the possibility of coming back for an extended period of time also meant that I was leaving my husband and my family behind exactly when we needed each other the most. However, I could not continue to move forward without taking this decision. Uncertainty, social isolation and lack of structure already had taken a toll on my mental health, to a point where my husband did not recognize the person I used to be anymore.

When I announced this ultimatum to my research partners, they were at first surprised and, I could feel, a little disappointed. However, they only showed me care, support and understanding. Although changing my research subject was very tempting at that point, when this option proved to be very unlikely, I decided to commit and arrange my move to New Brunswick. I found exactly what I needed for accommodations, received approbation from the Government of New Brunswick to move to the province, packed up my things and moved to Fredericton, all within a week. And there I was, writing a research proposal during what I considered a writing retreat, but which really was a pandemic quarantine, preparing the next steps of what would be, at last, an on-site

community-based research on food sovereignty and the complicated yet powerful nature of the relationships that make a community farm what it is.

Backward, Sideways and Forward

Since Veronique's first outreach to Hayes Farm in the fall of 2019, we have been keen on realizing a project with her. As her story here relates, this project has not come about especially easily, but our respective commitment to gaining value from collaboration as well as her passion and research ability is something which excites us greatly. As we work together to craft a project which will hold the most promise for each partner and participant, we have uncovered a process that takes steps backward and sideways before ultimately moving forward. We hope that this research shows us how best to move forward with our mission on this community farm, and what is most important in developing relationships and ways to engage the public on this land and within this project at Hayes Farm.

As the Hayes Farm Coordinator, I am excited about what the research question(s) will help us reveal, and would like to congratulate Veronique, our fearless leader, on her tenacity and patience in her work with us.

Alice

From Distance to Presence and Back

At this point in our research story, it was time to start looking at more tangible scenarios for what we intended to do with this research, although nothing was fixed at this point. This exercise was particularly alienating for me, as the ever-evolving context of the pandemic forced our research team to change our shaky plans every single week, and trying to commit to a certain scenario or plan seemed to yield only unmet expectations and further readjustments. Needless to say, very little of what we intended to do or we imagined as a timeline actually happened. My constant struggle with academic writing did not help for that matter, as two of the four months that I intended to dedicate to "fieldwork" were actually consumed by the mere writing of the proposal. Thankfully, I came across graduate students writing groups that used the Pomodoro technique and

connected over *Zoom*. I owe my very thesis to these writing groups as they helped me to sit down, focus and write, what I wasn't able to do by myself. The delays associated with the ethics approval process were also something that was, to a certain extent, out of our power and that kept pushing further the start of the more "empirical" side of our research, a point to which I will return below.

As the weeks and then the months passed, as much as I was enjoying my freedom in New Brunswick and I felt I was strengthening my ties to the farm, it became more and more difficult to nurture a healthy long-distance relationship with my husband and to still be somehow present for my little sister. My husband and I chatted every single night, while we connected with my sister over *Discord* every other day, but no matter how much fun we had, there was always this screen between us, reminding us of the ridiculous distance and the cold regulations that kept us apart. Technology is a funny thing: we get lured by the instantaneity of communications and the fidelity of the image and the sound that reaches us to the point where we believe that we are with one another and that we share the same intimate bubble, until we remember that what is in front of us still just a cold, inert screen, a very limited window into each other's lifeworld. The human presence, the bodily warmth, and the caring touch of a loved one does not carry well over an internet connection. I thus felt that, despite ongoing efforts at keeping our relationships strong despite the distance, our bounds were slowly but surely being severed, perhaps in irreparable ways.

After considering many options in terms of research timeline, program change and relocation, and pondering for many weeks as to what was the best way to go from there, I finally decided to move back to Quebec before the end of my intended stay in New Brunswick. This decision was anything but easy to take, as I had to prioritize some relationships while weakening others: no matter how I changed the parameters of the possible scenarios coming out of this decision, it still yielded incoherence, disappointment, and uncertainty for some of my relationships

while strengthening others. Still, at that point in time, this decision to come back was the most viable option for me, and we took the time to discuss it through as a research team and find solutions to allow us to continue this project as best as we can.

Once I would be back in Quebec, we would have to return to our remote beginnings and consider using virtual methods once again. For one thing, at that point my research partners and I felt more comfortable with videoconferencing and collaborating remotely, both because the pandemic compels many of us to adapt to those technologies and because the Hayes Farm core team itself started to use this to its advantage, coordinating meetings without requiring everyone to be present on the farm. This sometimes yields interesting situations, where most of the core team is on farm while holding a meeting over the platform *Zoom*, isolating themselves from one another in different rooms in the farm building. All this to say that carrying research remotely was then something that we could envision and be comfortable with as a team.

One of the last things I did in New Brunswick before coming back to Quebec was to work on the ethics application. The process to gain ethics approval is slow, and most of it implies waiting for a response from the ethics board to be able to start “collecting data”. The fact that I was only able to finalize the draft of the research proposal in late September 2020 and to submit it in mid-October after having edited it as a team also kept delaying our timeline. Having previously agreed with my supervisor that the research proposal had to come in before the ethics approval, we started working on the data-collection material and the ethics form only late in the process, but we nonetheless achieved to submit the ethics bundle for evaluation by mid-November. From there up until late December, all we could do was to wait for an answer and an approval to start conducting interviews, organizing focus groups and passing out surveys.

I had a bittersweet taste when I saw that our research received only conditional approval. One of the aspects that the ethics board had difficulty figuring out was the exact nature of our collaboration and trying to fit our research into a box that wasn't meant for it. They were concerned about making sure that the thesis coming out of our research would be my own work, as this was necessary to evaluate whether a graduate student would succeed or not in their program. If it is common knowledge that university ethics board already have difficulty grappling with the fuzzy methods of ethnography (Tolich and Fitzgerald 2006), it is nothing compared with *collaborative* research (see Malone, Yerger, McGrudder and Froehlicher 2006 for an example of those difficulties). It took us a good amount of brainstorming and cleverness, not to mention several meetings with my research supervisor, to be able to offer something that would be digestible for the ethics board the second time. Luckily, however, the ethics' board response after our second submission came in really quickly compared to the first one, and by the end of January 2021 we had everything in hand to start engaging with research participants.

The rest of the research was carried remotely and slowly. A family emergency on my side turned my world upside down and I have barely been able to hang on to my university courses and to our research project. Again, I thought of abandoning the research altogether more than once, and again my research partners were there for me across the miles, ready to put the research on hold if that was what I needed. In retrospect, I perhaps should have listened to them at that point, as my involvement in getting the research to move forward was really minimal for several months, but I decided to live up to all the energy that we had put collectively in this project and to bring it to fruition against all odds.

I can't help perceiving this back-and-forth twist of event as a blatant irony since I decided to move to New Brunswick to carry this research in person as we all wanted to avoid carrying it

remotely. We believed the energy and the dynamic would be different if I were present in person on the farm, meeting people and seeing life on the farm with my own eyes. I can only confirm now that this intuition was right (thanks Helen!), as the research project definitely evolved differently when I was present on the farm, but I'm still not sure whether this bold move lived up to the hopes we put in it, and whether in the end I won or I lost my wager that this research project would succeed if I could invest myself fully and physically in it. There was always a constant, nagging doubt for me that this project might actually fail at some point, but I could never definitely wrap my head around this possibility and only barely admit it to myself. Although we still have a long way to go to achieve our initial goals, I think I can say pretty confidently that we won our bet.

A Field without Fieldwork and a Fieldwork without a Field

You can look at a farm in many different ways: as a business, as a pile of investments waiting to be harvested, as a picturesque vision of the stereotypical country life, as the ideal cohabiting of humans and non-humans embodying a connection to the land, as a continual war with nature to pull off as much yield as possible, as an endless list of overwhelming tasks, as a train of life that couldn't be stopped. Your mindset determines your field of vision and the framework you use to understand what you see.

More importantly, you can *be* on a farm in many different ways. I realized this when I started volunteering at Hayes Farm after my quarantine. Over the course of the years, my vision of a farm had passed from an idyllic way of life to a depressing burden of overpowering work that could never be feasibly accomplished without machinery or tremendous workforce. The last seasons I had passed working on my family's homestead were especially hard psychologically and physically, as exhaustion and anxiety became the rule in the garden, overriding fun and revitalization. I started a task in the morning that had to be done by the end of the day while being

perfectly conscious that it was a one-week job, oscillating between giving up and trying to do miracles the rest of the day.

The atmosphere at Hayes Farm was different: the aura of stress and exasperation were replaced by an overwhelming feeling of happiness and serenity. “We do what we can, we do it well and we enjoy ourselves” was what we could read on the faces of the farm crew members, even though they also looked physically tired by the end of the day. Dan, the farm manager, always knew what had to be done in what order and also knew when everything needed to be turned upside down to adapt to the changing weather, but he always remained relaxed and laid-back. He never transmitted any kind of stress or communicated the need to rush to his fellow crew members. The crew likewise did not run around trying to do everything at the same time; they looked at the blackboard in front of the garage indicating what had to be done that day and just went on to do their work, in small groups or alone, as best as they could, coming back to the picnic tables in front of the garage when they needed a break or wanted to socialize a bit.

I arrived at the farm by foot most of the time, the walk between my room on Dobie Street and Hayes Farm taking fifteen minutes at worst. A sandwich sign standing in the entrance greeted me every time, with a cartoonish Covid impersonation holding a stop sign and requesting me to wash my hands and the rustic hand-washing station made from a foot pump, a plastic tube and a five-gallon water jug cut in half. *Clever*, I think every time I pass by this hand-washing station. It reminds me of the makeshift but very functional installations we put together at our own farm when we organized activities, hosted woofers, or received volunteer crews. It must be a staple of pre-Covid farm life, made a little more rigorous for public health necessities. On my right, bright yellow giant sunflowers twice my size greeted me from above, as if they were bowing down to open the way to visitors, volunteers and workers alike. In front of me, the driveway rolled out up

the hill, leading my gaze all the way to the old farmhouse, a huge antique building that became Hayes Farm's logo. Sometimes Rigby, Alice's lively little dog, slept patiently on the little patio in front of the farm building, in which case I had no other choice but to stop petting her before heading inside.

On each side of the driveway, long rows of permanent garden beds encircled me as I walked up my way to the farmhouse. At first sight, they looked both luxurious and wild: an experiment in companion planting, paired to a reorganization of the fields into semi-duplicated individual plots resulted in a incredible mosaic of an impressive variety of vegetable crops. Corn stalks, sunflowers, deep-green kale and giant Swiss chards were hard to miss, but if I looked more closely, I could see a plethora of smaller plants; carrots intermingled with onions, squash vines running through the corn stalks, cucumber vines stretching out on the straw alley from under an impressive bush of nasturtium, beets either hidden under thick shrubs of beans or outgrowing them, depending on which was clinging on the side of the garden bed. "A perpetual fun game of hide and seek" was how Alice described harvesting produce for the weekly vegetable baskets, half amused and half irritated, as this complexity made a tedious work even trickier.

Closer to the farmhouse, an elegant apple tree was surrounded by a circle wooden hand-made bench. Often, one of the crewmembers would be lying on the bench, taking a well-deserved pause, or chatting on the phone with a dear one. Behind them, we could see "la toilette" (the fancy 'Frenchie' name the crew gave to the compost toilet), the imposing hoop house and the longhouse structure in the backfield against a distant urban backdrop of cars rolling up Cliff street, apartment blocks and ongoing urban developments. To the right and behind the farm ran the "Angelica" field block, a rocky and grassy strip of land that was not currently used for agriculture, and behind the Angelica field was another strip of urban forest, a yet-to-discover wilderness gem for me.

Passing next to the farmhouse, I arrived at the nexus of the farm: the small space between the farm building and the garage, where two picnic tables and two retractable ones opened a common space in the entrance of the garage, often populated by volunteers, vegetable boxes, bushels of garlic or beans in the process of being cleaned, or just a couple of people chatting, eating and enjoying themselves. Often, Daisy and Donald, Nicole's ducks, would be roaming around the parking's dead end next to the farmhouse. Behind the garage, the old barn was under total renovation. Behind the farmhouse, a tempo shelter opened on both ends and lined up with gardening tools appeared as a portal to access the rest of the field blocks. After first passing next to a comfy-looking hammock, a pile of straw bales and the composter bins, I could walk through the elegant maze of diversified field blocks, the geometry of which had been adjusted to follow the curvy lines of the land and of the little sinuous ditch that brought water through the whole property. At the end of this mosaic field was a three-sisters garden that the interns had planted with Patricia Hill, Indigenous knowledge specialist at Hayes Farm.

The blackboard standing in the middle of the garage door was the point of reference from which to start every morning. If I was not sure what needed to be prioritized or where I would be more helpful, I started looking around for Mark, or walked in the farmhouse to chat with Alice and Nicole who were to be found there for sure. *Dusty but cozy* would be the best way to describe the inside of the farmhouse that hosted a small communal kitchen on the right, Alice's desk and an open living room on the left. I would often come across different crew members as they rested on the couch, chatted with each other, prepared some food preserves with Nicole or crossed the living room to reach the bathroom in the back of the farm building. This living room was also where we held our in-person research meetings between August and October 2020.

Upstairs, a series of bedrooms had been turned into echoing offices– the place where I would retreat to write “tomatoes” with my online writing group, where Hayes Farm’s board would split to join their online board meeting, where Nicole was drying different plants and where Dan gave the theoretical classes of the RFI program. No matter how many people were in the farmhouse, it was always calm and peaceful, as if it were a shelter to hide from the heat as well as from time – although I’m unsure Alice would agree. Sitting at her desk all day, buried under a pile of administrative work I doubt anyone could carry out better, I could see her looking at the fields and the crew members working in them through the front window and longing for being out there with them. This is what she really enjoyed, she told me, and wished she could have her hands in the dirt rather than on a computer keyboard more often.

Yes, as a good anthropologist, I went to the field. Yes, as a good ethnographer, I’m back from the field and writing about it. However, the time I spent in the field was not fieldwork per se. Technically, I did not have the ethics approval to carry out research just yet. More importantly, the work I did when I was there constituted the bulk of what collaborative research is about and that often goes unacknowledged in academic literature: the very real and lengthy process of setting up the bases of a collaborative research project - establishing and fostering relationships, developing a common vision and action plan as to what we want our research to be, crafting our research proposal, figuring out what methods and approaches we want to adopt and designing the material we would use with our research participants. Thus, although I was in the field, I cannot describe what I did as fieldwork.

Moreover, the data-collection part of the research that we were able to carry out in the winter of 2021 could not be described as traditional fieldwork either. For one thing, it lacked “a field site” as we imagine it quite romantically in anthropology, a physical place where we can take

part in the local communal life and get an understanding of how things work and how people live there. It was not quite a digital ethnography either, as it did not focus on a digital community or a digital phenomenon itself. However, our research was still grounded in the very physical place, Hayes Farm, and in the relationships that take roots in it. Hence, only the means of communication for carrying out the research had to change, moving from rich in-person interactions to disembodied conversations happening through emails, phone calls, collaborative documents, and videoconferences. How much was lost in doing fieldwork without being physically in the field? I could not answer this question easily, not more than we can collectively assess how much being isolated and disconnected from each other due to pandemic has affected us. One thing I know is that we all made the very best that we could do amidst the unforeseen challenges that COVID-19 brought.

SITUATING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Now that you, the reader, have a little more context about where our research project came from, I can delve into the details of its form and formalities. Any good research starts with a question to be answered, even if this question is likely to change as the researchers themselves or the people with whom they interact change in the process of carrying the research out, especially in qualitative social sciences (Tolich and Fitzgerald 2006). As Shawn Wilson says it so eloquently in his book: “Research is all about unanswered questions, but it also reveals unquestioned answers.” (2008: 6) This is the mindset with which I approached the delicate crafting of a research question, while also bearing out a concern for equity, relevance and collaboration in the process. Hence, our research question was crafted collaboratively in a way that strived to be fair and appropriate for all research collaborators and the community in which our research takes place.

Crafting the Research Questions Together

Too often, anthropologists approach “their field” looking for something specific (answering their research question) and thus somehow already knowing what they will find. This very logic constrains their understanding of and their engagement with the complexity of the social worlds in which their research takes place (for a very acidic version of this criticism, see Vine Deloria Jr’s *Custer Died For Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*, 1969). As Kenneth Gergen argues in his brilliant essay “From Mirroring to World-Making: Research as Future Forming”, “[...] when research commences with an ‘object of study’ the result is an extension of existing traditions, and suppression of alternative realities. The social imaginary is circumscribed.” (2014: 294) It would be hard to blame individual anthropologists and researchers for this tendency, as this is what we are trained to do: this very research proposal is part of this process (see Burman 2018).

However, inspired by a more transformational and engaged approach to anthropological research, I decided to follow a different route for crafting this research proposal and thus our research question. Audra Simpson writes, in *Mohawk Interruptus*: “I refuse to practice the kind of ethnography that claims to tell the whole story and have all the answers.” (2014: 34) I could not agree with her more, and the way for me to honor this stance is to recede from the authority of the researcher’s role and to relinquish the ascendancy of single-authorship as much as I can. I want to try my best to pass from a *research on* to a *research with* Hayes Farm, and from *talking for* my research collaborators to genuinely *talking with* them. By the time we started thinking seriously about our research question, we already had some important discussions about the level of commitment to the research project that would best balance a genuine collaboration between all research partners and a respect for each person’s schedule, energy and skills. We agreed that I, as a full-time university student being actually paid for conducting research (through different scholarships), should spend the most time and energy drafting research documents and collecting data, to then submit it to the research team for further discussion, input, reviewing and decision-making. The end goal of this strategy is to prevent overloading research collaborators who already live busy lives and have a lot of different commitments to honor, while offering them all the opportunities to contribute to the research project and make it their own.

To write the research question, I thus went through the minutes of our in-person meeting in March 2020 and identified key concerns that the participants expressed and wished to investigate through our research project (the meeting was designed to explore participants’ concerns, aspirations and expectations for the research project). Then, from these elements, I drafted four possible research questions and proposed them to the team through email. Hayes Farm’s team diligently took the time in one of their meetings to look through the questions, picked

one of them and reworked it to fit their needs and aspirations. Here is thus our research question, as crafted through this back-and-forth process:

How can the community farm model effectively work towards greater food sovereignty in New Brunswick during and after a pandemic?

Of course, from this question, and from our ongoing collaboration, other questions continue to arise. What exactly is the community farm model in New Brunswick? How do we actually define the term “community”? What is food sovereignty, and what does it mean for the community around Hayes Farm? How does carrying out research remotely differ from carrying it out in person in times of pandemic? How do we care for each other through research? How do real-life relationships translate (or not) into research partnerships and vice-versa? Those last questions pointed out to us the centrality of relationships and relationship-building both in Hayes Farm activities and in the intellectual process we are involved in as research partners. Hence, although this seems rather odd for a research project, we would like to ask a second research question, on the process of research rather than on the object of research itself. It goes like this:

What can our research project, as a collaborative process, teach us about the nature of relationships and the dynamics of relationship building?

We want to approach this question in a metonymic way: we want to look at both every-day life relationships on the farm as well as the relationships that we create through the research on this farm. Those two levels of analysis speak to one another, and at times *are* one another, but we still believe they can bring different insights; hence the metonymy. This is, in an academic framework, a question about methodology – how we do research and how we gain knowledge from it – but also about ontology – how we exist in the world and apprehend it. What this means

is that we approach relationships as being constitutive of the way we do research together and the way we live our lives.

Why We Decided to Embark on This Research Adventure

Before I get started with my argument, I would like to make clear that this section is written from a place of humility and honest thought-sharing in my perpetual journey to find a way of doing research that makes sense to me and to the people I work with. I am not trying here to claim a higher moral ground or to devalue other ways of doing research: I believe there are as many ways of carrying out research as there are researchers and thus we should value this diversity and learn from one another. My aim here is really to expose the reasons why this research makes sense to us and why we value it as research collaborators.

Why Food Sovereignty Matters

Beyond the fact that our research is engaged and community-based, I should also make the case for the research subject itself. It is not enough to state here that food sovereignty is worth investigating because this is what Hayes Farm strives for or because this is the issue that the different stakeholders who took part in the research design wanted to tackle (although to me it seems a legitimate enough rationale). There is, indeed, a vast body of literature in the social sciences about food sovereignty, so why should we add to it? The answer lies in the relationship between the global food movement and the local actions that constitute it: although there is a somewhat agreed-upon definition of food sovereignty (made famous by *La Via Campesina* in the *Declaration of Nyéléni* of 2007), this very definition (presented and discussed in the literature review below) leaves open the actual form and structure that food sovereignty will have in different locations and for different peoples.

Hence, our research brings two important insights both for the community around Hayes Farm and for academia, one being the local understanding of food sovereignty (how do the research participants envision food sovereignty and what would it look like in the Fredericton area) and the other, more practical, being the concrete ways in which the community farm model (and Hayes Farm itself) can contribute to getting closer to food sovereignty in this context. In a similar vein, although the community supported agriculture (CSA) model is well defined and well-known, there appears to be no firm or widely accepted definition of the community farm model. Hayes Farm, as a production farm that is teaching regenerative methods, strives to solidify their living version of what a community farm is and works to empower other communities to start their own in other locations. In that sense, this research taps into this very local and pragmatic desire to theorize what the community farm model is and how to make it replicable.

Why Community-Based Research is Worth the Extra Effort

Another reason why our research questions are worth asking is because they are based on real concerns, needs and aspirations of different stakeholders around Hayes Farm, and are thus oriented towards addressing those and benefiting the community. So far so good, but of course this affirmation needs to be unpacked, as there are also valid reasons for defending pure, intellectual-curiosity based research. One of the core assumptions behind community-based and engaged research is mere pragmatism, meaning that it is evaluated as good because it benefits people directly. As Chevalier and Buckles (2013) observe, “[e]ngaged research is pragmatism at work [i]t is meaningful because it serves a practical purpose and is grounded in real life.” (64) However, we should be careful, the authors note, not to pass everything through a pure pragmatic sieve lest we start judging out different research activities too quickly. Should we throw away any research

that does not directly address a need or have a practical value? I don't think so, as society and science always need primary research to continue to move forward and expand its knowledge base.

We should also ask according to whom a research is useful. What might seem useful according to a certain group can prove to be detrimental to another or can run counter to the greater good. And even what is deemed to be "the greater good" is value-laden and subject to debate. In the case of engaged research, as Hale (2006) points out, those questions are complicated by the fact that they have to be asked according to two very different sets of agendas and realities: those of the "academic" world from which the research emanates, and those of the "everyday" world in which the research takes place. This is nothing less than a double allegiance: the research has to be useful and worthy according to academic standards (advancement of knowledge, contribution to the discipline, etc.) and to the social and political actors we choose to work with and to side with. I am fully aware that proving how this research will be useful to Hayes Farm and the community around it will not suffice: I will also have to prove how this research will contribute (however humbly) to my discipline and expand the current knowledge on human beings and their interactions with each other and with their environment.

So why should I give myself double the trouble as a researcher and commit to this double allegiance? In a sense, Kulik (2006) might be right in proposing that I would try, like so many other anthropologists, to "expiate" the guilt associated with my discipline and, more poignantly, with the power structures from which it benefits. I certainly think that anthropology has a bloody past, and that most of the trauma and pain left from it today is experienced by the Indigenous and under-privileged communities it vampirized. Certainly enough, too, my desire to make something good with my research, or to do better anthropology, derives from this consciousness. What I am sure of is that the call for action in the social sciences is valid and justified: if we, as researchers,

get to work with people who already feel like they have been “researched to death”, who are wary of the negative effects of research on their lives, or who have a million other better things to do than participating in research, we should at least ensure that we do it *for* and *with* those people.

I also think that this commitment to the people we decide to work with should extend beyond disenfranchised, vulnerable or otherized communities. First, researchers should always consider the people they work with as critical thinkers having a say in how research is done with them and actively contributing to it, not only when these people are vulnerable (Burman 2018). Second, engaged and community-based research can bring useful insights and have positive impacts in many different settings and hence it would be an unnecessary restraint to imagination and progress to limit its use to certain groups and populations.

What Works and What Hasn't

At Hayes Farm, we are excited about and engaged with this research for several reasons. Though participation in academic research wasn't really on our radar or in our plan, the proposition of such a collaborative project resonates with our team and has embarked in a promising direction. At several junctions along the way, an expression of concern has come about around what we (Hayes Farm/NBCHG) will get out of the research, what the benefits will be for our project? This seems an easy question to answer.

Hayes Farm has quite a public interface, and in addition to welcoming all kinds of folks to the farm throughout the season, we have a comprehensive website, an active social media presence, the support of several funders, and are being watched by the community and municipal and provincial government departments alike. It is our goal that in working to answer these research questions we will ensure we remain relevant to our community in our mission, programming, and activities.

In documenting the process and outcomes from the research, we will be able to update our handbook, 'How to Start Your Community Farm.' Whether a stand-alone document, a new chapter of the handbook, or both, the information gleaned from the research will help us secure funding for our operations and projects and help future partners meaningfully pursue similar projects - we are all about sharing what works and what hasn't.

Hayes Farm Core Team

The Importance of Being Bold: Experimenting and Sharing Our Stories

Since the earliest versions of this research project, I was often told that collaborative research is difficult, that building the relationships necessary to make it work takes time, that it is probably too ambitious for a Master's research project, and that I should not be disappointed if it failed, since I could still write on why the project failed and the complex dynamics that were at work behind it. Although I understand that these warnings came from a place of care, concern and counselling, and that they were meant to take pressure off my shoulders so that I wouldn't get crushed under uncontrollable forces, I would like to advocate for a different attitude towards risky and uncertain research, one that does not set the stage for failure. Rather than being forced into the academic mold, graduate students should be encouraged to seize the opportunities they have to experiment with alternative research and writing (or production) practices; they should be supported in their efforts yet trusted in their capacities. Of course, if it ends up not working out, helping the student to walk through the remains of the project and finding interesting ways to do something with the failure is of prime importance.

What I want to say here is that we, as graduate students and young researchers, should dare to be bold in our research projects, and we should be encouraged to do so, because it is through audacious experiments, and the reflexive practice throughout and afterwards, that we can best contribute to the advancement of our discipline. It is good to be trained (theoretically) to decolonize and reinvent anthropology, but it would be better if we were given the tools and the structure to not only talk the talk, but to walk the walk as well. This research project, so far, has been anything but a "traditional" ethnographic field research: remote, carried mostly online, amidst uncertain times (the pandemic), community-based, action-oriented and collaborative. This is also exactly why it has the potential to contribute to the discipline in the best yet the humblest way: by sharing

the reflections, the stories and the knowledge that come out of these new experiences, our research team will be able to participate in the flourishing of alternative ways of doing research and to support current and future researchers who might want to be bold as well.

LOOKING BACK TO MOVE FORWARD BETTER

At one point in our research journey, we had to pause and do our homework right. Any research builds on what has been done before and should thus include a literature review. It is, in Shawn Wilson's (2008) words, part of the ceremony that research is – although for me it seems to have more to do with an academic formality than with a community-based, culturally relevant ritual. Nevertheless, and my own feelings of coercion notwithstanding, it is important to ground any research we are headed on doing in what has been done by other scholars, first to situate it in the intellectual landscape of ideas and provide context to it, but also to avoid replicating what others did before and producing purely useless research. There are three areas in this intellectual landscape that I would like us to explore before continuing further with this research: the literature of food sovereignty, the literature on isolation and mental health in academia, and the literature on relationships and community. The literature on community-based and engaged research will also be surveyed, but in the methodology section.

From Food Security to Food Sovereignty: The Local and The Global

Food sovereignty is a concept that has as many definitions as there are groups to support it, and hence it is not an easy task to try to tackle it and to define it for good. Indeed, there are so many competing definitions that Edelman (2014) even considers it as “a free-floating signifier filled with varying kinds of content” (959-960), meaning that it has become one of those empty, trendy and over-used words that mean everything and nothing at the same time. In that sense, food sovereignty as a concept would be as commonplace but as vague as the concepts of culture, community or society. Although Edelman's argument is valid, I think it is possible to approach this unruly diversity of meaning as a force rather than as a weakness. As Ayres and Bosia (2011)

argue, the diversity of definitions only demonstrates how the global food sovereignty movement is adaptable to the various local contexts in which different people adopt it. Based on their analysis of two different and rather unconnected food sovereignty initiatives in Vermont (US) and Larzac (France), they write:

Farmers adapted the food sovereignty frame and made it relevant to their own situations, in ways that reflect unique conflict structures—the resources and political opportunities and cultural settings—that provided acceptable environments for food sovereignty to take root in rural regions of both the US and France. (Ayres and Bosia 2011: 50)

Despite an incredible diversity of food sovereignty initiatives and meanings, there still exists what we could consider a canonical definition of food sovereignty that many food activist groups look up to for inspiration. This is the definition articulated by La Via Campesina in the Declaration of Nyéléni at the Forum for Food Sovereignty in 2007 and that I mentioned earlier. According to this definition, “[f]ood sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems” (Nyéléni Forum 2007: 9). The strength of this definition is two-fold: first, although it is pretty straightforward, it leaves plenty of room for endless local variations of what “culturally appropriate food” and “their own food and agriculture systems” mean; second, it puts an emphasis on local control and self-determination. In this sense, food sovereignty can be seen as going beyond food security, but this conception needs to be unpacked first.

In La Via Campesina’s “founding” definition of food sovereignty in 1996, the concept was indeed intended to stand in opposition to food security, but more often than not the two concepts overlap (Edelman 2014). Interestingly, one of the most agreed-upon definitions of food security was also crafted in 1996 at the World Food Summit: “Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their

dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.” (FAO 1996: <http://www.fao.org/3/w3548e/w3548e00.htm>, accessed August 25th 2020). According to La Via Campesina, the concept of food security was tricky because it revolved around the idea of *access* to food rather than *control* of the food system, leaving wide open the possibility for multinational corporations and powerful states to intermingle food aid with meddling and dumping (Thivet 2014). So even if the language of food security and that of food sovereignty are very similar, there is a noticeable trend in the global food movement to move from the former to the latter, at least in intent (Sage 2014). This trend is also replicated locally, as can be seen in the language shift of Food Secure Canada for example (Desmarais and Wittman 2014).

The Local Food Scene

When it comes to local articulations of food sovereignty, as Ayres and Bosia (2011) note, we must “consider the relationship between globally inspired challenges and campaigns transformed through culturally acceptable meanings in new local settings as the interaction of global macroclimates and the local microclimates where globalization is realized and resisted” (49-50). In other words, what is interesting with this research from an academic perspective is that it analyzes how the local food movement in New Brunswick interacts both with the local agricultural scene and the international trends of globalization and food activism. As Desmarais and Wittman (2014) write: “While there is a growing body of literature on food sovereignty at a global level, much less is known about what food sovereignty movements look like in specific places and how their expression is largely shaped by local dynamics.” (1153) Needless to say, if local actors such as Hayes Farm are to work towards food sovereignty, a first step in their endeavor is to envision how exactly will food sovereignty look like in their context and for their community: what is judged “culturally appropriate food” and how do they want to define “their own food and

agriculture system”? This is where, we believe, this research can yield an important contribution to the local food scene.

So what does the local food scene look like in New Brunswick nowadays? At first glance, it appears that there is really little academic literature on the state of agriculture and agribusiness in the province. However, triangulating from reports by social organisations, statistics and academic publications allows me to conjure up a portrait of what agriculture in New Brunswick looks like and why the need to work towards food sovereignty is so blatant - something that many informants would reiterate later on during our research. Currently, on a global scale, the province of New Brunswick is as far from being food as it could possibly be: the agricultural scene is dominated by a handful of cash crops that represented “comparative advantages” for the region and that are intended for exportation, while almost all the food that New Brunswickers eat is imported.

Indeed, it is estimated that about 95% of the money that New Brunswickers spend on their food is used to pay for outsourced food (Really Local Harvest Co-op, the Rural Social Justice Research Center, the United Way of Greater Moncton and South Eastern New Brunswick and the Food Security Action Network 2014). The proportion of imported food kept rising, as it was estimated to represent 75% of the food budget in the 1970s (Machum 2005). On the other hand, the province overproduces certain foods, exceeding 100% of what New Brunswickers could eat in poultry, turkey, milk, eggs, and 1000% in blueberries, potatoes, and maple syrup, but still the vast majority of those crops are grown for exportation (Department of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries 2016). In contrast, New Brunswick farms produce just enough vegetables to provide for 8% of what the province’s population needs (DAAF 2016). While about a quarter of farmers

declared selling a certain portion of their produce directly to customers, only a low 2% reported using organic growing methods (Statistics Canada 2017).

In general, the trend on the agricultural scene in New Brunswick is for the number of farms to fall and the farm size to rise: there are consistently fewer farms and farm owners from census to census, but the average farm size reversely steadily increases. For example, the number of farm operators dropped by almost 14% between the 2011 and the 2016 census, while the average farm size grew from 359 to 370 acres (Statistics Canada 2017). Moreover, the average age of farmers continues to hike, slowly but surely, going from 48 in 1991 to 56 in 2016 (Wall 2021). Meanwhile, only 7% of farmers declared to have a succession plan in the 2016 census (it was the first time this question was asked in the census) (Statistics Canada 2017). This means that a good portion of the farms will be up for grabs when their owners retire, but also that the centralization trend in New Brunswick will likely continue in the near future if it is not reversed.

Despite all of this, small family farms have not disappeared in New Brunswick and continue to play an important role in the life of rural areas and in the province's economy (Machum 2005). Along with community initiatives and collective garden spaces, they bring to life local food systems that glue the social fabric together and form the basis upon which building food sovereignty becomes possible. Fortunately, there are already a good number of initiatives to help foster food security in New Brunswick, but these initiatives often do not suffice to alleviate the inequalities in food access and experience issues in the quality of the food they can offer (Pépin-Filion, Tranchant, Forgues, Carrier, LeBlanc and LeBlanc 2016). Extra steps need to be taken first to help those initiatives source most of their food locally, and second to reclaim ownership and control over the food system; namely, to go the extra mile and aim for food sovereignty rather than only food security.

The Intricacies of Relationality and the Art of Relationship-Building

Relationships are at the very center of what Hayes Farm does: on their website, they claim that “everything they do at Hayes Farm is human-scale, regenerative and relationship-based.” (<https://www.hayesfarm.ca/mission>, accessed August 30th 2020). In our efforts to define what the community farm model consists of as a research team, we would even like to advance that relationships are the very basis of what makes a community farm. Hence, it is of great importance for us to analyze how relationships are built, how they evolve over time, how they are cared for and what performative effect they have on the farm and in the community. We would like to explore this phenomenon through our second research question, so it would be a good place to start to see what exists about relationships in the literature.

Collaborating is Relationship-Building

Relationships are not only constitutive of a community farm: they are also paramount in collaborative and engaged research projects. As Pushor (2008) notes: “[c]ollaborative research is relational research. It reflects a commitment to a special kind of care and attention in the provision of continuous opportunities for engagement, voice, and response for all research partners (or co-researchers, as they are frequently called).” (92). The notion of care here is very interesting, and it seems to be underexamined in the literature on collaborative research (compared, say, to the political and ethical dimensions of collaboration relationships), but I will come back to this later in the theoretical framework when I will talk about the feminist ethics of care. What I would like to focus on here is the idea of relational research. Pushor’s statement implies that relationships are constitutive of collaborative research, that they are its very essence. This kind of research cannot

take place or cannot succeed unless the relationships between the different research partners are significant and healthy.

Our own experience of collaboration through this research project has highlighted the importance of relationships in it: my feeling of endeavor towards this research project derives mainly from the commitment we all have put in this project and the moral obligation I feel not to let my research partners down now that we went so far. In July 2020, when I told my research partners that I might drop the project as it became too hard to continue for me, they were a little disappointed but nonetheless felt at peace with letting me go, because what they valued the most was the connection we had and the relationship we had built; the success or failure of the project was of secondary importance. This episode, to me, demonstrates how collaborative research projects are only as great as the relationships that constitute them, but it also demonstrates how care, concern, and accountability play a major role in how research partners relate to one another.

Shawn Wilson, in *Research is Ceremony* (2008), talks about the concept of relational accountability which, I think, applies well to what we are doing through this research project. In simple words, relational accountability means living up to the relationships you create or in which you are involved, in a moral sense. “Living up” to those relationships means honoring them, ensuring that what you do makes them grow stronger, respecting them, taking your share of responsibility for them and trying your best to keep those relationships fair and reciprocal (Wilson 2008). This last part, reciprocity, is of prime importance: the moral and psychological burden of relational accountability, if it is to be considered this way, should not be born by a single individual, but should rather be shared fairly (i.e., considering each person’s capacity, strengths and needs) by all parties involved. I think the notion of care once again steps in here, since we should also care

for ourselves and for others in this endeavor, checking in to make sure nothing of this is becoming overwhelming for anyone.

Relationships require time, trust and commitment to build, a fact that is widely acknowledged in the literature on collaborative and engaged research (Lawson et al 2015, McKinnon 2018, van Sande and Schwartz 2017, Chevalier and Buckles 2013, Johnson et al 2019, Strand et al 2013). They require frequent negotiation, concessions, discussion and mutual commitment, things that can seem daunting or discouraging to a young, uninitiated researcher like me, but they are totally worth investing in. As I said earlier, rather than being presented as a requirement for collaborative research impossible to achieve in the time span of a short graduate program, committing to developing rich relationships with research partners should be encouraged as a necessary and worthy initiation into collaborative research. Johnson et al's (2019) approach is helpful for that matter, as they value experiential and hands-on training in community-based research for graduate students even if they are aware that such training is far from perfect.

On a different note, different relationships can also sometimes be incompatible or hardly reconcilable. This eventuality can cause some moral and political turmoil for the researcher and for those with whom she is engaged. In Catherine Trundle's (2001) words, collaboration is not always comfortable. Frictions, discomfort, dissent and misunderstandings should also be addressed when looking at the relationships and the process of engaged research (Watson 2019). Important insights about power dynamics, biases, colonial legacies, privileges, and structures of inequality can come out of a collective reflexive process about conflicts and tensions arising through collaboration (Johnson et al 2019). In the context of our research project, frictions and misunderstandings that arose many times while proposing to collaborate with Indigenous

organizations and institutions speak volumes to the power dynamics, the structural inequalities and the colonial legacy traversing any kind of research involving Indigenous people.

However, tensions and misunderstandings should be bridged at least to some degree if a collaborative project is to survive them and continue to thrive. Although there is no straight and easy, one-size-fits-all solution to conflicts arising out of, or through, collaboration, perhaps relational accountability here could help. Figuring out what relations are more meaningful, more mutually beneficial, more important to be honored, without being disrespectful of our other relationships, could lead the way to finding some peace in those difficult situations. Perhaps proximity or morality will be a factor in moving forward with certain relationships while kindly ending others in a non-violent way? In another situation, perhaps relationship longevity or kinship will weigh more in the balance. In this complicated world of relational ethics, there is no universal answer: indeed, every situation will be made from different relationships and will thus be unique.

One such tension that we are treading carefully both through this research and at Hayes Farm is that brought about by the proposed connection with Dr. Barnes for a guest lecture as it ran counter to the values of Patricia Hill, Hayes Farm's Indigenous instructor. Hayes Farm's core team had a lengthy discussion about what to do with this situation, and finally decided to kindly cancel Dr Barnes' talk in order to prioritize their relationship with the local Indigenous community and with Patricia. Here, proximity, allegiance and length of relationships all played a role in moving forward with this dilemma.

The Tough Question: Defining Community

One realm of relationships that passes everyone's lips but that proves especially hard to tackle in the social sciences is community. Although it is a nearly impossible task to define what the word community exactly means, at least for anthropologists and sociologists, it would be hard

for us not to take the time to sit down with this concept as it is an integral part of two of our research focuses: community farm and community-based research. As Cohen (1985) explains in the introduction of his monograph on the very concept of community:

Community' is one of those words – like 'culture', 'myth', 'ritual', 'symbol' – bandied around in ordinary, everyday speech, apparently readily intelligible to speaker and listener, which, when imported into the discourse of social science, however, causes immense difficulty. Over the years it has proved to be highly resistant to satisfactory definition in anthropology and sociology, perhaps for the simple reason that all definitions contain or imply theories, and the theory of community has been very contentious. (11)

Community then is one of those broad and fuzzy catchall terms that has as many definitions as there are scholars to try to explain it out. Philosophers and social theorists have had an important impact on how we conceive of “community”, most notably by opposing a nostalgic sense of community that is to be found in small, rural and homogenous collectivities, to an all-to-modern sense of alienation attributable to industrialized and cosmopolitan city life (Bradshaw 2008). However, institutional language, government policies and multiple reappropriations by diverse groups also contributed to shape current conceptions of what “community” means (Vibert 2007).

Meticulously analyzing how the concept of community has been used in the Québec government's public policies over some forty years, Vibert (2007) proposes a four-tiered typology of community that dovetails with the development of the neoliberal society and with both scholarly and lay conceptions. Depending on the context, community could be used to describe a locally-bounded and place-based collectivity, like a village or a neighborhood; a group bounding together around social service or collective action, like community organizations and the respective populations they serve; an imagined collective framed around a common identity, like diasporas or subcultures; and a civic, law-bounded aggregation of people having rights and responsibilities towards one another, like society or nation. These conceptions of community proved very helpful

over time for neoliberal governments to hand their social responsibilities over to “the community” (whether it meant a neighborhood, community organizations, minority groups or the public’s civic responsibilities) and thus disinvest from social services. However, these concepts are not only the government’s language (and thus, but they are also to be found in other neoliberal societies as well), as they both influenced lay notions of community and were reciprocally influenced by them.

However, we should not be too obsessed with such a typology. In fact, most often than not, what people will define as a community will have features from all four types of communities.

Communities are also not static, essentialized entities, as Barrios (2014) explains:

A number of anthropological studies of the past three decades show that communities are never static in their capacities or membership; rather, they are in a constant state of emergence and transformation over time (Fabian, 1983; Mitchell, 2002; Pickering 2008). Moreover, these processes of emergence and transformation are driven by the dialectical relationships in which communities find themselves immersed with their surrounding environments, global networks of commodity production and circulation, and colonial and national governments. Consequently, even communities that are often heralded as icons of unchanging traditionality in the anthropological literature are quite contemporary, as they have usually taken form in relation to long histories of colonialism and post-colonial nation-building (331).

Similarly, Bradshaw (2008) proposes to move beyond the duality between the place-based, grounded community of small locations and the identity- and interest-based, fluid community of the city, and proposes the concept of post-place communities. Although this idea does help making sense of how groups bond together despite distance, especially during a pandemic, Bradshaw (2008) argues that “social relations associated with community work just as well across geographic boundaries as they do within” (7), at which point I have to disagree with him. First, many people still attach a lot of importance to place in how they get to feel a sense of community. Second, while digital and long-distance connections and interactions definitely work, I would not be ready to say that they are the exact equivalent of in-person ones. I just do not think that most people moved past physically connecting with places and with other people just yet.

In an effort to define community beyond place, but not necessarily despite place, Bhattacharyya (2004) proposes that perhaps the main shared characteristic of communities is solidarity, which meaning he describes as:

a shared identity (derived from place, ideology, or interest) and a code for conduct or norms, both deep enough that a rupture affects the members emotionally and other ways. The decade old social capital movement conveys the same meaning: networks, trust, and mutual obligations enabling people to take collective measures to address shared problems (12).

Although solidarity, shared norms and mutual commitment are indeed almost always present in what we call a community (the exception being when “community” is conflated with “locality” and could thus exist through the mere bunching of people in a common place, without any connectedness or meaningful interactions between them), they do not account by themselves for making a community what it is. The missing part here is belonging, or people’s sense of being part of a community:

[...] people need to be able to identify whether they are part of a community or not, that becoming (or remaining) a member of a community is a significant act, and that others recognize the claim to membership. Community is typically associated with a sense of belonging (Webber, 1964 p. 108). Community identity is not permanent or exclusive, and individuals may have varying degrees of identification with their community. (Bradshaw 2008: 9)

As Vered Amit (2010) explains, the intersection of joint commitment (solidarity, shared values and norms) and belonging yields a profusion of forms that a community could take, and a plethora of meanings associated with the term. However, rather than being analytically overwhelmed by such theoretical unruliness, Amit (2010) impels scholars to consider the vagueness of the notion of community as a generative space that people can use strategically:

If people continue to insist on using community to refer to many different forms of association, perhaps we need to probe how it might do so rather than bemoan its lack of precision. So, rather than viewing the familiar ambiguity of allusions to community as the most problematic aspect of its conceptualization, what if we considered, instead,

the possibility of developing a mode of investigation that recognized this ambiguity as a useful analytical resource rather than as a handicap. (358)

Another way to look at the “problem” of defining community is thus to look at how it is mobilized in different contexts and what it means to the people using it. I think there is great wisdom to gain from this insight: a first place to start our inquiry about the community farm model and the nature of relationships is to ask people belonging to the “community” around Hayes Farm what they think community means and how they are connected to one another. More than only being generative, his approach would compel us to genuinely listen to our research participants’ understanding of what community means rather than trying to fit what they tell us into rigid theoretical boxes.

Forced into Isolation: A Tale of Structure, Change and Care in Academia

I mentioned in the prologue the distress I experienced over most of the spring and the summer during the pandemic. Although the uncertainty and collective stress that the pandemic imposes on our lives are easy to blame in this situation and indeed played a major role in my feeling of being lost, I believe there are other structures that contributed to the problem. I am talking here about the very structure of academia and about the relics of anthropological practice that we learn to enshrine in graduate school despite ourselves. Those problems were for sure present before the pandemic, but as it did with so many other social and structural problems, the Covid-19 crisis exacerbated them and brought them into focus (See, for example, Chirikov, Soria, Horgos et al. 2020 and Kee 2021).

At the end of my quarantine in New Brunswick, which I wanted to consider as a writing retreat, I had come to realize that I was facing a terrible writer’s block, which honestly looked more like a mental block with the practice of academic writing than anything else. For days, I tried

to sit down in front of my computer to write and, even though I devoted full working days to this task, nothing was coming out of it. Worse, when I really forced myself to stay in front of the computer until I managed to write something, I ended up feeling terrible and broking down to tears every single time. The only thing I was able to write for a moment were random free-writing entries in what I called my *cahier bla-bla* (a clever practice I borrowed from a first-grade teacher who established this communication method for one of her students who had serious issues with expressing his feelings and canalizing his anger) and which resembled a trashy mood journal. Then, when I realized that I was able to at least do that, I started trying to write my proposal by hand first before transferring it to the computer. It was very time-consuming, but at the very least I was able to start writing something. The first 25 pages of my research proposal were actually written that way.

At this point, while I was struggling everyday just to try to write a couple of pages, and considering in retrospect the crushing unproductivity that characterized my whole summer semester, I started wondering whether I was the only one in my cohort to experience so much difficulty and angst. By the same token, I realized that I hadn't heard from any of my peers in the social and cultural anthropology Master's program since our classes had ended in the spring semester. I thus decided to write a check-in email to the rest of my cohort and proposed that we meet virtually at some point to catch up together. My colleagues responded with enthusiasm and we were able to meet the week after. What a surprise I had, learning that my peers had an even harder time than I did and that they were even more stuck than I was with their research project – if their research project survived the pandemic at all. I had thought before that I was probably the worst off in my cohort, but it turned out that I had no reason to feel sorry for myself after all

Breaking the very real isolation that kept us apart through all those months was revealing in many ways. Firstly, we realized that we all had a similar experience of trying to carry our own field research amidst the pandemic: with very limited practical training in preparing and conducting independent research, we were left with research projects that were impossible to materialize because of the pandemic and very few resources, support and advice to get out of this impasse. Before being waved goodbye at the end of the spring semester, we were simply advised to think about ways to redesign our research project that would make it possible to conduct remotely until the pandemic waned and to convert it to in-person research afterwards. However, this advice created another deadlock for us. First, the pandemic situation in Montreal never got to a point where in-person research activities were possible again (Concordia even forbid it to obtain ethics approval), infection numbers waxing again as soon as they had waned for a small rest at the end of the summer. Second, the very fact that we remained in a state of *waiting* for the context to get better only left us standing at a depressing crossroads. During this interminable waiting, the same question came back again and again: should I drop this research project altogether and craft a new digital one from scratch, or should I hold on just a little longer and hope that my initial project will become feasible?

Secondly, and perhaps even more unsettlingly, we realized that even though we all experienced similar challenges and emotional trials over the summer, we all assumed that we were alone to go through those obstacles. Moreover, most of us did not reach out to seek support nor received any substantial check-ins or support from our department's faculty during this time. We were, in effect, left to our own devices and convinced that this was the way it had to be. However, as became quickly apparent in our meetings, the mere fact of having the opportunity to exchange with each other and to provide advice, tips and a listening ear to one another proved to be a very

critical help in coping with our situation. At the very least, it assured us that what we were going through was, if not normal, very commonplace. It also brought us to realize that we were not spoiled bums lost in the abyss of our own nurtured procrastination, but rather studious individuals who were lacking structure, meaning and grounding!

I was curious to know whether our situation was an unusual and unfortunate one, or rather a commonplace issue in the academic world. A review of the literature on graduate students' mental health confirmed my hypothesis, as I will show below. This literature points to the prevalence of feelings of isolation and distress among graduate students, especially in the more independent parts of their programs. Moreover, and rather sadly so, the literature also highlights the silence, normalization and inaction surrounding this phenomenon. However, there is no good reason to believe that this situation should be normalized and perpetuated. Indeed, the literature also shows that other approaches and attitudes exist in academia that could lead to better practices and increase academics' mental health.

The Autonomous Scholar: How Graduate Students are Pushed into Individual Boxes

At the beginning of their article on collaboration and the structure of universities, Ervin and Fox (1994) introduce the figure of the *Magister Implicatus*, borrowed from Sosnoskis (1991). This figure is the representation of the "ideal" scholar, the stereotype that comes out of a tradition of white, upper-class and patriarchal institutions (universities), that embodies popular images of what a scholar is and that ultimately shapes structures, practices and expectations in academia to suit its forms. The *Magister Implicatus* is the flesh around the motto "publish or perish"; the specter of the solitary, über-productive thinker, writer and professor; the symbolic materialization of Descartes' "cogito ergo sum" ("I think therefore I am"). It is the same character that one can admire in Rembrandt's *The Scholar at the Lectern* (you can have a look at it here:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Scholar_at_the_Lectern), dressed in casual business suit and having traded his manuscripts for a handy laptop to fit the style of the day. He is a masculine, rational, stoic figure who systematically and carefully keeps emotions at bay (in order not to interfere with reasoning) and accumulates academic and scholar achievements (in order to advance his career and climb the prestige ladder of academia).

That the *Magister Implicatus* resembles a businessman in today's academia is nothing random. Indeed, as Sosnoski (1991) notes, over the course of the 19th century, scholars and other (male) professionals started to think of themselves more as businessmen than as gentlemen, and therefore the idea of pursuing a career supplanted that of following a vocation. However, it would be a delusion to think that the modern, business-inspired idea of what a scholar is totally replaced earlier monastic versions. Rather, they merged in interesting ways: “[o]ver time, [the] idealized career profile became a composite of masculine traits derived from the superimposition of the portrayals of exemplary male scholars.” (Sosnoski 1991:9) Earlier ideals of scholarly exploits tainted and trained successive generations of scholars, all the while new ideals were integrated in the composite portrait of the *Magister Implicatus*. Perhaps the most pervasive ideal that subsisted in academia up until today is “the notion of ‘epistemological individualism’, based on the Cartesian cogito: a solitary, dispassionate, ‘objective’ thinker who detaches himself from the phenomena of the physical world (including the body) in order to perceive a fixed, unchanging truth.” (Ervin and Fox 1994).

This is a rather extraordinary combination: what businessman would isolate himself from the world rather than cultivate numerous and strategic relations with other businessmen? The key to this tenuous juxtaposition lies in competition: while it is true that each scholar pursues their own career, they do not need to collaborate or to form alliances with other scholars around them per

say. In fact, as Ervin and Fox (1994) demonstrate, academics are pitted against one another for accessing sheer resources (grants, scholarships, positions, publications) and the highest prestige is associated with individual, single-authored work. In the end, academia is not so different from the business world: wine and cheese events, meet and greets, and conferences are all places where scholars can network and entertain strategic relations to others, all the while working on their own projects and pursuing their own careers. In both cases, competition overshadows co-operation; in both cases, individual advancement prevents collaboration.

So why is the figure of the *Magister Implicatus* so strong? First, because it has shaped and continues to shape the structures, the norms, and the very infrastructure of universities. Graduate programs are *designed* for individual and independent research; autonomy and individualism are built into the requirements for graduation from a graduate program, making it technically impossible to submit a collaboratively-written thesis or to conduct a truly collaborative research for one's academic requirements (Ervin and Fox 1994, Lovits 2005). Writing a thesis or a dissertation is thought from the start to be an individual and painful journey into isolation: "The structures within the academy require graduate students to complete such scholarly discourse individually, and frequently in isolation. In fact, the dissertation often sends people into solitary confinement, forcing them to disappear for weeks and to withdraw from their interactions with others." (Ervin and Fox 1994: 57)

Universities, in turn, are built to cater to the needs of autonomous scholars and are not designed nor thought for fostering collaboration. As Ervin and Fox (1994) say, "modern academy is infected by physical structures which create an atmosphere that discourages collaborative learning among undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty" (63). Small, individual offices; large classrooms with individual sitting places facing the lecturer; libraries with individual

workstations: these are all examples of structures that are thought for individual researchers rather than research teams, solitary intellectual quests rather than collaborative inquiries. Fortunately, spaces for collaboration are opening up in universities, as one can notice with the new group study rooms in Concordia's library or with the seminar classroom in the Sociology and Anthropology department for example, but structures facilitating or encouraging individual work remain the norm.

The way time and schedules are managed is another realm in which we can recognize the figure of the *Magister Implicatus* in its best alliance with neoliberalism. Schedules are built around classes, meetings and office hours (for faculty) – places and times where we have to gather and discuss together, but not necessarily work together. This could be thought of as visible, or in the words of Muntz et al (2015), productive time. However, the vast majority of the time that is required to prepare classes, complete coursework, write academic papers, advance research projects, review the literature, discuss ideas with colleagues, review papers from peers, is made invisible. Needless to say, the time spent on caring for oneself and for others, though absolutely necessary, is not even figuring in the time-counting calculator. Care work, considered as feminine and associated with the private realm, is made invisible, deemed unproductive and devalued in the face of masculine, productive time: “This relational ‘women’s time’ (also known as social reproduction) is distinguished from the masculine domain of true creativity, innovation, and invention – i.e. valorized production and productivity.” (Muntz et al 2015: 1242)

For that larger and hidden part of a scholar's schedule, we are told and expected to discipline ourselves and remain productive to make the best out of our time, to “make it work”. Often, in academia, every bit of time during the week can become work time – weekends, evenings, nights, lunch breaks, etc. As Judith Walker (2009) states, “[a]cademic capitalism requires both the

reification of time and an internalization of the importance of managing time in a demonstrably efficient manner. [...] Quintessentially, academic capitalism is premised on faculty and students both justifying their use of time and seeking to outsmart it.” (483-484) Outsmarting time is no small task, and it is arguable whether it is a feasible one, but it is nonetheless expected of academics to do so, and to achieve this impossible goal, numerous professional and self-help workshops proliferate. In the end, graduate students and faculty “are literally *making* time. In this way, fictitious neoliberal university time requires real sacrifice of personal time.” (Moutz et al 2015: 1242)

But why do we do so, why do we comply with that logic of “do more, somehow, no matter how”? The short answer to this would be careerism: this is what is expected of scholars if we want to succeed in academia and access (rare) jobs somewhere down the road. The more subtle answer would be, as Sosnoski (1991) suggests, that scholars end up internalizing the values and expectations of the neoliberal academia, represented by the figure of the *Magister Imperatus*:

In his modern, traditional persona, the Magister's power enables or disables any member of the institution who introjects him. He punishes by making us believe we have failed, do not deserve tenure, have not published enough. He is the monster in the male machine, the instrument of self-discipline and self-abnegation. In his traditional guise, he is the personification of the patriarchal institution, the site for training, disciplining, schooling men. He professionalizes the amateur. He governs through our introjection of what the desired outcome of any performance must be if it is to be rewarded. (Sosnoski 1991: 10)

The result of this psychological internalization is a quite powerful delusion: even though many academics feel the pressure to be more productive, to write more, to devote more time to research to attain what is thought to be the *norm*, this norm actually does not exist insofar as it is an *ideal* that few people in academia actually achieve, while the others try to pretend they achieve it in order to survive this regime. If my account of neoliberal time in academia seemed to involve some magic in order to create time that does not exist, then this magic is the delusion created by

the *Magister Imperatus*, the internalized spectral figure of the ideal academic that we all strive to be yet know very well we can't become.

I argue that the same kind of delusion exists regarding isolation and mental health in graduate students. Even though we all believe that we are alone in our personal research journey and that we should overcome the challenges we face along the way by ourselves, we actually don't need to: there should be opportunities for us to get together, to share our experiences and to support each other. We play this game of pretending that everything is fine, that there is no big deal in coping with independent research and solitary writing, and that we should be grown-up and professional enough to get over "minor" obstacles. Yet, in the end, we discover that most of us are dealing with similar problems, suffering from not knowing others go through the same, and more crucially, from not addressing isolation and mental health issues since we all pretend they do not exist.

Challenging the Status Quo: Distress Should not be a Rite of Passage

At one point in my struggle to write the research proposal for this project during the fall, I started to lose hope that I would be able to finish the proposal, let alone to write a whole thesis. I considered converting my program from the field research and thesis option to the bibliographic research and essay one. As I did not know what would be best to do, I decided to seek advice from some of my previous professors and they kindly agreed to connect with me during their office hours. I described my situation, my writing block, my psychological distress and my career goals and asked if, all things considered, switching to the essay option would be better for me. I was astonished and, I must admit, a little destroyed by the advice I received. First, they told me that the feelings I had were very commonplace and that we all had to deal with them as they were intrinsic to academia. Then, they thought that, if I was not able to advance my research proposal, it was

because I did not take my research seriously enough and ended up procrastinating too much. Finally, they advised me that the best thing for me to do was to force myself into total isolation (physical and virtual) for a couple hours until I felt shameful enough from not writing that I would have no other choice but to write.

This experience was very painful for me, especially since I knew most of those things were wrong in my case. I already did force myself to sit down and write for lengthy hours, without anything *productive* coming out of the process but terrible, existential shame, angst, and tears. I did dedicate whole days for writing, and good portions of my days everyday for writing, but most of the time the result was quite poor. I really did (and still do) take this research very seriously, yet this was not enough to overcome the emotional and psychological pain I experienced every time I sat in front of the computer to try to write down a page or two. I knew that, without formal deadlines, the “just do it” and “if you don’t do it, you’ll fail” mottos were not able to supplant the “you don’t know what you’re talking about” and “why am I doing that for?” ones that were preventing me from writing.

Nevertheless, in retrospective, this meeting has been quite eye-opening for me. First, it made me realize that what I was lacking so bad was internal motivation (which I never really cultivated) and external structures (within which I was able to be a very productive and high achieving student before doing my Master’s research). Second, it burst open the delusion bubble about isolation and mental health in academia: if feelings of isolation and mental health challenges were a commonplace issue in graduate students, why was it normalized and even banalized? I started thinking more and more through the implications of this illusionary and compulsory isolation and, as I reviewed the literature to write this section and discussed the issue with fellow

students from my cohort, the activist in me came to one conclusion: the current situation in academia is unhealthy and it needs to be changed.

Although everything I have said in this section might seem rather anecdotal and subjective so far, the issues I exposed are real and well documented. In a recent and rigorous meta-analysis on doctoral students' mental health, Hanzell et al. (2020) found that stress and mental health issues were significantly more frequent in graduate students than in the general population, and that isolation and lack of support were found across studies to be the most important risk factors. Interestingly, being female also appeared to be correlated with higher likelihood of experiencing stress, anxiety, and burnout. The authors tentatively explained this gender gap by the fact that women report mental challenges more easily, the "additional hurdles when studying in a male dominated profession, and the expectation that in addition to their doctoral studies, females should retain sole or majority responsibility for the domestic and/ or caring duties within their family" (Hazell et al 2020: 24).

Likewise, a study of European PhD students found that about half of those surveyed experienced psychological distress, while a good third was at high risk of developing a mental health issue or already dealing with one (Levecque et al. 2019). A study done in the United States came to an even more alarming conclusion, with about a half of PhD students and a third of Master's students being identified as depressed (The Graduate Assembly 2014). In their extensive survey of more than 2000 graduate students from 26 countries enrolled in a wide variety of disciplines, Evans et al (2018) found that "graduate students are more than six times as likely to experience depression and anxiety as compared to the general population." (282) Studies looking at student attrition in graduate education (i.e. the proportion of students who abandon their program before completion) also point to isolation, lack of social support and lack of communication (both

student-to-student and student-to-faculty) as main causes of drop-out in graduate school, and more especially in PhD programs (Lovitts 2005, Ali and Kohun 2006). Conversely, connectedness to others and social support (from peers, supervisor, faculty and surroundings) was found to be associated with less stress and mental issues (Hazell et al. 2020). I will come back to that point below when I will talk about care and collaboration in academia.

Barbara Lovitts, in her article “Being a Good Course-Taker is not Enough: A Theoretical Perspective on the Transition to Independent Research” (2005), proposes that another factor exacerbating the situation for graduate students is the abrupt shift from a very structured and regulated learning environment to an independent and entrepreneurial academic endeavor. For most students, the only type of education we experience prior to our graduate studies, from kindergarten all the way to our graduation, is the standard, western, course-based education: attend classes, take notes, study hard, hand-in good assignments and perform well on exams. According to Lovitts, during this first part of education, that she calls “the dependent stage”, students are mostly consumers of knowledge, being somehow walked through the existing knowledge and techniques in our disciplines by the means of readings, lectures, assignments and specific practice tasks. However, none of this prepares you for taking your research and your education in your own hands all of a sudden. Students thus have to face a pretty abrupt transition to the “independent stage” of their education: “[...]while graduate students are familiar with the nature and processes involved in completing coursework, the nature of the processes they encounter in the independent stage, such as selecting an adviser and researching and writing a dissertation, are often vague and alien concepts [...]. They are also complex processes with which students have had little, if any, prior experience.” (Lovitts 2005: 140) Hence, a lot of students experience a challenging drop from being excellent students to being struggling and disoriented researchers.

Interestingly, the themes discussed above through the lens of the *Magister Implicatus* are also recurrent in many qualitative studies (Hazell et al. 2020, Russell-Pinson and Harris 2019, Siegel and Keeler 2020). Unrealistic expectations, a distorted vision of what is the norm in academia, acute feelings of isolation and a banalization of mental challenges are regularly voiced by the graduate students interviewed or surveyed. Even if those issues are widespread, they are rarely acknowledged by universities and departments, and even less often really addressed (Ali and Kohun 2006). Siegel and Keeler (2020) talk about a “culture of silence” surrounding mental health in graduate school that, combined with expectations (real and imagined) that graduate students should overwork themselves in order to succeed and with the stigmatization of mental illness, pushes graduate students to deal with their problems by themselves rather than seeking help. The participants in this study highlighted that “the culture that rewards students for pushing themselves to the brink of mental exhaustion is the same culture that will admonish them—particularly those who have prior experience with depression—for experiencing the depressive symptomatology that such a lifestyle can cause” (Siegel and Keeler 2020: 216).

Similarly, this “expectation of exhaustion” appeared as a recurrent theme in the meta-analysis done by Hazell et al. (2020). The authors draw from the results of their study, and in particular from this commonplace expectation that undergoing mental hardships is a rule of the game in graduate school, to call for a widespread change in academic culture:

“An accepted narrative around DRs [doctoral researchers] needing to experience a certain level of dis/stress would likely contribute to poor mental health and as an impediment to the uptake and effectiveness of proffered interventions. Although further research is needed, it is apparent that individual interventions alone are not sufficient to improve DR mental health, and that a widespread culture shift is needed in order to prevent the transmission of unhealthy work attitudes and practices.” (Hazell et al. 2020: 26)

I agree with these authors in that banalizing mental health issues and leaving graduate students isolated in their journey to degree completion is not doing anyone a service. Psychological distress is not, and should not, be a rite of passage in graduate school. I believe it is more than time to wake up from this collective delusion and to realize that the Emperor has no clothes: mental challenges are widespread but not banal and we ought not to be alone in facing them. This is not to say that Master's and PhD degrees should be made easier; the problem is isolation and invisibilization, not difficulty. Rather, programs, departments and universities should be redesigned to favor peer support, collaboration, healthy communication, and help-seeking. Caring for one another, supporting one another and working together should be encouraged, not discouraged in the name of careerism, competition and individual merit.

A Different Approach: How Care and Collaboration Could Change the Game

As was mentioned above, social support and connectedness are shown by many studies to break isolation and hence lower the risk of developing mental issues in graduate students (Hazell et al. 2020). Of course, access to mental health resources and a good supervisor-supervisee relationship are also important factors in promoting graduate student well-being. However, for the purpose of this section, I will focus on what caring for each other, collaborating on projects and supporting peers can do to improve the situation in academia. Care and collaboration, many authors argue, are deeply needed in academia and can alleviate the negative effects of isolation and perfectionism on students and faculty's mental health.

In their article on slow scholarship, Mountz et al. (2015) argue that, as academics, we should take the time needed to work on collaborative projects, produce quality research and enact care in our teaching, researching, learning and mentoring practices. Doing so, they say, is a very political and powerful act: "[...] cultivating space to care for ourselves, our colleagues, and our

students is, in fact, a political activity when we are situated in institutions that devalue and militate against such relations and practices” (Mountz et al. 2015: 1240). Collaboration, as we have seen above, takes time, and so does care. However, they are too often sacrificed because of the unrealistic demands placed on academics (students, researchers, and faculty) in terms of productivity (i.e., how much work should be accomplished in a certain amount of time) (Mountz et al. 2015). Moreover, there is rarely enough time dedicated to collaboration built into programs and schedules, pushing the time needed for true collaboration into the realm of magical time-making (Ervin and Fox 1994). Hence, deciding to *take* the time needed to collaborate with and care for each other, rather than *making* this time, is a political act of resistance against the dominant culture of academia and the authoritative figure of the *Magister Implicatus*.

Encouraging care and collaboration in academia could have several benefits. First, by opening space and time for care, for example by providing peer support groups, informal activities, dedicated counselling or mentoring time, and friendly collaborative spaces, we can create a climate of sharing and openness that would enable academics to break through the culture of individualism, isolation and silence in universities (Ervin and Fox 1994). Moreover, if we genuinely care for each other, we should stop assuming – or believing – that everybody is doing just fine on their own when we don’t hear from them. Rather, we should take the time to kindly check in every once in a while and lend a listening ear or provide support if needed. If, as Julia Horncastle (2001) says, practices of un-caring in academia “can have devastating effects on (to name some): creativity, confidence, output, collegiality, motivation, feelings of safety, cognition, morale, working conditions, pro-activity and general well-being” (53), caring for each other can do just the opposite.

In their meta-analysis on graduate student mental health, Hazell et al. (2020) found that there was a real and widespread need to be seen among doctoral researchers. This need to be seen

was partly linked to gaining recognition from other students and from their supervisor, but it was more basically linked to feeling worthy, considered and respected as a human being. Caring for others by simply being present and attentive can fulfill that need and can, in addition, prevent psychological distress from turning into mental health issues if a person is encouraged to seek help and support, rather than being discouraged or invisibilized. Peer support groups, writing groups, student clubs and collaborative research teams can, likewise, break feelings of isolation and provide a place for being seen and recognized as a valued and cared-for peer. In times of pandemic, even if the social links provided by those groups are virtual, they are nonetheless essential to break isolation and maintain social connectedness with peers.

Collaboration itself – be it with other academics or with people and institutions outside of academia – can help recreate the connectedness that can be severed either by the structure of graduate school or by the pandemic. In her article “Participatory and Action-Oriented Dissertations: The Challenges and Importance of Community-Engaged Graduate Research”, Emily van der Meulen (2011) details how engaging in community-based and collaborative research can alleviate feelings of isolation and loss of purpose that can lead many students to dropping out of their program. She shares her experience of practicing community-based research at the doctoral level:

As many of my fellow colleagues became estranged from their academic departments and the university as a whole, I found that my involvement in the community and my relationship to a local organization increased my drive to complete the study, and therefore to finish my degree. I believe that building bridges between graduate student researchers and local communities can lead to benefits for both; graduate students can develop a greater sense of purpose in their research projects and communities can participate in studies that seek answers to questions they themselves deem as important (van der Meulen 2011: 1292)

My experience conducting community-based research aligns with van der Meulen’s one and I must admit that, on many occasions, my engagement with and towards Hayes Farm was one

of my few motivations left in pursuing this research project and my Master's degree. Collaboration provided me with a clear purpose for conducting research and with people to be accountable to. However, another benefit that van der Meulen (2011) does not address is all the support and caring that my research team and the local community provided me with, especially during times of increased isolation such as the quarantine following my arrival in New Brunswick. I was no longer a lone scholar working on my research on my own: I had a research team to meet and check in with every week, and I had precious fellow co-researchers who cared for me enough to check in, knock at my door and bring me plenty of fresh produce from the farm on many occasions. At its best, collaboration can provide academics not only with connection and a sense of purpose, but also with care and support from peers and colleagues.

CHOOSING OUR LENSES RIGHT

Now that I have presented the story behind our research project, stated the two main research questions that guide our inquiry, explained the reasons why we think this research is important, and discussed the literature on the three main areas that our research explores; now is the time to choose the lenses that we want to use to approach and make sense of our research process and findings. It took us a long time to get there, but I don't regret all the time, energy, reflection, and research that went into it. My only concern was that my research partners could eventually grow impatient and irritated from having the impression that I kept delaying the "real" start of the research and that I was wasting their precious time. However, they assured me this was not the case. I thus took the time I needed to sit down with the ideas that animate this research project and we took the time we needed as a team to digest them, discuss them through, understand them, and learn to navigate them in a way that would be beneficial to us all and to the communities we are engaged in.

Our Relationships with Ideas

In the previous section, I explored some ways to approach relationships, especially in collaborative research projects. However, we should not blind ourselves unnecessarily by considering only relationships between humans: relationships with non-human living beings, with the environment, with non-living things, with embodied practices, and with ideas are also significant and should be taken into consideration. For example, relationships with non-human living beings – mostly plants and bugs – infuse the practices and the atmosphere on the farm just as much as do the relationships between different people on the farm. On a more personal level, the relationship I have with academic writing is complicated at best, and outright unhealthy at

worst. As I am writing this thesis, and as might appear very clearly in it, I am still struggling to make this relationship better and to live well with it. Changing my life-long relationships with learning, writing, schoolwork, and education in general is no small task.

More importantly here, Shawn Wilson writes in his book about the importance of developing and honoring relationships to ideas. He states that “[t]he concepts or ideas are not as important as the relationships that went into forming them.” (Wilson 2008: 74) Wilson’s approach resonates with me for several reasons, and I hope that he (and other Indigenous people) will forgive me for taking guidance and inspiration from his work even though I am not Indigenous myself. I am not trying here to reappropriate an Indigenous epistemology to suit the needs of a settler-based research and I hope this is clear. Rather, I connect deeply with Wilson’s writing because I can relate to the experience he shares of struggling to find a voice, of trying really hard to make sense of the dominant academic systems while resisting it and of going through cycles of questioning to strive to practice meaningful research. The way in which he humbly shares his journey through the writing of his doctoral dissertation and the research that led to it empowers me to carry on with this project, to reconsider my own relationship with research and academic writing and to share my own struggles and reflections in the process. Recasting the way in which I relate to the ideas I engage with in this research and caring for the relationships I have with them by taking the time to sit down with them and to respectfully “listen” to them are just two ways in which I think I can benefit from learning from Wilson’s shared stories and reflections.

This is a rather long introduction to the theoretical framework we use in our research project, but it is integral and essential to it in many ways. As the dominant way in which we approach our activities (in research, on the farm, and in our social lives) is relationship-based, it is essential to develop healthy and respectful relations with the theories and concepts that will help us make sense

of what we learn out of this research. Hence, my goal in this section is not to claim the greatness of some perspectives by devaluing others, but rather to present, kind-heartedly, the approaches that we find best suited for the kind of research we do and that make the most sense to us as activists and researchers. I derive great humility from Wilson’s concept of “epistemological egalitarianism”. He writes: “There is no need to be critical of or judge others’ ideas or theories if all are thought of as equally valid. Rather, there is a need for each person to develop his or her own relationship with ideas and to therefore to form their own conclusion.” (Wilson 2008: 94). As such, the theoretical approaches I present in this section came out of cycles of reading, writing, thinking, presenting, and discussing. This process built our relationship with those approaches and led us to judge that they represented good lenses to use in our inquiry. The main approach that we use is a feminist ethics of care, which informs and talks to the way we view, consider, and interpret relationships between research collaborators and the relationships that exist on a community farm. A second part of this section will address the bridge that we build between theory and practice, research and activism.

Research and Academia

I will go on a limb to express some thoughts on behalf of the individuals who sit with the Hayes Farm side of the research collaboration team. Whether consciously or by means of some other attraction or action, all three of us seem to have rejected the pursuit of academia on our own paths. The ideas presented so casually above came not without struggle, and found a beautiful balance between the structure and limits of academic research, and the nature of collaboration and community. This approach will allow us to maintain the essence of what we’ve all worked together to build at Hayes Farm, while seeking new information which will help us remain relevant in our work. As we ‘can’t wait to find out what happens next’ in this research project we are gradually becoming more comfortable with the realization that we are not mere soundboards or cheerleaders in this work, but players who help guide its direction and the outcomes we seek.

Alice

A feminist ethics of care through research

I have alluded to the notion of care a couple of times so far, but I did not delve into it yet for the sake of clarity. Now is the time to consider this important yet complex aspect of our research, and I deliberately decided to insert it in the theoretical framework since it will be the lens through which we will approach our second research question and it will inform our analysis of the first one too. Including an ethics of care in this section is admittedly a stretch because it addresses perhaps the ethical aspect of research first and foremost (at least as suggested in the literature), but I suggest here that it has much to offer as an analytical tool. I am deliberately talking about *a* feminist ethics of care rather than *the* feminist ethics of care, as there are many versions of it and thus it is hard to define what “the” feminist ethics of care is to then apply it to our analysis.

Moreover, there have been a good number of critiques addressed at feminist ethics since it has been popularised in the 1980s (Cooper 2007) and I would like to engage with them as well. Keeping in mind that we want to build healthy relationships with the ideas we will be working with this research, there are indeed a couple of complicated theoretical relationships that have to be unpacked with care ethics and that I, personally as a feminist, have to figure out and to come to terms with. One of these issues is the gendered nature of the work and the research we are engaged in, and another important one is the essentializing tendencies of some versions of feminist ethics that assume women have some natural abilities and predispositions for caring that men lack. But let me first present what constitutes the feminist ethics of care we want to work with before engaging with the critiques of it.

The first versions of an ethics of care were proposed as feminist alternatives to more traditional ethics of justice that were considered as male-dominated and male-centered (Koehn 1998). Hence, rather than considering ethics from a universalizing and impersonal viewpoint,

which more often than not tended to also be a white, male, and upper-class one, early ethics of care intended to build on women's way of engaging with ethical concerns. This feminine ethical reasoning was considered to be a context-specific, relationship-based evaluation of who needs what in order to survive, thrive, and be well (Held 2006). Now, the word "women" in these two last sentences is highly problematic, as there is surely enough not only one way of thinking that all women share, nor is it certain whether this particular point of view (if such a thing exists) is the result of a natural disposition, of the gendered socialization of women or of some combination of both. As these two concerns are at the center of long-standing and ever-raging anthropological and feminist debates, I have no pretention here to provide a definite answer to them. For now, the important elements of a feminist ethics of care that we will retain is that it is based on relationships rather than on independent individuals, and that its analysis starts from a particular context rather than from abstract, pseudo-universal cases.

Care is Not as Rosy as it Sounds

At the center of a feminist ethics of care is, of course, the concept of care itself. Although it may seem pretty straightforward, this concept actually means many things at once. There seems to be a consensus amongst feminist theorists that care is as much a value as it is a practice, and as a practice it is often vital work that is undervalued (Mountz et al 2015). As Aimee Meredith Cox so aptly demonstrates in *Shapeshifters: Black Girls and the Choreography of Citizenship* (2015), caring acts and care work always take place in a particular politics of care that frame our understanding, evaluation and appreciation of what caring is. Most often, the dominant politics of care as enacted through institutions, policies and social organization makes the work of care either underpaid or straightly unpaid and pushes those who engage in care work, mainly women, to neglect themselves in the process (Cox 2015). However, revaluing care also means practicing and

legitimizing self-care and informal everyday care, and it is a very political act that has the power to resist the neoliberal logics of work (Mountz et al 2015).

Care is also, always and already, socially constructed as gendered, even before an act of care actually takes place (Parreñas 2018). When feminist thinkers first proposed an ethics of care, they were extrapolating moral values from the nurturing relationship between mother and child, which is often conceived as universal (Koehn 1998). Koehn (1998) rightly points out though that being a mother is not an experience that all women share (or will share) and that it should thus not be considered as universal; even saying that all human beings have a nurturing mother is too much of a stretch. However, through a gendered upbringing and accompanying social expectations towards women *as if* they were all potentially mothers, many women indeed internalize a moral imperative to embody this imagined caring mother-child relationship in many areas of their lives even when they are not mothers themselves (Cooper 2007). Although I am not sure yet whether this will be a point of disagreement with my research partners, I nonetheless agree with Sherilyn MacGregor (2006) that we should be wary of essentializing tropes which equate women with nature and which presuppose a natural disposition for caring in women. As she puts it, “[...] we simply do not know what ‘feminine morality’ would be under conditions of equity and freedom, and we should not confuse actions shaped under socially oppressive conditions for ‘natural’ ones.” (MacGregor 2006: 63)

Finally, care is also not always joy and love, as feminist scholars have often stressed, and it is certainly not power- and value-free (Parreñas 2018). Although I appreciate what a feminist ethics of care can bring to our research (a point I will elaborate on soon), I do not sit well with the fact that it takes the mother-child relationship as the model for exploring the morality of all relationships because it is intrinsically an unequal and non-reciprocal one (Cooper 2007). As

Koehn (1998) points out, nurturing relationships rest on power imbalances, one-sided dependencies and unequal vulnerability that should not be replicated in other relationships that ought to be more reciprocal. It is easy to fall into a “caregiver/cared-for” pattern that can be intoxicating and paternalistic and that can even perpetuate domination and colonization (Cox 2015). When we engage in caring, we should sometimes pause and take a minute to reflect on why we consider someone as actually in need of care and what are the assumptions and the biases that we bring with us in the caring relationship.

One way of doing so is proposed by Juno Salazar Parreñas in *Decolonizing Extinction: The Work of Care in Orangutan Rehabilitation* (2018). She proposes to consider shared and mutual vulnerability in the interface between people in caring relationships while at the same time staying attuned to “who sacrifices more in these states of vulnerability” (Parreñas 2018: 167). For Parreñas, achieving a totally fair, power-balanced and reciprocal relationship is impossible, but we could nonetheless strive to be mindful in our practices, to reduce the violence of our actions and to impede as less as possible on the autonomy of the others with whom we engage. Taking a very different approach, Gibson-Graham et al (2013) center fairness and reciprocity in relationships, be them close, intimate ones or impersonal, long-distance ones. They talk about striking a balance between meeting our needs while also making sure that the needs of others are met in the relationships that we engage in. Koehn (1998) proposes to rethink caring relationships in a more dialogical way. She writes that feminist ethics of care “must provide some space in which people who are on the receiving end of care or trust or empathy (i.e. what the caregiver, trustor or empathizer thinks of as such) can contest effectively the caregiver’s, trustor’s or empathizer’s expectations”. (Koehn 1998: 4) Often, good intentions are not enough, and we need to keep a genuine dialogue going between both parties in a caring relationship in order to critically address

power relations and biases in the relationship but also to enable all actors to engage in both caring and being cared for in a way that they deem appropriate.

Care and Patience

It should be noted that it is exactly this notion of care and making an effort to take action in the care of each other and ourselves that has delayed this project beyond its originally envisioned timeline, be that for better or worse. In being careful of each other's needs or complicating factors in terms of project participation, each of us has shown explicit care for everyone else. In doing so, we've attempted to put care of self first to make sure that we're all getting what we need - as far as we can help it. That means that often, one person's priority simply doesn't align with the needs of the project as a whole, and that focus is pulled from this work in another direction. We encourage each other to maintain open dialogue and support each other actively seeking out what is needed. Often that is space, sleep, a different focus, family, other work, and very often it is simply time.

Alice

What a Feminist Ethics of Care can Bring to Collaborative Research

Many scholars aptly demonstrate how a feminist ethics of care can enrich social research and collaborative research in a variety of disciplines. Mountz et al (2015) use a feminist ethics of care to argue for a "slow scholarship" that would create space and time for caring for ourselves, for our colleagues, for our research partners, and for our loved ones outside of academia. They see this kind of academic endeavour as challenging the structures and logics of the current neoliberal university model that promotes individualism and isolation. Light and Akama (2014) and Lawrence and Maltis (2012), applying an ethics of care in design and management research respectively, argue that this approach is useful to address ethical issues in collaborative practice while fostering the potential for future relationship-building. Toombs et al (2016) similarly use a feminist ethics of care perspective to engage with the complex and rich relationships that grow

between researchers and research participants in long-term participatory research and that, according to them, inevitably involve some level of care. Finally, Laura Pottinger (2020) talks about the advantages of conducting research care-fully and gently, acknowledging that a lot of quiet, unobtrusive acts of care often go unnoticed in more conventional research.

I believe keeping fairness, mindfulness, and reciprocity in mind while considering acts of caring using a critical feminist ethics of care framework helps us navigate and make sense of the unique relationships we have built through our collaborative research project and the always-evolving connections between people, non-human species, objects, spaces, and practices on and through the farm. As I mentioned a couple of times already, each member of our research team has engaged in acts of caring towards others and it is our feeling that caring for each other is an important aspect of our collaborative research project. A critical feminist ethics of care, because it focuses on relationships, interconnectedness, and context-based thinking, allows us to critically *and* gently approach the connections that we embody through our research project and in our actions on the farm as well as beyond the farm.

This approach also helps us in regularly assessing everyone's contributions and sacrifices in participating in our common research project. It reminds us that we should keep an eye on balancing our personal and social lives and on what we ask from each other and from ourselves. If a research project is only as good as the relationships that constitute it, then there is no point in prioritizing the project over our own needs and priorities. When Alice writes that we are trying to put care of the self forward, it does not mean that we are individually struggling to pull the blanket our side and to play our cards right, but rather that we still deserve self-respect and autonomy when we come together as a group and, as such, we make sure that everyone in our team feels safe, comfortable, empowered and cared for before we start focusing on our common endeavor.

Theory and Action: An Artificial Dilemma

Is there a difference between academia and the real world? Are academics so entrenched in their ivory tower that they lost base with the material, practical reality of everyday life? Do scholars really need to retreat to a privileged, neutral and isolated vantage point to observe and analyze the world in order to produce good theory? Does activism threaten good scholarship by tainting reasoning? Can intellectual insight and engaged practice be brought together in a useful and productive way?

These questions populate the literature on engaged research for a good reason: there is an assumed and culturally ingrained dichotomy between theory and action in academia, safeguarded by illusions of neutrality, avoidance of conflicts of interests, conflation of dispassion with critical thinking and outdated standards of academic rigor (Nygreen 2006). As Hale (2006) says, we can only argue for engaged research with other academics using an academic language - that is, with arguments that are considered valid in academia - yet this language is based on a favoring of disengagement and a suspicion of partiality. On the other hand, for most people, and especially for the people with whom engaged researchers work, credibility battles in the academic arena are of no interest and no value. Rather, knowledge - or even just hearsay - of those battles inspire distrust, disgust and questioning of the real motivations of the scholars that people encounter and engage with (Burman 2018).

I personally tend to sit on the latter side of the theory-versus-action dilemma, favoring real-life concerns and outputs over academic careerism. In my *Decolonizing anthropology* course last semester, during a class where we were discussing engaged research, I wanted to share my opinion on the “need” to satisfy academic standards. I got pretty agitated and really wanted to burst out loud “I actually don’t care about academia!” As the words were about to pass my lips, I suddenly

realized that I couldn't say that. First, that would have been hypocrisy, because it's not true that I don't care about my grades or my achievements in graduate school, quite the opposite. Second, saying that would have been disrespectful towards my supervisor and my colleagues, who were the representatives of academia sitting in front of me. Third, it would have amounted to biting the hand that feeds me: over the course of my university studies, I have received many scholarships from different institutions and at least three important ones will have served to support me specifically in carrying this research project, constituting the bulk of my budget for a little more than two years.

I had - once again - abruptly realized that I was structurally tied to paying allegiance to academia. However, I still believe that research should serve more than just academic careerism or the mere circulation of texts by, for and amongst academics in search of recognition (Wilce 2006, Kelty et al 2008, Hughes 2019). So, in the end, what did I decide to say in that situation? "I guess I should not say it, but I don't really care about academia. I don't write or do research for other academics; I do it for the people I work with." Of course, this was but only a partial truth. It demonstrated my convictions and motivations in doing academic research, yet it showed that I had a consideration for my peers, my institution and my funders, even if this consideration could be seen as irreverent. Of course, I won't give up funding or compromise my career by ruining my degree. In that sense, I made it clear from day one with my research partners that my ultimate goal in pursuing my research project was to obtain my degree. I also encouraged them to likewise state what they were expecting out of this research.

In trying to bridge different agendas to work effectively together, putting all our cards on the table is perhaps our best strategy as a collaborative research team. Yet, it does not resolve the value conflicts that dual allegiances (to academia and to community organizations) produce for

engaged researchers. Nor does it answer the question whether theory and practice, or knowledge production and community action, are reconcilable. In order to tackle those issues and to provide a solid theoretical ground for our research practice, I propose that we explore three different ways to work through the theory and action dichotomy. The first angle of analysis is relational and considers the conflicting obligations of engaged researchers. The second is spatial and places *praxis* at the meeting point of theory and action. The last one is temporal and envisions engaged research as exploring and forming the future at the same time. Again, it is not my aim here to declare which approach is best, as I believe all three of them are valid and complementary. Rather, I present all three of them because I think they all contribute to making sense of the kind of research we are engaged in as a research team and to coming to terms with some unresolvable yet highly productive tensions for me as an engaged academic.

Conflicting relations: Collaborative research as double allegiance

I am clearly not the first engaged researcher to write about the conflicting obligations that collaborative, community-based, participatory or activist research entails for academics (Hale 2006, Nygreen 2009-2010, Kara 2017, Cancian 1993, Reiter and Oslender 2015, Dyrness 2008, Langhout 2006, to name but a few). If we consider this problem as an extension of the notion of *positionality* in ethnography, the literature on multiple engagements becomes even more vast (Simpson 2014, Cox 2015, Berreman 1972, Skidmore 2006, Rabinow 1997, etc.). Somewhat traditionally, an ethnographer is expected to get immersed and entangled in her “field” in order to achieve a deeper level of understanding and thus to bring new insights into human nature and cultures. Hence, it is widely accepted in anthropology that objectivity and detachment are improbable if not totally impossible to achieve: the researcher, by her very presence, will influence the people with whom she works and be influenced by them. Likewise, she will only have access

to an understanding of a situation bound to her background and her position in a given context. Hence, the kind of theory that ethnography can produce and use is always situated, partial and generalizable only through adaptation to a new context.

More to the point, an ethnographer always plays many roles and entertains many different relationships at once (Berreman 1972). Indeed, she can be simultaneously a researcher, a peer, a professor, a student, a friend, a volunteer, a co-worker, a project manager and even an adopted relative. She is tied to the academic world from which she is from, and she is tied to her interlocutors, on whom she depends for conducting her research. As Wilson (2008) reminds us, relations require accountability, and thus maintaining many relationships imply honoring many different commitments. This accountability, it should be noted, is not merely instrumental and must be imagined as stretching through time and space: although they might be severed in important ways, relationships do not simply dissolve once someone leaves a place or a group for an extended period of time, or forever. They might become empty and tenuous as time passes, but the bonds connecting people in a web of relationships still exist at the very least in one place - memory.

Unfortunately, many anthropologists tend to disappear and stop honoring the relations they built once they leave their “field”, a practice that continues to contribute to the discipline’s bad reputation (Burman 2018). This reputation, along with the expectations and apprehensions it generates, precedes any new researcher that enters a community with previous experiences of academic “looting”, no matter if that researcher is well-intentioned or not. At a very deep level, trust towards academics (the category of people, not specific individuals) have been abused, severed and lost. Building meaningful and respectful relationships over the ruins of deceived hopes, betrayed trust and rightful resentment is a delicate, intricate and Sisyphean task.

I have painfully witnessed how my discipline's unfavorable reputation preceded me through many attempts to propose a research collaboration with different Indigenous groups. Every time, and even if I was first welcomed with enthusiasm and interest for a potential research project, I came across a red "stop" sign and a kind but firm refusal to engage in any research activity, be it collaborative or not, with an outsider. The stop sign, in reality, acted on me as a mirror that returned a distorted image to me: the ugly face of the vampiristic monster that colonial research, anthropological or not, came to represent for them (Burman 2018). Each time, I could not accept to identify with this image that was returned to me, even though deep down I knew that it was probably part of who I was and that I would have to work on it to move forward.

Each time, the person holding that "stop" sign, acting as a gatekeeper (see Emmel, Hughes, Greenhalgh and Sales 2007), pointed out to me previous experiences of culturally inappropriate, exploitative or deceptive research and asked me for solid proofs of good intentions, appropriate research methods and genuine control over data and research process - which I could and did provide. However, they also asked me for something I could not provide in the framework and limitations of my degree - long-term commitment to engage in a slow, lengthy and delicate process of trust restoring and relationship building. Accepting those conditions would have translated some day or another into plain deception - constrained by academic regulations and scholarship rules to finish my degree within two years, restricted in interprovincial moves amidst the pandemic, bound to my loved ones and my homestead left behind in Québec and uncertain about my own life trajectory, I simply could not loyally step into this commitment that I could not fulfill.

In his powerful and highly critical piece "Of Academic Embeddedness: Communities of Choice and How to Make Sense of Activism and Research Abroad", Bernd Reiter (2015) argues that gaining access to the field does not only serve research purposes of building trust and (in very

crude terms) accessing people's knowledge - it also temporarily alleviates a feeling of alienation and a lost ideal of community associated with modern, industrialized and bureaucratized life. Moreover, researchers have the privilege to "choose" the communities where they conduct their research and build relationships, a luxury that few human beings can offer themselves. However, Reiter (2015) continues, once they leave their community of choice, many researchers move on in their career, find another community to squat and never go back to the previous ones they abandoned. Inevitably, the people left behind feel betrayed and disappointed and, unsurprisingly, become wary of new outsider researchers trying to join their community. Such practices do not follow the principle of relational accountability because researchers do not honor the relationships they created but rather treat them in an instrumental way.

But why do engaged researchers talk about double allegiances as being a unique problem of collaborative research if it should be a staple of ethnographic practice? Perhaps because they take their commitment to the people they work with seriously enough to dedicate time and energy to thinking through the effects their community engagements have on their academic practices (and, of course, the effects of their involvement in academia on their actions in the community). Perhaps because their accountability to the people they work with is more salient than in traditional ethnographic research. Perhaps because their engaged research practices spark more suspicion amongst their academic peers over potential conflicts of interests and lessened academic rigor. In any case, double allegiances force engaged researchers to straddle the dichotomy between theory (what they do in writing) and practice (what they do in action) and to live up to both of these commitments.

Moreover, engaged researchers are fully aware that they write for two very different audiences and that their work must satisfy two competing sets of expectations. Charles Hale (2006)

writes, in “Activist Research v. Cultural Critique: Indigenous Land Rights and the Contradictions of Politically Engaged Anthropology” :

Within an academic setting, the case for activist research can only be made in rigorous academic terms. [...] It must generate new knowledge and theoretical innovation [...] Outside academia, however, activist research will be judged in starkly different terms: what is its potential contribution to the political struggle underway? At the end of the day, activist scholars must embrace two quite distinct sets of objectives and forms of accountability, and they must negotiate the often considerable tensions between them.” (105).

Hence, an engaged researcher must speak and write in two languages, preferably at the same time, without acting or being considered as Janus-faced. In the best case scenario, those two languages can align and the two sets of expectations can be met - in this sense, working on food sovereignty is an excellent middle ground as it answers big and “trendy” theoretical questions all the while addressing the concerns and aspirations of my research partners and the community that supports it. However, contradictions between two different agendas can become too dissonant to be supportable to the point where they no longer seem reconcilable. Similarly, to be successful in academia, a researcher has to maintain good relationships with her peers and her institution, publish a lot of preferably single-authored work and make professional choices based on career outcomes (Cancian 1993). When collaboration implies aligning politically with the group we work with and diverting our energy from academic careerism and public relations, truly engaged and collaborative research can then seem incompatible with academic success (Cancian 1993).

Although dual loyalties clearly represent a challenge for engaged researchers, the tension they create can be seen as a fertile ground rather than as a limitation. As Hale (2006) notes:

To align oneself with a political struggle while carrying research on issues related to that struggle is to occupy a space of profoundly generative scholarly understanding. Yet when we position ourselves in such spaces, we are also inevitably drawn into the compromised conditions of the political process. The resulting contradictions make the research more difficult to carry out, but they also generate insight that otherwise would be impossible to achieve. This insight, in turn,

provides an often unacknowledged basis for analytical understanding and theoretical innovation.” (98)

Political and theoretical tensions prevent the engaged researcher from resorting to widely accepted explanations or from glossing over the implications of her own beliefs, identity and power. Sitting in a difficult position forces the researcher to question herself, her intentions and her research practice, but also the knowledge the research generates and the grounds on which such knowledge can be constructed, the worthiness of the research endeavor, the fairness of her contributions and benefits, the effects of her privileges, etc. By being no longer accountable only to good academic writing, rigorous research criteria and standard research ethics, the engaged researcher must find ways to make her research impactful, meaningful and respectful outside of academic circles as well. By actively working in partnership with a community organization (be they co-researchers, partners or interlocutors), she has no choice but to genuinely consider ways of knowing and understanding that are not common in academia, to negotiate her interpretations and question her own conclusions.

For these reasons, I align with Hale (2006) in arguing that engaged research can tie theory and practice in a unique way and thus yield new insights that would otherwise be inaccessible. I propose that this junction between theory and practice is mainly relational: it is realized through having commitments to different communities that often have conflicting agendas, expectations and concerns. However, other approaches to reconciling theory and practice can be particularly useful. For example, another way to bridge theory and practice is through the concept of *praxis*, first developed by Marx but later taken up by many engaged researchers. I will argue that the concept of *praxis* ties theory and practice in a spatial way, by forcing theory to leave its privileged panoramic vantage point and to dwell in the place of practice, in the everyday actions of informed actors.

Bridging Theory and Action Through Praxis: A Spatial Metaphor

The concept of praxis was originally developed by Aristotle and was conceptualized as thinking in action rather than thinking in abstraction. For Aristotle, “where the pursuit of knowledge through *theoria* is to establish an articulated truth, knowledge through praxis is achieved through and represented within ongoing action.” (Gergen 2014: 294) It is interesting to note that the notions of “theory” and “practice” are conceived as opposites today, while they were initially both tied to knowledge. The term *praxis* was employed by Marx to designate a distinctive type of practice that is not mechanical but rather consciously based on theoretical knowledge about economic and social dynamics. For him, praxis is “theoretically informed and self-reflexive human action devoted to the emancipation of the working class from domination by the capitalist class and the capitalist state” (Nonini 2016: 242). Although the concept of praxis has been mostly taken up by Marxist anthropologists, it can nonetheless be useful to other strands of anthropological practice, such as engaged and collaborative research (Nonini 2016). However, I am less interested here in participating in the “emancipation” of any group of workers (although there can clearly be a case made for the improvement of farmers’ and farm workers’ conditions under the current agro-economic system) in the traditional Marxist sense than in thinking through the ways in which knowledge production can inform community action and everyday practice.

It should be noted here that the people who work at Hayes Farm already actively engage in discussions and reflections on the agro-economic system, the model of food production they implement at the farm, the impacts of their activities on the environment and their relationships with the different groups and people they interact with. Theory about agriculture economics, food systems, decolonization, environmental impacts, and climate change are all part of the curriculum taught at the farm and are indeed central in many activities and conversations on the farm as well.

On Hayes Farm’s website, visitors can read that the farm is “used as a tool for critical thinking, democratic citizenship, and skills-building”, meaning that the farm is conceived as a site of food production and of knowledge building, a place for acting concretely but also for thinking, learning and reflecting (Hayes Farm 2020, <https://www.hayesfarm.ca/rfc>).

Hence, I am highly conscious that Hayes Farm’s team did not need an academic like me to think through and theorize what they do, or to “enlighten” their practices: they indeed already do a wonderful job at this by themselves. However, my contribution is appreciated and valued in terms of the time and energy I can dedicate to the research project because of my privileged situation as a full-time graduate student receiving funding for doing research. In other words, I am paid for reading, researching, thinking and writing, whereas other crew members do that on top of and through their other numerous tasks. Thus, I can be perceived as investing significant “brainpower” into tackling issues such as food sovereignty and relationship-building for the farm and spending more time in knowledge building activities (i.e., research) that otherwise would be an overload in the farm crew’s busy schedule.

However, even if I can dedicate more time to intellectual labor, our research project is still based on farm activities and goals. Moreover, the collaborative nature of our research team ensures that there is a constant interplay between what is theorized through our research and what happens on the farm. In other words, theory and practice are not neatly kept apart, with practice happening in the immediate space of action and theory taking from a distance to provide enough detachment.²

² It’s actually pretty funny to write those lines now that I am back in Quebec and effectively away from the farm and the rest of the research team. The concept of distance and the effect of “being here” has haunted our research since the onset of the pandemic. In a way, videoconferencing tools can seem to collapse space and connect places despite distance, but at the same time a screen remains a screen: the energy of different people does not mix in the same way, and the people we interact with, although virtually present, remain physically absent. We can come together as a research team in a virtual room, but only in a disembodied way. We can talk together in real time, but we lack all the other interactions we could have between meetings.

Rather, they feed one another constantly; practice informs theory and theory is brought back on the site of practice and put to the test. To a certain extent, the theory and knowledge created inform the actions that take place on the farm and, if not relevant, they will be revised or discarded.

This merging of theory and practice on the place of action is exactly what the concept of *praxis* consists of. In his article on the use of praxis in applied anthropology, Wayne Werry (1992) described praxis as “not simply activity, but a specific form of activity: activity based on knowledge informed by theory and performed according to certain ethical and moral principles for political ends” (157). This larger definition of praxis represents the kind of politically informed practice that takes place at the farm *and* the specific type of research practice that we perform in our collaborative research project. What Hayes Farm’s team does is not just producing food and training people to grow food too; it is above all producing food and showing how to produce food in a regenerative and respectful way in order to increase the community’s food sovereignty. What we do as a research team is not just to collect and analyze data; rather, we strive to carry a genuinely collaborative, respectful and meaningful research that will also help the farm to increase food sovereignty in the region. Hence, in both cases, our practices are informed by ideals, moral principles, political goals and theoretical ideas; what we do is indeed *praxis*.

I conceive of praxis as a spatial metaphor because it collapses the imagined (or imposed) distance between practice “here” in the real world and theory “out there” in the realm of ideas. It forces theoretical ideas out of the ivory tower and infuses them back in the everyday actions in the field. The value and contribution of a given theory does not lie anymore in its detachment for a situation and its achieved objective truth, but rather in its usefulness and its relevance for the actions it informs. What happens in praxis is a back and forth motion between thinking and doing (i.e., between theory and practice), sometimes in neatly separated moments and places (for

example, when we discuss our strategy for moving forward in a meeting), but most often closely intertwined in the fabric of everyday actions so that it becomes hard to tell where action ends and where reflections starts (for example, when discussing Indigenous perspectives on food sovereignty while weeding raised beds with other crew members). In both cases, theorizing and acting concretely happen in the same space: the site of praxis.

Speculative Grounds: Researching and Shaping the Future

A third way of conceptualizing the junction between theory and action is temporal. We can think of action research as a practice that is anchored in the present moment (the “now”) but that looks forward into what could be (the “not yet”) rather than in what already exists (the “already over”). In the words of Kenneth Gergen (2014), most social research consists of documenting what is, or *mirroring* the world as it appears to us. By doing so, researchers provide explanations for what already exists, for how things came to be, but give no clue as to how things may change in the future. At worst, multiplying research that mirrors and explains the world as it is and as it was can crystallize the present into an accepted “state of affairs”, thus reinforcing the status quo rather than challenging it, even when the research aims at criticizing the current situation. Gergen (2014) explains that “when research commences with an ‘object of study’ the result is an extension of existing traditions, and suppression of alternative realities. The social imaginary is circumscribed.” (294). Thus when studying what already is, researchers cannot do otherwise but to reiterate the existence of their “object of study” and to document it, thus solidifying it in the tradition of research.

Gergen (2014) proposes instead to orient research forward rather than backward and to leave aside our fascination for the past for a more productive exploration into the future. The values

of the researchers would then be rightly acknowledged and would inform the research project directly:

Rather than their latent presence in the choice of terminology and methodology, and in the vain hopes that an absent audience will somehow make use of one's work, what if purposeful and passionate visions supplied the source of inquiry? Given a valued vision of the possible, the challenge for research would be to explore how such a possibility could be realized. The aim of research would not be to illuminate *what is*, but to create *what is to become*. Herein lies the essence of a future forming orientation to research." (Gergen 2014: 294)

Researching what does not yet exist might seem a little complicated if not outright impossible at first glance. When reviewing our research question, Alice voiced a very legitimate concern with the "after" part of it. She wondered whether we could keep the question as "How can the community farm model effectively work towards greater food sovereignty in New Brunswick during *and after* a pandemic?" or if we should rather limit it to "during a pandemic". Indeed, we have no way of really knowing what the world will look like after the pandemic, we can only be certain of how it is now, that is, in the midst of a pandemic. However, even if we don't have any more solid ground for researching what food sovereignty in New Brunswick will eventually look like, we nonetheless need to explore how we imagine it in order to come up with ways to foster it. This is the whole point of future-oriented research: by projecting ourselves in the future and nurturing a vision of how the world could be, we can then focus on ways to take action and work towards this goal.

There are many ways to research the future. The kind of future-oriented research that Gergen (2014) proposes is similar to the concept of praxis that we have talked about above and suits engaged research very well. In those cases, research is politically and morally motivated and the envisioned future is thus equally political (as in the sustainable futures imagined by food sovereignty activists). However, not all imagined futures need to be political ideals or optimistic

visions: dystopias, resignation, disillusion, blindness and anxiety are all very human ways to engage with the future. Understanding how different people imagine and engage with the future is a very interesting but often overlooked research endeavor.

For example, Andrea Ballestero, in *A Future History of Water* (2019), talks about the concept of *future anterior* to describe how her informants engage with the future they are creating. In her research, Ballestero worked mostly with bureaucrats whose functions were related to water regulation and management in Costa Rica. Although these people are highly conscious that their work and their decisions impact the everyday life and the future of everyone in their country, they are at the same time realistic about the limits of their actions. On the spot, it is impossible for her informants to really envision the extent of the changes their bureaucratic decisions will bring in the future: they can turn out to be capital or to have strictly no effect at all.

Hence, their decisions will become meaningful and valued (or devalued) only when they will be looked back at from a future that has not yet come. What they do in the present is shaping the preconditions of this future without ultimately knowing what this future will be. Ten years from now, the decision to index the price of water to a certain neatly calculated percentage will have impacted people's access to water through time and will be seen as a turning point – or not. The *future anterior*, then, “is actualized in those practices of the present that embrace the future's impossible calculability, without relegating it into the unthinkable or into a realm of ideas that cannot be acted upon. [...] In this temporal mode, people act to set up structures and obligations for the yet-to-come, despite their inability to visualize that future precisely.” (Ballestero 2019: 28-29)

Although the future anterior as conceived by Ballestero's informants can seem to be on the verge of being hopeless and apolitical – contrasting with Gergen's “purposeful and passionate

visions” (2014: 294) – it can actually help us make sense of a myriad of small actions, repetitive tasks and undervalued but essential work performed by food activists on a daily basis. Ballesteros (2019) argues that “futures are constantly being produced out of mundane actions [...] and how those actions are crucial sites where big moral and even philosophical questions are encountered and entertained by everyday people [...]” (191). In our case here, working towards food sovereignty means a vast group of tasks – from weeding to managing a farm to organizing meetings and writing policies and grant applications – that can seem insignificant in the present but in fact participate in creating the preconditions of a food sovereign future.

In both cases, thinking of engaged research as future-oriented or as taking place in the future anterior changes the perspective on how action and theory come together. In their introduction to *Anthropologies and Futures: Research Emerging and Uncertain Worlds*, Jennifer Pink and Juan Francisco Salazar (2017) explain that a viable approach to researching the future “[...] takes ongoing processes of change as its starting point, where what is next is constantly unfolding, and where anticipation and imagination equally emerge, as part of the embodied and experiential ways we live in the world – as researchers, participants and collaborators in research” (14). Hence, research is action, changing the future in hoped-for yet unpredictable ways, conceptualizing the imagined future and the changes underway at the same time.

Doing collaborative research on food sovereignty and relationship-building requires that we think about how we bridge action and theory – or activism and academia. I proposed three different ways of conceptualizing this intersection, and I believe all three can be useful in making sense of our research practices. First, the interaction between theory and practice in engaged research can be thought of as relational: researchers must honor different and sometimes conflicting relationships and thus satisfy at least two sets of expectations. Second, practice and

theory can be brought together in a spatial way, as they are intertwined and feeding each other in praxis on the site of research. Finally, theory and action are also connected in a temporal way, changing the future through research and action as it unfolds all the while reflecting on those changes and the resulting imagined futures.

THE TOOLS WE GEAR UP WITH ON OUR RESEARCH JOURNEY

Now that we have seen how we ground our research theoretically – which lenses we want to use to analyze our findings and answer our research question – it is more than time now to talk about how we actually *do* our research. By the same token, we should address the very commonplace question: what *is* research? Basically, doing research (at least for graduate students in the social sciences) is asking a question about the world – either its current state, how it was before or how it could be in the future – using tools to gather information about the world and analyze this information to answer our question (Nutbrown 2002). There are of course more straightforward ways to do research – think about a chemist who asks a question about how different molecules interact, poses a hypothesis, goes through several rounds of experiments to test the hypothesis and then analyzes the results to confirm or infirm it – but there are a lot of other ways to carry research that are way fuzzier and messier. Our research, being collaborative and taking its root in a tradition of ethnographic field research, is probably situated in the messier end of that spectrum.

Although this is not bad in itself, it did make the research project a little hard to describe and explain to potential research participants and partners. Defining our research questions early on in the process and deciding which methods we wanted to use to answer them contributed to giving a more classic and solid form to our research, which in the end turned out to be good for us as a research team to guide ourselves in the process and help us advertise our project. However, I agree with Shawn Wilson (2008) that we should not concern ourselves too much with squeezing our research endeavor into a dominant academic model or endlessly comparing what we do with it: other ways of doing research that do not follow straight lines are valid and should be appreciated for what they are rather than what they are not. Of course, Wilson talks about Indigenous research;

what we are doing here is not Indigenous research, but rather a community-based, collaborative ethnographic research that develops its very own methodology as it moves forwards, as Alice mentioned before. However, both models share important similarities: they go in circles, they evolve through relationships and ongoing conversations, and they are collaborative and flexible. Another important similarity is that knowledge about the world is not to be “discovered” and “gathered” by an individual researcher, but rather emerges out of the interactions and discussions between collaborators.³

Wilson (2008) prefers to talk about “strategies of inquiry” rather than “methods” since he wants to stay attuned to the people with whom he works and hence retain a high level of flexibility in how he interacts with them. Similarly, we decided as a team that, rather than choosing specific methods and then recruiting participants based on these, we would first honor the relationships that Hayes Farm and NBCHG have with different partners and community members and then adjust our methods to them. We thus selected six groups that we wanted to involve in the research first and discussed which strategies of inquiry would be more appropriate to use with each of them. Hence, the methods we chose first were tentative and likely to change depending on the specific relationships that would develop with those groups through research. Indeed, we adjusted our strategies of inquiries further down the road as we noticed that some turned out to be inappropriate or did not yield the turnout we hoped for. Through discussions, meetings and communications with our potential partners, we ended up discovering and adopting new strategies of inquiry that we all agreed upon and which yielded very promising results. But before I describe the specific

³ Importantly, however, in an Indigenous research paradigm, knowledge already exists “out there” in the cosmos and can only be brought to our consciousness rather than gained (Wilson 2008).

methods we used, let me first describe how we actually collaborate as a research team, as our overarching methodology remains collaboration.

Collaboration as Method

In the same way as “fieldwork” and all that it encapsulates is the core method on which cultural anthropology relies, “collaboration” could be called the central method that we used as a research team. Whereas it is not exactly clear in a collaborative project when the research began and when it will end, one thing that we can say for sure is that setting up the research, as well as designing and redesigning it, represents a bigger portion of our research project than the more typical research stuff that revolves around data collection and that falls under the auspice of university ethics protocol. Our research project encompasses way more than using specific methods to find evidence to answer our research question and then interpreting this evidence. In our case, doing the research together and engaging the community to take part in it is part of the finality of the research, as it gave us as much insights into answering our research question as the information that we tried to elicit through interviews and surveys.

A Short Introduction to Community-Based Research

Before we go further, a little note on terminology is needed to clear the path and understand what we are talking about. There are indeed many trends in, let’s say, socially engaged research, and they all have slightly different approaches, but in my view they all apply to what we are doing with this research project. I decided to stick to the term “community-based research” in this proposal for the sake of simplicity and consistency, and perhaps because it is the approach that describes best what we are doing, but I must admit that I am unashamedly drawing from different approaches in engaged research for inspiration and guidance. Let me start with the term I use most

often to describe the kind of research I'm doing to new interlocutors (that is, my cliché elevator pitch): collaborative research.

Collaborative research can mean a wide variety of practices, but of course the core idea is always collaboration: between academics and lay people, researchers and community organizations, researchers and businesses, between academics from different institutions or departments, etc. Of course, the kind of collaborative research we are interested in here is not happening between different academics or with businesses, but rather between an academic (me) and community organizations (Hayes Farm and NBCHG). In *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, Pushor (2008) describes collaborative research as

“[...] research “with” rather than research “on.” It is research that arises out of the expressed needs, interests, and questions of the stakeholders who are most invested in the research and its findings, and it is research conducted in relationship with them. [...] It reflects a belief that regardless of one's role, all of one's actions in that role are simultaneously acts of theorizing and acts of practice. Collaborative research invites rich dialogue between and among individuals and the multiple perspectives they represent.” (92)

There is a lot to unpack in this definition. The core of it is the idea of working *with* rather than working *on* a certain group of people: it is bottom-up rather than top-down research. The way this kind of research roots itself in the aspirations and inquiries of local actors rather than – or in conjunction with- those of the researcher is exactly how our current research project took form after we first met as a group in March. Pushor's understanding of collaborative research also presupposes an ongoing interaction between theory and practice, not only for the researcher, but for all collaborating research partners. However, the most enticing part of the definition to me is the “rich dialog” between different actors that constitutes the essence of collaborative research. Hence, the strength of collaborative research lies in the fact that it emerges out of an ongoing

conversation that brings many perspectives together. Ideally, the voices of the different actors also shine through the research findings and, in our case, in the ethnography that will come out of it.

A second engaged research approach that has a lot of proponents is participatory action research (hereafter PAR). As its name states quite literally, this type of research is based on participation, action and academic inquiry, but as each of these elements come in a wide palette of versions, the exact meaning and form of PAR varies greatly from one research project to the other (Lawson et al 2015). However, as PAR comes out of a rich academic tradition that harks back to the 1950s, it does have a set of rules to follow (Van de Sande and Schwartz 2017). Oddly enough, while those rules are presented as of paramount importance by every handbook on PAR, they turn out to be quite different from one author to the other. Since it is not my aim here to make any authoritative statement on what collaborative research ought to be, I prefer not to delve into the nitty-gritty disentanglement of commonalities and differences across the various schools of PAR; as I stated a little earlier, I will run the risk of being accused of cherry picking and rather learn quite synthetically from different PAR authors to pursue our reflection on useful and meaningful research.

Finally, another important trend in engaged research that I would like to focus on is community-based research (hereafter CBR). I personally believe that this approach exemplifies best what we are trying to do with our research project, but again I would like to stress that it is unnecessary to lock ourselves up in pure definitions. I think there is a lot to gain in learning from different approaches and then finding what fits our project, personalities, and group dynamics better. Nevertheless, a short introduction to CBR should be offered here as this is the label I chose to use in this paper. Johnson et al (2019) define CBR (in their case, they focus on community-based *qualitative* research, so CBQR) as made up of three distinctive characteristics:

First, CBQR projects are *collaborative* and involve dialogue and discussion among researchers and community partners at various stages of the research process. Researchers conducting CBQR adopt a *critical* stance, utilizing research to challenge status quo narratives about social problems. Finally, CBQR is intended to be *transformative* by employing research findings to make substantive and meaningful changes related to the issue under study; in addition, projects should enact transformations on researchers and participants, by shifting or impacting their perspectives on particular phenomena, as well as expanding their views of specific community and educational contexts.” (164, emphasis in original)

Based on this definition, what sets CBR apart from mere collaborative research is that it does not designate just any kind of collaboration, but rather collaboration especially with community organizations or community members, and that it is unashamedly engaged. Hence, CBR is a critical approach, in an intellectual and an activist way. What I find more interesting in this definition is the emphasis on research as a *transformative* process on many levels: CBR indeed aims at transforming society or the community in which it takes place, but perhaps more importantly it transforms all those who are involved in the research directly. Johnson et al’s (2019) article is also insightful in that it moves from classic individualistic views of reflexivity (the researcher reflecting on her own experience and questioning herself) to a collective and relational approach to it. The authors advance the concept of “dialogic reflexivity” to describe the way critical reflections in collaborative research actually take place through an ongoing conversation between research partners and participants (Johnson et al 2019).

Collaborating in Our Very Own Way

As Alice described above, our collaboration process is very personalized. Of course, it was and still is heavily impacted by the pandemic. While our first introductory meetings were luckily held in person, the following ones were held online until I was able to move to New Brunswick and finished my quarantine in mid-August. The frequency of our virtual meetings and email communications fluctuated a lot during this period, as we were able to meet weekly at best. At

certain moments, as I described above, Alice took the initiative to bring us back together when I was too overwhelmed by the situation to call the next meeting. I am endlessly thankful to her for that, and our research project would not be where it is now without her unflinching diligence all throughout.

Between August and November, we were able to hold most of our meetings in person, but we still hold them virtually from time to time as one of us lives about an hour away from Fredericton. Probably because of proximity that made us come across each other almost everyday on the farm, we started holding our research meetings more regularly, almost on a weekly basis. Our meetings sometimes had agendas, especially when we wanted to be more efficient or discuss a certain topic, but most of the time they were more informal, taking form as the conversation evolved, and were used to update each other, check in, and discuss ideas. Between November and August of the following year, we went back to virtual meetings, and their frequency started to oscillate again.

Very early on in our research process, we decided to work with living, collaborative and editable online documents. The first reason was pragmatic: this was to facilitate working together remotely as we were stuck in different provinces because of the pandemic. The second reason was the strong commitment that we all share in maintaining this research as genuinely collaborative as possible. Some participatory action research (PAR) authors talk about how necessary it is to avoid “pseudo-participation”, by which research participants are only shallowly involved in the research in order to provide an ethical aura to the research (Bergold and Thomas 2012). This was not our case: at every step, we made sure that the decisions were taken together, synchronously or asynchronously, and input from all research partners was a prerequisite before moving forward. The crafting of the research questions, the listing of the research participants, the choice of

methodology, the analysis of our participants' answers and the writing of the research proposal and thesis were open works-in-progress on which we continually collaborated.

Looking at our participants' answers together and writing the thesis together remained a conundrum for me for a while. Technically, a thesis has to be the graduate student's own work, yet to us it was really important that we kept collaborating on the research all throughout. It did not make sense to me to analyze the "results" and interpret them by myself once back in Quebec. We thought this would not honor the process we went through and the commitment to make this research project as collaborative and community-based as possible. The way we found around this problem was that it is still possible to have co-authored work in a thesis, as long as the contribution of each author is clearly identified and can be told apart from the contribution of other authors.

Hence, we decided to collaborate on analysis and interpretation of our research's results in a manner similar to what we had done for this proposal, with the difference that it would be done mostly remotely. After making clear in the ethics submission and the consent forms that all members of the research team, along with the supervisor, would have access to the interview and appreciative inquiry recordings and anonymous survey results, we decided to meet together on a regular basis to share with one another our takeaways from our participants' answers. Individually, we took the time to review the specific pieces (survey results, appreciative inquiry, and two or three interviews at a time) we wanted to work on in the upcoming meeting ahead of time. When we met, we recorded the meeting and I took notes to keep track of who contributed what insights and to have traces of it if needed (quotations for example).

These notes were converted into online living documents to which we could all contribute, always keeping an eye on being able to tell our contributions apart, especially for the writing of the thesis. For the writing of the thesis, to remain sensitive to time and energy constraints on the

side of my research partners, we proceeded similarly to what we have done before: after brainstorming together in our research meetings, I would use the notes from that brainstorm to write the first draft of a given section, and finally we would discuss the draft together again and collaborate on the editing, my partners being encouraged to add their own contribution to the text along the way.

One part of the research project that we decided not to do together was conducting and transcribing the interviews. As for writing first drafts, managing the ethics process and conducting the literature review, we thought as a team that the fairest thing to do was for me to dedicate time and energy to the “data collection” phase of the project since, again, I had more time to do it and I still had a scholarship to help support me financially during the research. One exception to that was the appreciative inquiry, for which we thought that it was better to have a member of Hayes Farm’s team co-hosting the discussion to help participants feel more comfortable and relate more easily to the research project. Having the interview transcripts in hand, it became easier for us to collaborate on thinking through our participants’ answers and to use our meeting time more efficiently.

Although this process is not perfect, it is as close as we can get to co-writing and co-authorship in the conditions I have as a Master’s student. I strongly believe that anthropology has to move definitely from writing *on* or *for* people to actually writing *with* them. Of course, the “with” in this phrase is totally fraught with power imbalances, uneven privileges and differences in social, economic and academic capital that prevent any collaboration to be totally equally distributed amongst team members. Hence, it is important to think beyond straight equality and rather think about fairness and equity, as every member of the research team faces different

challenges and constraints yet all have their own strengths and talents to bring to the project. At this point, we came full circle back to the notion of care that remains central to our research.

The Need for Pedagogy and Accessible Language in (Collaborative) Research

In order to collaborate effectively, however, a good amount of pedagogy and explanation had to go into the research process, especially when it came to very technical stuff like theory or specific methods. One of the important power imbalances in our team is the differences in our professional backgrounds and the amount of academic and intellectual capital we have access to (Demeter 2019). At the start of the project, most of my research partners had an aversion for academia and had decided at some point in their lives that they would not engage in academic training, a point that Alice mentioned before. The overall mindset sounded like “I don’t have any idea what academia is about”, “I am not versed in academic jargon”, “I don’t know what is research and how it works” and “you are the expert, we don’t know anything about this”. To me, this sounded like an interesting challenge to take up, as I was well aware that we should equip ourselves as a team with the tools to really engage in research before we could effectively collaborate on it.

Making research, theory, and writing accessible appeared to me to be the first step in that direction. Many times, I tried my best to explain what social research is (or what it could be) and we often grappled with this ever-present question as a team. Although it might not yet seem clear to the reader what we are doing exactly with our research, at least we know what we are doing and where we are going as research partners, which is an enormous improvement in my opinion. Similarly, when we started discussing the methodology, it became clear early on that the methods I was talking about did not ring a bell to my research partners. Again, we resorted to an online collaborative document that listed and explained the different methods that could be used in our research (the first version of this was actually an email that we converted to a Google Doc for ease

of use and collaboration). Finally, when choosing which literature and theories would go into the research proposal, I first presented them to the research team and explained what they were about to enable my partners to participate in the discussion and the elaboration of the proposal as much as possible.

A lot of the concepts and theories we ended up using were totally new to my research partners, but they were nonetheless very enthusiastic about discussing those ideas and they turned out to be very apt at engaging with them. Perhaps they even surprised themselves, taking part in academic and theoretical discussions had an aversion to at the beginning of the project. However, as Alice makes clear here, not being versed in academic rhetoric does not prevent someone from engaging in and contributing to critical intellectual discussions.

Words and Ideas

Maybe it's a matter of a word or label clouding what a thing is or could be, simply because those who are discussing the matter are unfamiliar with the word, but are conversely very aware of or in-tune with the idea. If we claim to know nothing about academia (which we certainly did do) that doesn't mean we know nothing about what is discussed in academic circles, perhaps it's the framework that is so foreign to us... ?!

Alice

My personal commitment to writing in a manner that is as accessible as possible is also part of this effort to foster genuine collaboration and to equip research partners with the tools to effectively engage in collaborative research *as researchers*. In a sense, the whole format of this thesis (narrative, collaborative, personal, and accessible) is an enactment of this commitment to genuine collaboration. As I said earlier, it takes inspiration in the very elegant yet very humble style of Shawn Wilson's *Research is Ceremony* (2008), but it also resembles closely what Alan

Bishop, a Maori scholar, calls “narrative inquiry” when he describes the role storytelling can play in research (especially Indigenous research). He writes:

“Like the Maori proverb ‘to see the future, we look to the past’, the text of a story looks two ways. The text looks backwards into the events that led to the telling of the story within the cultural world-view of the story teller. The text looks forward to the social and cultural contexts of the reader. This consideration of the reader is fundamental to story telling. It addresses the oft-quoted concern for ‘readerly’ accessible text, for less elite language.” (Bishop 1995: 79)

I feel that this is exactly what this thesis is doing - or at least trying to do. By situating the current research project in its context and telling the different events and conjunctures that led to it, both from my perspective and from that of my research partners, it “looks backward” into our dispositions and worldviews as research partners. But by remaining dialogical and accessible, the proposal also “looks forward” to its readers and stays attuned to their capacities and interests. Most advances and successes in our research project are attributable to the ongoing discussions we had at every stage, and so making sure that we were on the same page and that we understood each other was the baseline throughout. This does not mean that we could disagree at some point, as indeed we did, but it means that we had to work through our misunderstandings and disagreements to be able to move forward together.

Caring for Each Other and Strengthening Our Relationships

I would like to add that our research meetings did not only serve organization, pedagogy, and research functions. One of the most important aspects of our research meetings was all the social and moral support that it provided us – and probably me more especially. Research meetings were and are still precious to me in order to break isolation and talk about the issues and difficult choices I faced as the pandemic unfolds and tripped me up every single week with regulation changes and uncertainty. I did not take any decision regarding this research and the program to

which it is tied without first talking with my research partners, first because I find doing otherwise would not be fair to them and would break the amazing collaboration process we are engaged in, but second because in fact without their advice I honestly believe that I would have been unable to take any decision whatsoever in certain moments.

This research project has been on the brink of termination more than once: when Covid hit at the beginning of the project, the summer before I moved to New Brunswick and I did not achieve to write any research proposal whatsoever, waiting for the ethics approval when I was back in Quebec, putting the research on hold when my family was in crisis during the winter. Every time, I felt that I could not simply abandon this research project because I owed it to my research partners to continue what we started together and to honor the energy we all had put into the project. Each time, though, my research partners reiterated that whatever decision I would take should be the best for me and that my wellbeing should have precedence over the research itself. Towards the end of the research, Helen even advised me to take more time to play the piano than to work on the research project in order to keep a good mental state.

We kept building our relationships with one another throughout our research project. We took time at the beginning of all our meetings to take each other's news even as this would take up a good portion of our meeting time. When one of us needed more time or was not able to attend a meeting, we rearranged our meeting schedule to accommodate that person and offered help as much as we needed. Every time we arrived at a crossroad, we took the time to consider what was binding us to this research project and what benefit we got out of it, but we were also opening our arms to let go of the project if it became stifling or constraining for one of us. That way, I think, we actually were assessing the connections that bound us to one another, testing how strong they were and realizing that, no matter whether the project continued or not, care for one another was

more important than research. Depending on the situation, care and relationship accountability could mean holding on tight to our mutual commitments, or letting go of them.

“But What Do You Actually *Do* in Your Research?”: Classic Methods

Based on the six groups of people that we decided to focus on as our main research participants in our living document “Hayes Farm’s relationships and connections”, we chose to work with three specific “classical” methods, namely semi-structured interviews, focus groups and surveys. A method that we discussed but that was not included in the proposal here was photovoice, a cousin of focus groups that takes photography as a point of departure for talking and sharing about a certain topic. Although we thought it could be included to our methods along the way if time and organizational constraints permitted it, we did not do any photovoice in our research. Rather, we included a completely different method along the road to honor the relationships Hayes Farm had with their programming partners to which I will return below. As I mentioned above, the choice of methods was based on the interaction and the connection we wanted to have with our different participants.

Interviews

For complex institutions with which Hayes Farm partners up, like the Fredericton Public Library and the provincial government Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, as well as for key individuals in the community that might not be readily related between them, like the landowner and the guest speakers from the Regenerative Farming Internship program (RFI) offered at Hayes Farm, we decided to go for individual interviews. We thus

prepared an interview guide⁴ with open-ended questions about the topics we would like to cover in the interview, but we let the interlocutor develop freely on each topic. Interviews are favored in social sciences and in ethnography more especially for gaining important insights into the problem or situation at hand from key actors in a given community or organization. Interviews are especially well-suited for exchanging with experts, important stakeholders or representatives from organizations. Because of the pandemic situation, we did not have the opportunity to hold in-person interviews, even if in some cases it would have been more appropriate. We thus offered our participants to take part in phone or online interviews.

In February, Hayes Farm originally sent slightly over a dozen individual invitations for participating in an interview for this research through the farm's main email. A recruitment poster was also displayed at the farm and at some partners' organizations, but it probably did not have much impact as there was not much human presence on the farm around that time of the year, and more especially with the pandemic. All the survey respondents were also invited to take part in an in-depth interview if they wished to share their thoughts in a more detailed manner. Over the months that followed, and after a reminder email that was sent in April, we received eight answers from people who were interested in doing an interview. Unfortunately, one interview never concretized due to a lot of rescheduling and misunderstanding. In total, I was able to conduct seven in-depth interviews with key partners in the community, namely one of the CSA-basket customers, the director of the Fredericton Public Library, Hayes Farm's landowner, one of the guest lecturers, the community inclusion network coordinator at Greater Fredericton Social Innovation and Hayes Farm's farm mentorship coordinator.

⁴ See Appendix 1

Although this was not the turnout we wished for, those interviews still gave us valuable insights into food sovereignty, the community farm model and the nature and meaning of the relationships these people had to the farm. After an introductory question, we had three questions on their relationship with Hayes Farm: how our participants described their relationship to the farm, what drew them to engage with it, and whether their experience with the farm had led them to change their attitude and the environment. We then had three imaginative questions to get them to define what a community farm should be: we asked them what images they saw when they thought of a farm, then what they imagined as community, and finally how they would define a community farm by bringing the two concepts together. We then asked them to explain what purposes they thought a community farm should serve. Finally, we had three questions on food sovereignty: we asked our interlocutors to define what food sovereignty meant for them, how they imagined food sovereignty should look like in their region and what they thought should be done to get towards that ideal.

In addition to the initial interviews, we decided to have three life history interviews with core members of the farm: Alice, Helen and Dan, the farm manager. Nicole did not take part in one of these, but she had family issues cropping up at the same time, so I did not think it was appropriate to follow up on that at the time. These life history interviews were more informal and had the main purpose to know more about each other, to discuss about our goals and aspirations beyond the research project. I also provided me with more context about where the members of Hayes Farm came from and how the farm project took form in the first place.

Focus Groups

For groups that have a strong cohort spirit comprising many individuals involved directly with the farm, like the RFI graduates, we decided to use focus groups. Basically, focus groups are

simply group interviews. Like the latter, we prepared again a set of open-ended questions that we wanted to ask to the whole group, and we would then allow the discussion to flow from there according to group dynamics. The strength and advantage of focus groups is that researchers get to interview many individuals at once and hence gather information from a more diverse and important sample. Another interesting aspect of focus groups is that it can create a collective intellectual effervescence, the ideas shared by one person helping to trigger ideas in others, and so forth.

More especially in times of pandemic, focus groups can help put like-minded people in contact, break social isolation, and create a certain sense of belonging. In that sense, we were considering offering online focus groups (either synchronous or asynchronous) to the individuals who contributed to Hayes Farm's crowdfunding campaign, as this is a loose group of individuals from a great variety of locations and socioeconomic backgrounds who nonetheless all have an interest in the community farm. We believe that bringing these people together would be very insightful for us as researchers, but could also be beneficial to the participants in that it could create connections and some sense of community around it.

Hayes Farm sent an email invitation to its graduates from the RFI program in February to take part in an online interview, using the main farm email again. Survey participants were also offered to participate in a focus group after they had completed the survey if they wished to. However, we had absolutely no answers from those invitations. We decided to convert the focus group into a survey and resent an invitation to the RFI graduates and collected only one answer. This virtual absence of response kept us puzzled. In our attempts to figure out why we ended up not having any answers from the farm's graduates, we articulated some hypotheses that we could only speculate on and not really test. We thought first that, perhaps, the cohort spirit on which we

counted for lively interaction dispersed after the students continued their own path after attending completing the RFI program. While that could be an explanation, we also thought that there might be a break in email communications if the corresponding emails that the farm were no longer used by former interns. The interns could also generally be in really shifting and busy periods of their lives and not pay much attention to an insignificant email about a research project.

Finally, having had the chance to discuss informally with some of last year's RFI interns, I learnt that the research poster seemed a little dizzying and thus could have deterred the RFI graduates from participating in the study. I was also asked questions about the "traumatic events" that my research was focusing on. When I said that our research was on nothing of the like, I realize the intern was talking about the section on risks and benefits in the consent form that was attached to the electronic survey. Although this section is usually read and passed over quickly by most research participants, perhaps some interns could have brought a bigger focus on that section because of some challenges the farm crew experienced last summer. These same challenges could indeed weaken social ties, trust and group spirit in last year's cohort, which might all be elements to take into serious consideration before taking part in a focus group. In the end, we did not insist further on connecting with the RFI graduate, either through focus groups or through surveys, thinking that it would rather be more appropriate to try other ways of reconnecting in the future outside of the realm of our current research.

Surveys

Finally, the last method we initially thought of using was surveys. We opt for surveys in social research when we want to have input from a bigger number of people, like customers, service users, members of an organization, etc. In our case, we planned to use surveys with the farm's CSA customers (i.e., the individuals who buy community-supported-agriculture shares at

the beginning of the season and receive a basket of produce each week) and the Open Farm Day participants. Though encouraged to engage in a variety of farm activities, we thought that these people would have more of an arm's length association with the farm and see Hayes as a service provider or vendor as opposed to part of their community or social circle. Since surveys allow researchers to reach a bigger number of participants, it is possible to include questions on demographics (age, gender, area of residence, etc.), if and when this is relevant. We thought this could help identify group dynamics and which groups are more interested in certain programs, and thus surveys could be very helpful to the farm as they would make it easier to tailor programming and production to their community. On the participants' end of the research, surveys can be interesting because they take less of people's time, people are free to elaborate or not. Moreover, as most surveys are anonymous, people can really write what they think without being identified easily.

We initially designed two surveys, one for the CSA customers, and one for the contributors of Hayes Farm's crowdfunding campaign⁵. We collected 17 answers in total, seven from CSA customers and ten from crowdfund contributors. The questions were quite similar in both surveys, with only minor adjustments in questions wording, order or selection. Both surveys asked why the participants decided to engage with and support Hayes Farm in the first place, sought their opinion on the pay-what-you-can formula that the farm adopted for its veggie box program, wondered whether their interaction with the farm led them to change their attitude and their behavior towards food and the environment and inquired about what activities and services a community farm should offer, and which one they would participate in. In terms of demographics, the crowdfund contributors' survey focused on where people lived (as we assumed they would not all be from

⁵ See Appendices 2 and 3

Fredericton), whereas the CSA customer survey focused on how many people would be fed with the vegetable baskets and what percentage of the family's food budget the CSA shares would represent. Both surveys asked about the respondents' access to healthy and local food year-round and through the pandemic, as well as how they had heard about the farm in the first place and how they would like to hear about community initiatives. Obviously, the last questions were designed to help the farm in its strategic planning, advertisement and grant-writing.

Before moving on to the next section, I should say a word about potential Indigenous participants in this research and what this entails for ethics, methodology, and theory. We attempted, early on in the research project, to reach out to potential Indigenous partners in this research, but our offers were declined on many occasions, as was told earlier in the thesis. One of the concerns that were raised about potentially participating in our research project was that the specific methods that we were discussing at the moment were not adapted to Indigenous people, let alone being Indigenous methods in themselves. This goes back to Shawn Wilson's (2008) whole argument about the importance of implementing an Indigenous research paradigm when conducting research by and for Indigenous people.

The Need for Indigenous Methodology

One of the groups that we thought of including in our research participants, Under One Sky (Fredericton's off-reserve friendship center), had retreated from our research project exactly for those methodological reasons and did not jump back in the project until January. It was not our intent to force them to join or to keep asking them to do so. However, important settler-Indigenous relationship, allyship, representation, and Indigenous sovereignty discussions were taking place in and around Hayes Farm at that very moment, some of them having been spurred by the early

developments of this research project. As such, we understand our research project as taking place amidst those discussions, being influenced by them and contributing to them at the same time.

We still hoped however that we could put together some sort of focus group with Hayes Farm's most important programming and CSA-shares partners, namely the Multicultural Association of Fredericton, the Riverstone Recovery Center, Youth in Transition and Under One Sky. For us, this meant that I had to take Jennifer and Anna's advice to do my homework about Indigenous methodology very seriously and to come up with concrete propositions to discuss with Jennifer. I had several books on Indigenous methodology sitting on my desk since July, but I kept postponing tackling that question and opening the books. We really wanted this focus group to happen as it meant so much for Hayes Farm, so I finally put some time apart to look for propositions of Indigenous methods we could use.

I also agreed with Shaw Wilson (2008) and many Indigenous scholars (see, for example, Battiste 2000, Carjuzaa and Fenimore-Smith 2010, Nichols 2009, Simonds and Christopher 2013) who argue that the first step in doing research with Indigenous communities is to use Indigenous methods, or at least culturally appropriate methods. Eventually, adapting a research project's methodology or "choosing" appropriate methods is but a band-aid solution: research with Indigenous communities should be done by Indigenous scholars, or at least in genuine collaboration with an Indigenous community, and thus guarantee total access, control and ownership of the research process, data and outcomes. It should also be based on an Indigenous epistemology (the nature and construction of knowledge) and worldview. As we had not been able to build the research project *with* Indigenous partners from the get-go, we had no claim that we are doing any kind of Indigenous research per say, but we still thought that we could do our best to do what we could to engage respectfully and appropriately with the farm's Indigenous partners who

would take part in the research. Adapting our methodology was not a perfect solution, but it should be understood as part and parcel of honoring and strengthening our relationships through and beyond our research.

After going around several Indigenous and non-Indigenous methods that might be more appropriate for Indigenous participants, we wrote an email to Jennifer in which we proposed two techniques that sounded promising: appreciative inquiry and focused conversation. Both were recommended and explained by the *Walking Together: First Nations, Métis and Inuit Perspectives in Curriculum* sponsored by the Ministry of Education of Alberta. *Talking Together: A Discussion Guide for Walking Together* is an online resource for teachers that provide hand-outs to facilitate discussions and activities with Indigenous participants respectfully and appropriately, both young and old, and that was my first contact with appreciative inquiry, which we rapidly adopted as a research team. It turned out to be really appreciated by all the programming partners as well.

Appreciative Inquiry

It should be noted from the get-go that appreciative inquiry was not an Indigenous method to start with. However, it is used for research in some Indigenous organizations because it is well adapted to Indigenous ways to do research, hold conversations and plan for change, as it focuses on existing relationships and gives a central place to envisioning (see, for example, Battiste 2000). Appreciative inquiry was developed in the 1980s by David Cooperrider, Robert Fry and Suresh Srivatsa as a new action-research method for organizational studies (Grieten, Lambrechts, Bouwen, Hyubrechts, Fry and Cooperrider 2018). Originally based in behavioral studies focusing on the effects of positive thinking, appreciative inquiry was meant to reverse the tide in organizational research and decision-making, where the main emphasis was on identifying and solving problems (Mishra and Bhatnagar 2012). Instead, by voluntarily focusing on the most

positive aspects of cooperation and efficiency in organizations and by reaffirming relationships and empowering people, this new research approach was meant to make the best out of an organization's current practices and open up possibilities for future action and improvement (Bushe 2010).

Since its inception, appreciative inquiry has been reused in a huge diversity of action research and split into many different versions, but the overall structure and goal remained the same: to build on what works well, to envision how we would like the future to be, to imagine means to make this vision come to life and to actually take concrete action to implement this vision (Mishra and Bhatnagar 2012). The specific model of appreciative inquiry that we decided to use, based on the factsheet and handout provided by Talking Together, was the 4D model: discover, dream, design, deliver. The first step in our conversation was thus to discover what Hayes Farm and the programming partners already do well in their collaborations, activities and relationships. The second step was to dream about what we envisioned as our ideal community and the food sovereign future we would like to live in. The third step, and the last one we were able to complete so far, was to design possible actions to make that vision possible. The fourth step, that still has to be implemented, is to deliver, to turn words into action and to bring about the change that we envisioned. Unfortunately, or fortunately, we did not have the time during our appreciative inquiry meeting to talk much about the last phase, "deliver", but perhaps it is better that way. We agreed that we would continue our conversations in the future and that the deliver phase would be a result of our nurtured collaborations and continued actions.

Although we wondered as a research team whether the format of the appreciative inquiry yielded results that were too biased, leading participants to overrate the "positiveness" of their collaboration with Hayes Farm and stifling whatever constructive criticism they might have. This

concern can also be found in the literature (see, for example, Grant and Humphries 2006). While we do have to take this inherent bias into consideration, we believe that the benefits from using this method out exceeded its potential drawbacks. It should also be noted that, even when we opened up the floor for constructive criticism, room for improvement or “things to work on”, the virtual room remained silent. Moreover, all the programming partners who attended the appreciative inquiry were genuinely happy to take be there and to take part in the discussion. In fact, as will be shown in the next section, for some participants, the very conversation that the appreciative inquiry made possible was the most significant and important part of the research.

Moreover, keeping in mind that our research is community-based and thus puts as much emphasis on process as on outcomes, the very quality of the appreciative inquiry to bring partners together and to strengthen the relationships between them was in the end what counted the most. It allowed an assessment of what worked well in previous and ongoing collaborations, a sharing of touching and eye-opening stories, a discovery of effects and relationships that the farm had beyond the walls of their partner institutions and a mutual gratitude about what was made possible by working together. The appreciative inquiry also created a context where articulating a shared vision of an ideal (food) future was encouraged. The very fact of nurturing this vision and finding ways to move towards it together in turn strengthens the ties that bind a community together.

If this was the only thing that the appreciative inquiry could contribute to our research project, we would already be extremely happy with it. However, it also helped us in answering our two research questions by sharing with us extremely valuable insights on food sovereignty and on the nature of relationships. Moreover, the information, knowledge and stories shared during the appreciative inquiry will also prove to be useful to Hayes Farm directly in its programming, its mission and its approach.

WHAT WE LEARNED THROUGH THIS RESEARCH

In my Master's program, I had one final class to take in the winter of 2020 after completing my "fieldwork" that was supposed to have taken place over the summer and the fall semesters. This class was really helpful in many ways, but the cohort spirit it revived, despite the fact that we were not physically together, was definitely the best part of it. However, the writing samples I submitted for peer review and the opinions I shared in class caused a good amount of tension between the instructor and me. I was advocating for engaged, collaborative and (striving for) decolonized research, whereas they were all about "traditional" anthropological field research in which the researcher goes to live for an extended period of time in a community both physically and culturally remote from their own.

Along with that ideal of anthropological research came a palpable nostalgia and advocacy of in-person and (exotically) remote fieldwork that none of the students in my cohort had been able to pursue due to the pandemic. This was quite an uncomfortable friction considering that most of us were still "grieving the death" of our initial and idealized research projects (in the words of one of my colleagues) and trying to put the surviving pieces of it together to make the best out of what was left. Online research was what we were compelled to do due to the pandemic, and reminding us that this was not the most valuable and desirable kind of anthropological research did nothing to help us cope with the situation.

During one of our heated debates about engaged and non-traditional research, the instructor took the arguments in my writing sample quite personally adopted a fierce defensive posture. According to them, I was actively trying to devalue the more "traditional" type of anthropological research that they and a lot of their colleagues were doing. While this was not my intention, and I had stated it from the get-go both verbally and in writing, I took the blame and

agreed that I could review the language I was using and focus more on what collaborative research can offer rather than why it is needed or why it could help solve problems associated with traditional anthropological research. As a final argument, they threw: “Well, I am really curious to see what great results your research will yield, now that you have told us so many times that it was such a great research process and that it was such an incredible way to do research!”

At this point, I had no intelligent answer to propose to that colossal challenge, as I was in the middle of conducting online interviews and surveys, but it got me wondering. How could I pretend that my research would yield better results than others? Was it the point of collaborative research at all? Who should judge those results, and on what terms? Is the worth of collaborative research in the academic “quality” of the knowledge it produces, or rather in the ‘usefulness’ of that knowledge, or even in the very process of producing that knowledge? Were the results more important than the way to get them, or was the process more important than what it yields as an end product?

I open this section with this anecdote because it offers a good point of departure to appreciate “what we learned through this research” and what it represents in consideration of all the work done to get through it. As I said before, making sure that I was not wasting my time nor my research partners’ one has been a main concern for me all throughout this research. So, in the end, what did we learn that we did not already know? What did we uncover that wasn’t already sitting under our nose? Did we just achieve to confirm our assumptions, or did we gain any kind of wisdom, ideas for action or hands-on experience to infuse in our upcoming endeavors?

Looking together at our research participants’ inputs, we were able to uncover many great elements of answer to both of our research questions, enough at least to feed our individual and collective reflections on our practices. I thus propose to look at what came out of our research

under three main themes. First, to the question “How can the community farm model effectively work towards greater food sovereignty in New Brunswick during and after a pandemic?”, we found many valuable insights into what Hayes Farm, as a community farm, could do to nurture food sovereignty in the region and, moreover, insights that will be directly useful for the farm’s strategic planning and ongoing projects. We were thus able to come up with a picture of how the people engaged with Hayes Farm conceived of a community and what, according to them, a community farm should be.

Second, we were also able to come up with a clearer picture of what food sovereignty means for the community around Hayes Farm, or rather with a shared vision of where we want to head to. By doing that, our research participants also helped us recognize what Hayes Farm already does well in fostering food sovereignty as well as important challenges, points to improve and plans for future action.

Third, and perhaps more importantly, to the question “What can our research project, as a collaborative process, teach us about the nature of relationships and the dynamics of relationship building?”, we achieved to uncover some of the elements that allow the farm team to create, maintain and nourish deep and meaningful relationships with people both within the farm and outside the farm. Moreover, the collaborative process of our research project allowed us to discover successful tools and approaches to reuse in the future as well as to shed light on some issues that we (the farm crew, the research team and myself) have to address in order to live up to our ideals.

Lessons on the Community Farm Model

Before looking at what food sovereignty means for the community around Hayes Farm, and what the community farm model can do to foster it, our first step was to ask ourselves and our interlocutors what “community” and “community farm” meant for them.

The “Community” in Community Farm

As we stated early on in this research project, one of our goals was to better theorize what the community farm model is and what it should be in order to best accomplish its mission. To have the richest input from our research participants on this question, we decided to ask them imaginative questions and to bring concepts together so that they could come up with their own definition of what a community farm is. The first two questions asked them “what comes to your mind when you think of a farm?” and “what comes to your mind when you think of a community?”. Then, once they had described both concepts, we asked our participants to merge the concepts together and to describe what a “community farm” is. As expected, we were given a very rich and diverse set of answers to those three questions that can help us better understand what a community farm represents in Fredericton.

One thing that we did learn about the community farm model throughout this research, or at least what it should be according to our interlocutors, is that at the root of a community farm there is, well, community. This throws us back to the hard-to-tackle question of what exactly this concept of “community” means. However, rather than going back to the academic discussion of what “community” is and the theoretical problems that using such a wide-signifying concept brings, we want to look at how our interlocutors defined, or rather envisioned, as community. Fortunately enough, we had the foresight to ask our interlocutors and survey participants this exact question (see above). There were significant crossovers in the responses we got, yet our participants’ answers were diverse enough for us to highlight a handful of different themes.

In the online surveys, for the sake of concision, we asked our participants to choose one word to describe how they imagined community. The most common answers were “connections” (three responses), “love”, “cooperation” and “belonging” (two responses each). This seems to point out

the importance of interconnectedness in the participants' conception of community, before location. In that sense, the community around Hayes Farm would be what Bradshaw (2008) calls a "post-place community" that relies more on people's connections, common ideals and sense of belonging than on the location bounding those people together.

However, it would be hard in our case to ignore the fact that what ties those people together is the relationships and the interconnectedness they have *through* Hayes Farm, a very grounded, physical place. Moreover, place did play a central role in Robert's and Nathan's definition of what a community is. In that sense, perhaps the insights from Jean-Christophe, talking about peasantry and life on the farm, might be helpful to tackle this importance yet transcendence of the physicality of the farm:

Je dis toujours que la paysannerie, c'est plus un mode de vie, c'est pas vraiment un travail. La saisonnalité, la relation avec les animaux, la relation avec la Terre-Mère, la relation avec la communauté, la relation avec les animaux non-humains, avec les humains aussi, là, alentour de nous autres, c'est totalement différent, là. On se retrouve à travers un mode de vie pis non pas d'un travail. Y'a pas de coupure en fait, là. *La ferme nous transcende, pis nous on transcende la ferme aussi.* La ferme devient un genre de microcosme en fait, c'est une, ça fait partie de notre nature à nous, là, notre nature en tant qu'entité. (interview with Jean-Christophe 2021: 36 :22, emphasis mine)⁶

So, even for a farmer who lives on the land and off the land and who is profoundly grounded in the farm, relationships and connections, with other humans but also with non-humans, are still at the center of what community means, as indeed they *transcend* the farm and the place itself. This leads us to think that one of the main roles of a community farm is to be a *connector* between people and a catalyst for community engagement, a point to which I will return below.

⁶ "I always say that peasantry is more a way of life than a job per say. The seasonality, the relation we have with animals, with Mother Earth, with the community, with non-human animals and with humans alike around us, this relation is totally different. It really is a way of life rather than a job, there is no divide between work and life. *The farm transcends us, and we transcend the farm.* In fact, the farm becomes a microcosm and it becomes part of our nature, of who we are as an entity." (free translation, emphasis mine)

Connections were also at the center of how Emily described community:

I think lots of connections, so kind of connections between people and places and skills and like resources. So not requiring every person in the community to like, have all the tools or have all the time or have all the resources, but *having enough of a web of connection, that kind of, those resources can be shared*. I think my more romantic notion is like, the acceptance of like, difference and understanding that like, different people contribute in different ways and have different capacity. (Interview with Emily 2021: 19:40, emphasis mine)

Thus, a community involves creating this “web of connection” that binds people – and knowledge, and places, and resources - together so that everyone involved could contribute and benefit from being part of this collective. Likewise, in addition to connectedness, cooperation and care were two themes that stood out from our interviews and appreciative inquiry. When asked to describe how they imagined community, our interlocutors articulated the importance of caring for each other and for offering mutual assistance to each other:

I think community, partly to be, you know, *folks looking out for each other*, you know, looking out for their kind of individual self or family, but also *broadening that web of concern to kind of connect with different things they care about*, or, you know, have interest in. So, yeah, kind of moving beyond your individual, home and work life and trying to build connections with other parts of the community.” (Interview with Emily 2021: 20:50, emphasis mine)

I think the ideal community is changing our relationship or changing our relationship with food, changing our relationship with how we access our food, how we choose to nourish our bodies, *like strengthening our spirituality, our relationship with Mother Earth, our relationship with each other, right, with our communities and the people that we're serving and really changing those, those things for the better, but also like nurturing them* (Jennifer, in the appreciative inquiry: 58:31, emphasis mine)

Community, I think, you know, as an image, I think of sort of *hands holding hands*. That's the image that I think of. (Interview with Isabella: 19:50)

As we can see in those three responses, in a community, connections not only exist for the sake of existing; they have to be nurtured and enacted through care, mutual assistance and concern

and consideration.⁷ It is also this enactment that makes relationships visible and meaningful. As Jennifer pointed out, food can also be a very vivid way to enact and materialize the bonds between people that create a community. Similarly, Emma, program coordinator at Youth in Transition, underlined the power of food in materializing the feeling of community:

We run a fundraiser and typically as part of the in-person event, there's a meal afterwards. So everyone comes back and it's, you know, the participants don't necessarily have to come back, but if they'd like to and it's the highlight for most people. So it's, a big event is a walk in winter time, but at the end, you can come back and get a bowl of soup when you sit there and chat with the other people around the table. And, and it's just that, that sense of community is so amazing. (Emma, in the appreciative inquiry: 55:52)

In Emma's example, what concretized the "sense of community" amongst the event participants was actually the meal that was shared together after the event. Sharing a meal allows people to sit down and connect to each other, but also to incorporate and absorb, in a very visceral sense, the connections they create with others through that food (I decide not to dive into this topic, but there is a rich anthropological and sociological literature on food, emotions and commensality. See, for example, Fischler 2011, Smith and Harvey 2021, Fahlander 2010, Lutpon 1994, or Abarca 2021).

Interestingly though, Smith and Harvey (2021) put forward that food can be used not only to show connection, but also perform care, a point that was highlighted by Nancy:

I think it's because it's in our DNA [to share food]. Okay, if I want to show you that I care about you, I'm going to offer you a cup of tea, I'm going to put a dessert on the table, I'm going to offer a meal. I want to show I care, I offer to feed someone. And so that's why I say like all of these other grander actions, it's just at the core, is "I want to show people I care. And I do care. And I want to help. Do you want a cup of tea?" It's in our DNA. Yeah, and it's something I can do. I can't put a roof over your head. But I

⁷ As much as "care" is a word that could hardly be translated in French but that is so useful and meaningful in English, "entraide" (quite literally, "mutual-help") is a very useful French word that doesn't really have an English translation but that could prove very helpful here to describe the ethos of sharing and helping out each other that our interlocutors conjured up. In our interview, which was held in French, Jean-Christophe used the word "entraide" quite a lot to describe the spirit of community, solidarity and mutual assistance between co-workers on the farm.

can make sure that I can feed your belly. Yeah. And you know, the good feeling that comes from a cup of tea and a blueberry pie. (Interview with Nancy: 26:36)

I will not comment on the DNA part of this statement, at least in its literal form, as it is not my expertise. However, what Nancy tells us here, and what is well documented in social food studies, is that sharing and giving food is a very conspicuous way to show care, one that is easily understood across cultures, locations, and times. In that sense, food is an excellent material expression for something as intangible as relationships, or connections, especially for people involved in some way or another, with a community farm.

What is a Community Farm?

Now that we better understand what “community” means to the very community that built itself around Hayes Farm, we are better equipped to understand what a community farm represents to the people around it and what it should ideally be. What purposes did our interlocutors imagine for a community farm? Answers were varied but focused around serving the community in which it the farm is located. Interestingly enough, the idea that a community farm is first a *space* for connecting, for sharing, for learning and for healing came back a lot. This stands in contrast to most definitions of community we had, where community was immaterial and bounded by affinity more than space. In that sense, perhaps, in a way similar to food, a community farm could be a way to materialize and anchor the relationships that make up a community. A community farm, then, would be a *hub* for creating and fostering relationships, but also for learning, for healing and for (re)connecting people to each other, to the land and to their food. Emily expressed this idea of a hub brilliantly:

I think *a space for connections*, so kind of a space where... I think people come to a farm for lots of different reasons. And I think having a space where, you know, those kinds of different reasons, or skills or needs, might be able to connect, and kind of having informal and formal spaces, *both like mental spaces and physical spaces, to*

kind of make connections between people who might have come to the farm, and the farm kind of would become like a hub for that. I would definitely think like a place for skills and like resource sharing. [...] But you know, even a place, and I think Hayes has kind of struggled with this a bit, but as a space for healing. So kind of, like, you know, I think that some folks have come to, to work, but also to kind of heal in a completely different environment than like, busy kind of urban spaces that we're often used to. I think a community farm should be ideally, like accessible. (Interview with Emily: 21:50, emphasis mine)

I will come back later to the challenge that Emily was evoking, as it is apparently one of the vital functions of a community farm to act as a place for healing, whereas neither the farm's mission nor the farm staff's training and background were oriented that way. However, what I would like to put into focus here is the role of hub that a community farm can serve. Nancy, like Emily, also conceived of a community farm as a space for connection, and she exemplified it with a wonderful story:

*I can tell you another story that tells the point, and that is that *community garden space is a great equalizer. Because right off the bat, people dress down. So it doesn't matter what your economic background is, you're going to wear your, your worst pair of jeans and your scrubbiest T-shirt. And you're going to get dirty. And in that environment, unlikely friendships will form.**

So in that very first community garden that [Ellen] and I were involved in, we had a guy who used to be a pharmaceutical salesman. So you can imagine the kind of, you know, world that he operated in. And we had a guy that had been referred to us from the John Howard Society. Because we wanted to create a space where we invited, actively invited people that could benefit from the opportunity of gardening. So these two struck up that unlikely friendship. And over, [Dave], the guy from John Howard didn't really know a lot about gardening. And so the other guy, [Philip], decided to mentor him. And [Dave] had the worst luck and he put too much compost on than needed to kill all those plants. But, you know, it's through that conversation, they got into other things.

And then [Philip] got [Dave] to come out and help him at his cottage, doing some heavy lifting, which is the things that [Dave] could excel at, because he was a big guy. And then that led to talking about recipes and cooking and so on. [Philip] started teaching [Dave] how to cook. Roll forward about three years and [Dave] lost weight, got married, found a job and relocated to Nova Scotia with his new wife. You know, and so you think of where he started with the John Howard society, and how this unlikely friendship resulted in this beautiful mentoring opportunity. *That's the power of relationship that can happen in the garden space.* (Interview with Nancy: 33:19)

More than being just a space that fosters connections, a community farm, like other communal garden spaces, also levels out the playing field in some ways (or at least it strives to do so) by increasing accessibility and removing some social markers. That is not to say that a community farm exists outside inequalities, privileges and obstacles to accessibility; that would be a blatant denial. However, it does create, as Jean-Cristophe said, a microcosm of its own, where relationships can be created on different terms than in everyday society.

Similarly, for Robert, who is an architect by training and who is actively engaged in urban planning discussions, a community farm project should not be seen as different as a community playground project: it should encourage interaction between members of the community, it should welcome all the members of the community to participate in its activities and to use its space and it should present opportunities for fun and play. That is, a community farm can combine learning and playing and create as many possibilities (for connection, for learning, for healing) as possible. When, as a research team, we looked at Robert's interview notes together, Helen framed this idea of creating multiple possibilities on the farm as being like "portals" that people engaging with the farm could use to connect to people, knowledge and resources through time and space. Although Robert never used the term "portal" itself during the interview, I thought the idea illustrated well the role of a connector that a community farm can serve.

A community farm can also foster connections between generations, and also between older, more experienced individuals, and eager younger ones who might lack a knowledge base in gardening, cooking and other manual skills. Helen, Nicole, Nancy and Isabella expressed the importance of multigenerational connections and passing down of knowledge that can happen on a community farm. When Isabella imagined what a community would look like, collaboration and mutual assistance between generations is the first thing she envisioned:

I think multigenerational, working together. So I mean, you can see, like, I can see, in my mind, I can see, you know, little kids working with older folks trying to figure out how to get something to work, whether it's how to water something, or, you know, harvest something, or, and then getting it to market somehow, you know, getting it off the land and into the hands of people. I think those are the images I see. [...] To me, that's just the way [it should be] because we know who has the knowledge, right? We know who that is. Usually older people have the knowledge, and they have to share that. (Interview with Isabella: 20:20)

By linking generations together and creating the space and the opportunity for them to work together, a community farm also creates unique learning opportunities for children, teenagers and young adults (and even less young ones), where they can learn by watching, doing and listening. Especially in the case of a community *teaching* farm like Hayes, there is an invaluable opportunity to fill the knowledge gap between old, retiring farmers and young aspiring farmers and, by the same token, address at least partially the farming succession problem in New Brunswick. As Jean-Christophe mentioned, Hayes Farm is indeed the only place in the province to provide solid post-secondary training in regenerative agriculture, so their teaching and training role is vital. Nancy articulated this training purpose of a community farm forcefully:

So the ones that say they want to go back to the land, and they want that opportunity to build some more self-sufficiency in their life have no two clues. Yeah, exactly how, experience, they've had no training in it. They have no one to mentor them. But they have a glorified impression, that "Wouldn't be great if I could lose these nine to five jobs and then just grow my own corn. And, you know, raise my own sheep for wool". Yeah. And kudos to them that you know, like, but it's, it's, you know, you question, how successful are going to be because they don't appreciate the amount of skill and fortitude and resilience and finances, and it's going to take an ingenuity to, you know, because you're putting together a whole variety of pieces to make an economic success out of it. So that's, the downfall is that. [...]

So how do we support them? And then you come in with the Hayes Farm. Tada! [...] Folks [young farmers] that have that passion and drive and determination are to be applauded. And then they're to be helped. Yeah, you know, with, you know, because they don't know what they don't know. But we have people out there that have those answers. So how do we put them together? (Interview with Nancy: 48:04)

Finally, as Emily mentioned earlier, a community farm is also a place for caring and for healing. In the words of one of Hayes Farm's *Regenerative Farming Certificate Graduate*, a

community farm should be “a place where people nurture each other and where people and land nurture each other” (RFC Graduate Survey). For one thing, the welcoming and peaceful atmosphere at the farm can already be soothing for people. As Alice told me in a meeting when we were discussing the different challenges that the farm went through during Covid, perhaps it is “part of the healing process where folks come here [at the farm], and there is more space to like, feel your feelings and time to think about stuff. And so things kind of, like, have the space to come out. And I'm wondering if that's kind of part of the atmosphere that we've created” (Hayes Farm challenges through the pandemic: 33:20). Beyond the space and the atmosphere that the farm has created, collective gardening also has the potential to help people cope with anxiety and stress in a way that became even more crucial during the pandemic:

And, then when you think of how that can tie into mental health, when you are [a] perceived victim of what's happening in the climate front, and on the economic front, and perceiving that life is out of control. Because you're facing factors that are so much bigger than yourself, *to be able to even just walk out a door and go into a garden and get your hands in the soil. And know that you can do something for yourself that could translate into something substantial, like putting food on your table can help to mitigate some of the mental stresses in your life.* I heard that more times and enough, last summer, particular when we had to challenge public health in New Brunswick to open up the community gardens in the springtime, they wanted to just take the safe route and keep them closed. And we said no. And you know, and that was the argument in part, it's, it's to address, you know, people's ability to be able to grow their own food, but it was also hard to deal with mental health challenges that people are facing, and *creating those opportunities to still feel, you know, beyond just going out and growing food in your own backyard, but to be able to do it in a communal space, and have those opportunities to meet people who share same common purpose and interest is you and are going through the same life experiences that you right now. And this happening on a wide social level was going to be able to help on the mental front as well.* (Interview with Nancy: 36:38, emphasis mine)

In addition to reconnecting, teaching and healing, a community farm is and should remain a actor of change and a tool for food sovereignty (Interview with Jean-Christophe). It has the power to empower people and to help them reclaim the knowledge that might have been severed or lost over the last decades and centuries. Hence, I will now turn to the question of food sovereignty:

how the community around Hayes Farm envisions it, what is already done to move in the right direction, and the work that still has to be done create a food sovereign Fredericton.

Community Farm is Medicine

The natural healing power of Hayes Farm needs to be recognized upfront and supported appropriately. I loved your discussion with [Alice] (you are both so very clever!) of how the healing atmosphere and working with the land loosens the lid on the pot of suppressed emotions. But everyone's background is different and we need to appreciate that the lid may come off gently where emotions are acknowledged reflectively, like [Nathan]'s reference of being pulled to the farm: "It's really an amazing atmosphere. I kind of imagined like a golden bubble around the farm. And you know, there might be a little patches here and there, but it's still a golden bubble. And, yeah, I feel like a little bit like, it's a little bit as mine. Like, it's not mine, it's shared, but you know, it's a shared thing. So I, I'm really happy to be here, honestly" (Interview with Nathan: 17:15). Or sometimes, as we've experienced with some individuals, the lid may suddenly blow off and release the power of those emotions in a way that may be difficult to control and possibly harm anyone standing in their trajectory.

As such, we need to fully recognize the farm as a healing centre. [Nancy] commented that her Market Greens project uses food as a prescription – so why not ensure that we have a mental health professional as part of our Hayes Farm team? This was already on our radar in January 2021, and along with the Wabanaki Advisory Council, was supposed to have been in place before this season started but again, funding was so late this year it was all we could do to scramble just to get our core staffing in place. As long as we remain resilient and are willing to learn from our experiences, we will continue to evolve.

Helen

Lessons on Food Sovereignty

What is food sovereignty? As I explained earlier, there are as many definitions of this concept as there are groups to care about it. Hence, a first step in trying to foster food sovereignty in our community is to define what it means for us in our context and to envision what our community would look like if it were food sovereign. The next step is to acknowledge what we already do that helps us walk towards that ideal and what we would need to do to continue in the

right direction. Finally, and this is where my hope lies with this research project, we have to take concrete action, based on what we learned and what we decided, to concretely bring about the food sovereign future we imagine together, one step at a time.

Food everywhere

So what does food sovereignty mean to the community around Hayes Farm? The first thing that we should acknowledge is that everyone we have talked with for this research was aware of what the food scene looked like in New Brunswick and in Fredericton, in some cases even down to the statistics and numbers I outlined in the literature review. Hence, one of the recurrent features in how people imagine food sovereignty in Fredericton is exactly what they are aware is lacking right now, especially in an urban context: abundance, accessibility, seasonality and locality of food. Because most of the food produced in New Brunswick is meant for exportation and that, reversely, most of the food New Brunswickers eat is imported, the first element of a shared vision of food sovereignty is to reverse this tendency and to achieve a certain level of self-sufficiency.

During our appreciative inquiry, Erika, formerly working with the Riverstone Recovery Center, one of Hayes Farm's programming partners, put it this way: "[...] just the idea of growing food everywhere. Just like everywhere. [...] just having like, having food everywhere and having it really accessible. [...] and for those who want to participate in growing food, have that also available." (Erika, in appreciative inquiry 2021: 35:58). This idea came back a lot in the interviews and in the surveys as well. For example, one survey participant defined food sovereignty as "the community/region is able to be self-sufficient and produce its own food in a manner that is regenerative for the environment and brings abundance to the producers and consumers" (RFC Graduate survey 2021)

Accessibility does not only mean physical proximity, but also financial capacity or economic access. In a food sovereign Fredericton, healthy, local and culturally-appropriate food would not be reserved to privileged members of society who could afford it. In the words of Emily, one of Hayes Farm's vegetable basket customers and volunteer, healthy and local food "needs to become less of this, like, middle class privilege, luxury, like, 'Oh, I buy local' to making it more of like, this is just what people do." (interview with Emily 2021: 31:59) This was echoed by Robert, Hayes Farm's landowner and precious collaborator: if Fredericton would be food sovereign, food would be affordable to those with lower incomes and a lower portion of their budget should be allotted to food, and that food should not only be in sufficient quantity but also of excellent quality (interview with Robert 2021).

Local food production also means local consumption, and in Fredericton that means eating seasonally. This is not an easy cultural shift for a population who is used to buying just anything they wish (and are able to afford) at grocery stores. As Isabella, librarian at the Fredericton Public Library and precious partner of the farm, said:

[...] in Fredericton too, I think it [food sovereignty] would be less reliance on imported food. So more locally harvested, and maybe that means we change our diet a little bit to support that. So you know, we don't have pineapples, so maybe we don't have pineapples, you know, because we don't grow them here, that sort of thing. So that would be sort of more of a cultural mind shift for people. Right. Yeah, I think that's kind of what it would look like to me, like people being able to access the food that they wish to eat, but less reliance on importing things that aren't necessarily necessary. They're, they're treats more than anything. (interview with Isabella 2021: 24:03)

This was echoed by Jean-Christophe, farmer and co-worker at Ferme Terre Partagée, who stated that food sovereignty had to be based in seasonality and respect for nature, by Dan, the farm manager and main instructor at Hayes Farm, by Clara, Settlement worker at the Multicultural Association of Fredericton, and by various survey respondents.

Finally, on a more political level, beyond accessibility, sustainability and local self-sufficiency, food sovereignty in Fredericton also means involvement in decision-making and knowledge of how food is grown. For Jean-Christophe, that means producing food by and for the people of New Brunswick, but also prioritizing producing food to feed people rather than producing food for an exportation value as it is currently the case in the province. For Robert, if people have a desire to participate in deciding what foods are available to them or in helping grow food, they should have the opportunity to do so, whereas the choice of what is grown and availability of the food should be decided locally (interview with Robert 2021). This call for local control also appeared in many survey participants' answers.

(Re)Connecting and Reclaiming

Through the different conversations we had throughout this research, by asking questions such as “how would you define a community farm?” or “what purpose should a community farm serve?”, we received a lot of positive feedback about what Hayes Farm was already doing well in promoting food sovereignty. During the appreciative inquiry, Jennifer from Under One Sky told us with perceptible excitement:

I was thinking like, “Oh, my gosh, like we are doing this, Hayes is doing this”, like all of these wonderful examples just speak to how we are making change to the right direction. Like, I'm like, “we're changing our relationship with food. We're having these wonderful conversations. We're breaking down silos and coming together and bonding over the Mother Earth and the food and the incredible things that everyone is doing”. And so I think it's like continuing to do this work [...] *But I think just like continuing to do the work that we've been doing with one another and continuing to come together and having these conversations are really where the magic happens and where we can see those, those changes coming into fruition.* [...] It's just when you kind of stand back and take a bird's eye view at it all, you're like, “Oh, my goodness. Like we're, we're doing it”. (Jennifer, in the appreciative inquiry: 59:05, emphasis mine)

Although this burst of enthusiasm might seem to overrate the real impact of Hayes Farm (and this research to a certain extent) in the community, it actually reflects the general gratitude and excitement about what the farm is doing and how its different partners benefit from their relationship with it. Of course, it doesn't mean that there are no challenges to working together, both within the farm and with community partners. I will return to these below in order to balance off the fact that, even if the feedback we received was overwhelmingly positive, there is still room for improvement and challenges to be faced.

Hayes Farm, as a community farm and a teaching farm, is already playing a very important role in fostering food sovereignty in the region. Some of its contributions are obvious, concrete and wide-ranging, like training aspiring young farmers through the RFI program or producing ecologically-grown food and making it accessible to the local population. However, Hayes Farm also makes small, subtle and yet wind-changing impacts, one way or another, in the lives of a lot of people. As Nicole said when we were reviewing what came out of the appreciative inquiry,

We actually are probably touching more people than we probably realize. Can we give ourselves a pat on the back about that? So, and, and what [Jennifer] said about, with Covid, of course this research is, is during a pandemic, and how that, delivering those boxes was that little bit of connection, 'cause I know, for me, especially last year, it was tough, you didn't get personal connection. So, we don't realize how something as simple as that is, how important it is until you lose it." (Research meeting on July 14th: 48:49, emphasis mine)

What Nicole was talking about here is a story that Jennifer from Under One Sky told us during the appreciative inquiry. When we asked Hayes Farm's programming partners about what worked well in their relationship with the farm, the participants talked about the welcoming atmosphere of the farm, the quality of the food and the connections created through food, and especially through the vegetable baskets. Jennifer's story highlighted the importance of the latter:

I think this year, engaging in the share program was such a blessing. I know like, when Covid happened, and it was like a complete 180. Like we were kind of in panic mode,

the friendship center completely shut down. And it was at that point that we realized that so many of the families and the people who would like frequent the friendship center, often it's like, for a lot of our families like, they were in isolation prior to Covid, right? And for a lot of our families like we were their biggest support system. And so, when we shut our doors, it was just really eye opening. And so we were scrambling to be like, you know, "How can we support you? What do you need?"

And so Hayes' shares were a huge part of this. So we were able to purchase shares for 10 families, and support these Indigenous families to have this fresh produce every single week. And we were closed. We didn't, we have an Aboriginal headstart at the friendship center and, throughout the summer, during the time when the shares were, were happening, we were still closed. So we were still in some ways isolated from our families. We were hosting like virtual get-togethers and doing grandmother teachings and everything that we could from a distance, but we would hand deliver these shares to all the families every, every Wednesday, when we pick them up, we would go and deliver them to our families.

And so just to leave them on the front door and then knock and then you run away and then they come out and you're just like hollering from each other at the end of the driveway and sometimes we get hauled up talking for like forty minutes, an hour, you know. It's just such a great way to, to reconnect with our families and to also support them. And because a lot of them don't have a great means of transportation, have young children or single parents, so it was more difficult for them to like access food or be able to go to a grocery store, to be able to get the things that they needed.

And so it was such it, like, I just remember how many of the families were just, would always express how grateful that they were to have that. And I remember like, literally tearing up and crying because we had received the shares. And it was like, because the shares ran quite late this year, and it was like right before Thanksgiving, and to see like, they had this big beautiful spread. And they were so grateful, because they had enough produce, like they were able to invite their, their close family over. And like they, it was just so amazing. (Jennifer, in the appreciative inquiry: 23:10)

In Jennifer's example, even though nobody at the farm had direct contact with the Indigenous families who received the food shares through the partnership with Under One Sky, the food that the farm crew had produced, and the social network that was created through the distribution of that food, played a major role in breaking isolation and fostering relations for those families. Moreover, once in the families, the produce from the farm was able to help strengthening other relationships, to populate relationships so to speak, between the family receiving the vegetable basket and the extended family around it. Another way in which a lot of people in the community

end up being connected with Hayes Farm is through other, less food-centered collaborations. One such example was given by Nathan:

And I guess, more for the community farm, it's just like bringing in, even like, there might be organizations or groups or people that may not necessarily have thought of being connected to the farm, but by, that connection is like forged. I guess a random one is, what I'm thinking of is like the woodworking school. There's an elementary school that built all the handwash stations here. That's phenomenal! Like all that, all those little things that I can, you know, can connect along the way. (Interview with Nathan: 34:44)

Connecting people organizations together, and thus strengthening a social solidarity net, might then be one of the most important contributions Hayes Farm brings to the community and to the fostering of food sovereignty. Forging a complex web of relations and *entraide* in the neighborhood, in the city and in the region is indeed what enables action to switch from a collection of individual actions to a collective movement per say, and hence to the development of a local food system that is truly interconnected. More than empowering people by reconnecting them to one another, the community farm also empowers people by reconnecting them to knowledge about food production, nutrition, cooking and a myriad of technical know-how that might have been lost through urbanization and industrialization. Sometimes, empowering people also means helping them to gain self-confidence and to minimize the fear of not knowing how to certain things. Another story told by Nancy (who, by the way, should be applauded as a great storyteller) tells the point:

I'll tell you a neat story. I was involved in setting up a community garden for kids only. Okay, and, in a neighborhood that had social assistance housing. So the adults weren't allowed to come over, it was just the kids and me. And we had the compost delivered and we had some soil delivered. And the kids and I moved all that onto the earth, we spread it all out. And we created some rows, and the kids are planting the seeds. And I think they really enjoyed the fact that it was kids only.

So at one point, the kids took a break, they went for lunch, and one of the grandmothers came over. Because she was really curious about what was going on. I said, "Well, we're just going to plant some peas. In fact, you could help me". And the grandmother said "No, no, no, no, no, no, no. I don't know anything about gardening.

I've never gardened. I'm not a farmer, I don't know how to do anything". I said, "Well, that's okay. Could you just help me?" And she's kinda looked surprised, she didn't know how to say no to that.

So I said, "Could you put your finger in the dirt? And could you just make a dent in the soil there?" And she did that. And I said, "I've got to do this, can I just give you the seeds for peas? And could you just put them in the dent that you made, and put them about this far apart?" So she put them in, and then I again pretended to be busy with something else. And I said, "Okay, all I need you to do now is cover the soil over and pat them." And so she did that. And I said, "There you go. Now you're a gardener."

And she had this biggest grin on her face. That all of a sudden, gardening wasn't rocket science. Gardening was as simple as, you know, make a row, put in the seeds and cover them over. And I think I just blew her mind.

That's the power a communal garden space, is bringing in people that are already perceived that "No, I can't do it". But the real translation of that is "No, I haven't done it before". And if you can just, you know, find those opportunities to bring them in, find one of those opportunities to engage them and learning and help them to see that it's not that hard. And yes, there will be mistakes. And yes, it will be, you know, lack of rain, you know, gardening is not easy. But no one will die. Yeah, everyone can try. (Interview with Nancy: 30:06, emphasis mine)

Nancy's story shows that sometimes, people have to see and try for themselves to build their knowledge at the same time as they build their confidence. In that sense, a community farm can offer this experiential learning opportunity, especially because of the connections that the farm creates between people, land, knowledge and resources. Another example of that need to empower people through learning, doing and having access to resources is an idea that was brought forth during the appreciative inquiry. Erika proposed that Hayes Farm could offer a "U-can" program where people would have access to a communal canning station with the equipment and experienced individuals to supervise, train and help the beginners in the process. The idea gained traction in the group, especially because of the apprehension and uncertainty that many had towards canning, a process that can indeed be dangerous if not done properly. Having access to training, equipment and supervised practice could then help them to overcome their fear and to learn how to start conserving their surpluses themselves. The empowerment that the community farm enables was well exemplified by Nancy:

A community farm is *an opportunity to bring power back to people* to equip them enough, if done properly, to create that learning opportunity. *So people can understand that there is a way of becoming more self-reliant and taking more charge of making food decisions for themselves and for their families.* So I see a kind of a rebalancing of what's happening in our society, where everything has been skewed towards a consumer economy and taking it back to place more of sharing to a commons. And therefore, *we should be looking to how to set up those communal opportunities, be sharing land, sharing education, sharing equipment for processing food and storing food.* And because food is so fundamental to life itself, and therefore it shouldn't be surrendered to you know, dependent upon who's got money. (Interview with Nancy: 28:30, emphasis mine)

Moreover, participating in the farm's activities and workshops, or just visiting the farm, can be an eye-opening experience for some people, one that helps them reconnect with how food is produced, what farming actually looks and feels like and inspire them to take part in growing food as well. Emily put it this way: "I feel like, you know, part of food sovereignty, and I don't think everyone needs to go to a farm to like, truly understand. But I do feel like, going to a farm, even if it's just once like, makes you understand like, 'Oh, this really does come from like a place that's got like, limited space, and limited resources.'" (Interview with Emily: 35:40).

Building capacity and building knowledge was a common theme in what our interlocutors thought was needed in order to move towards food sovereignty. As Isabella said, "It's a knowledge thing. [...] Education needs to happen." (Interview with Isabella 25:31) Gratefully, education is already the main focus at Hayes Farm, and one of the points our participants highlighted as the community farm's contribution to food sovereignty. But more than reconnecting people to knowledge, it is also important, especially for Indigenous people, to reclaim that knowledge, As Jennifer explained:

Something that really stood out to me so many times, like, while we were engaging with the shares, and with their families was like, so many times, they're heard, you know, "If it wasn't for Hayes, I never would have tried this", or "I didn't know this existed", or "I wish that I could had access to be able to grow my own food". And especially when it came to like [Patricia] had shared her knowledge on some of the foods like the Jerusalem artichokes and some of the, the varieties of beans. And it was

so exciting to share that knowledge and, and everyone who was like, was receiving the shares was so excited to receive that knowledge. And it's kind of like, *reclaiming that too, you know, because those kinds of teachings around growing food are so severed, I think and buried and there's not like when you're looking for Indigenous knowledge shares that that have this kind of like agricultural knowledge, like they're like few and far between, in the area.* And so I would really love to see like, those that cultural knowledge and the cultural teachings.

Like we were so lucky to be able to, we kind of hopped in on a three-sisters planting that had, [Patricia] had done with The Ville. And so I was able to kind of sneak my way into that event and bring some of our family members and our staff members over to The Ville to see the three sisters planting. And like, when you're living in an urban space in a city like, these opportunities, they don't present themselves very often. And so for so many people, they were like, "Wow, that was incredible!", like "That was like a once in a lifetime opportunity for me" and to hear that is so heartbreaking in so many ways. I'm like, I hope that we can have more of these opportunities. And so that's what my ideal would look like, you know, sharing more of this cultural knowledge, traditional teachings like, traditional foods as well. (Jennifer, in the appreciative inquiry: 38:07)

Recovering and reclaiming lost knowledge was also the main way to foster food sovereignty for Clara, who discussed about how a lot of the knowledge about food, especially about the properties and the sacredness of food, has gone lost for a lot of people. Fortunately, however, there are still individuals or groups who hold tight on some of that knowledge and who can teach others so that cultural groups and communities can reclaim that knowledge:

I believe from this group, I am the only one that learned in my early years that food is important not only to, to fill our stomach, but every single thing that we eat, having some properties and so on, relationship with our body. And I think that knowledge has been probably lost for the common people. [...] You, you will have to have a space for food and all that things that our ancestors used to know is now gone. [...] Then, now, we have all these illnesses and symptoms that we are, that each one of us are paying the fee at this moment for our ignorance, I will say. Then I have the opportunity to be close to, to a farm. And people that have been holding this knowledge for that long, like [Nicole], that you have a conversation with her and you will learn in five minutes things that you haven't seen for a long time. *What I want to say is, is really important to, to put the food in the center, probably, of the conversation, of the knowledge. [...]* There are a lot of things that we have been forgetting and the knowledge was there. I remember that. I hear, and probably now, there are groups that probably are holding a little bit of that information. But for most of the people, what I notice this is all that conversation is gone. (Clara, in the appreciative inquiry: 41:46, emphasis mine)

Hayes Farm, as a community and teaching farm, can help reconnecting with lost knowledge, but beyond learning and empowering themselves, people then have to reclaim that knowledge and make it their own again. It should be noted here that Hayes Farm makes great efforts not to take a patronizing and colonial approach to teaching, especially when it comes to Indigenous knowledge. For example, they partnered with Patricia Hill to be an Indigenous instructor on the farm, and she thus takes care of the traditional teachings at Hayes, both formal and informal, in addition to playing the role of an elder for Indigenous interns on some occasions. Hence, Hayes Farm's role in reclaiming Indigenous knowledge is not to "teach" or "give back" that knowledge to the Indigenous community, but rather to connect people together and to provide the resources, the opportunities, and the environment so that reclaiming their knowledge becomes possible.

More than reclaiming knowledge, people and communities are also able to reclaim their very identity through sharing, producing and consuming food, whether traditional or not. Without taking credit for how Indigenous communities can reclaim their knowledge and their identity, Hayes Farm could be instrumental in the process by providing local food, offering learning and growing opportunities about food and connecting members of the community with Indigenous knowledge-keepers like Patricia Hill. Jennifer from Under One Sky exemplified this really well:

Because the shares ran quite late this year, and it was like right before Thanksgiving, and to see like, they had this big beautiful spread. And they were so grateful, because they had enough produce, like they were able to invite their, their close family over. And like they, it was just so amazing. And, and we have like a private Facebook group, and as well, and so like, they would like share recipes with one another. And we'd be like, I love the information sheets, because sharing those results are always helpful for, for the families and like sharing photos of the giant zucchinis. And the giant squash that they were getting. And it was just such a great way to, to connect. And it was also something that was like really needed too, when I think like food. *And it's such, like a big piece of like a what it means to be Indigenous for a lot of people is the, the gathering and the feasts and the being with family* (Jennifer, in the appreciative inquiry: 25:45, emphasis mine)

Changing the system: Some Challenges Ahead

Although Hayes Farm already plays an important role in fostering food sovereignty in Fredericton, there is still a lot of work to be done to get closer to the ideal that is envisioned by the community around the farm. There are actions that need to be taken on a small scale, at the human relations level, on the farm and beyond, but there also needs to be a broad systemic change that needs concerted and long-term efforts. There is always room for improvement, as Alice told me in our conversation about farm challenges, but I will focus here on three areas to pay attention to that correspond to some challenges that the farm is facing during the pandemic and that came out in our interlocutors' concerns. These areas include the question of how a systemic change could be brought about, the process of decolonization and the problem of community participation.

First, many of our interlocutors mentioned that a systemic change was needed to achieve food sovereignty in New Brunswick, especially since the current situation in the province is anything but food sovereign. By the same token, the leap from “where we are now” to an envisioned food sovereign Fredericton becomes immeasurable, and the gap between baby-step actions and systemic change becomes hard to fill. As Jean-Christophe told me, in our modern western society, it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalist society⁸. However, our research participants were bold enough to dare imagining what we could do, individually and collectively, to get to our ideal of food sovereignty. These changes could be understood as two-fold: political change and cultural change.

First, on the political level, there needs to be more awareness around food politics in New Brunswick and citizens need to reclaim political power over food production decisions. As Robert

⁸ This seems to be one of many distorted quotes, but it was actually written down by Mark Fisher in his book *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative*, who attributed it in return to Slavoj Žižek and to Fredric Jameson. It turns out that the phrase is first attributable, if not a differently enunciated, to H. Bruce Franklin (Beaumont 2014).

put it so aptly, on the government level, “We should subsidize big number of small farms rather than a small number of big, mechanized farms.” (Interview with Robert: unknown time stamp)

While it is easy to put the blame on the government, it is also important to realize that the general public still has a long way to go in terms of awareness of the situation and political action, even if that just means voting for some people. As Emily explained it,

So I think where we're at right now is like, more education and more promotion of local food sources and like local food control. And I think it kind of needs to go both levels, right. Like, we need to acknowledge that people like the Irving's and people like McCain's and like, you know, Sobeys and all the big corporations, they're not on the top, just because they're super great at growing food, they're on the top, because they get huge investments of like government dollars and subsidies. And like, we need to educate the public about that. And about places like Walmart and like how that affects local communities, and how it's basically like, modern day colonialism, how we're like exploiting all these other countries for this cheap food.

And so I think we need to, like, make that a priority and making the population understand and some people aren't going to care. And some people will be like, “Holy crap, I didn't know that! I need to change what I'm doing.” And so *I think looking at like government structures and being like, you know, “Are we subsidizing Sobeys more than we're subsidizing a place like Hayes farm? Should we be doing that?”* And then I also think, you know, from the ground up is like more promotion and education about places like Hayes, or even slightly bigger scale, like, you know, big farms, but that are like community run, or that kind of thing. [...]

And just, I think a lot of people just don't know about it. So, yeah, but I think just like government invest, investing in local or regenerative food sources too, right, like we got to stop subsidizing the Irvings and the McCain's as the only people and start looking at like “Where else could that money go? It would help. (Interview with Emily: 29:51).

As Emily said, in order for New Brunswick to become fully food sovereign, educating people on how to grow and process food by themselves and empowering them to do it will not suffice. Alongside individual action, there needs to be collective awareness and political action to be able to change the face of agriculture in New Brunswick on a large scale. According to Jean-Christophe, Hayes Farm, as an independent teaching farm, should emphasize a radical and revolutionary pedagogy that questions the structures of power in place and the status quo in order

to help bring about the systemic change that is needed to really achieve food sovereignty (Interview with Jean-Christophe).

Other social and political measures could also be helpful in building the conditions that are necessary for food sovereignty to flourish in Fredericton and in New Brunswick. One such measure would be to make public transportation more accessible and more efficient so it would be possible for everyone to visit and frequent urban and rural community farms:

It might be kind of like, a step beyond, but I feel like we need like better transportation networks, like, I feel like, you know, part of food sovereignty, and I don't think everyone needs to go to a farm to like, truly understand. But I do feel like going to a farm, even if it's just once like, makes you understand, like, "Oh, this really does come from like a place that's got like, limited space, and limited resources". And currently, like, our transportation network is just so car dependent. And like, one, if you don't own a car, it's really hard to get anywhere and two, even if you do own a car, doesn't it kind of defeat the purpose to have like, everyone jump in their car, and like drive to a place just to see like, you know, a regenerative farm that's supposed to be fighting climate change? [...]

I feel like a more communal transportation network would help facilitate that kind of like rural urban connection that is missing, I think, as part of that food sovereignty because we're not going to have like a million Hayes farms in the city. So you kind of need to go outside of the urban space. [...] I think part of the problem is this disconnect between food production and consumption and people don't understand like, this is a huge input of labor and energy and like resources. And I think seeing it more kind of makes people understand it better. (Interview with Emily: 35:36)

According to Emily, we thus cannot think about how to change our food system without changing our whole economic and social system at the same time. Social inclusion measures that increase accessibility to basic things like food, transportation, shelter and economic well-being have to be part of the picture when we think about how we could make local food production viable and local food accessible to everyone. Measures to increase economic accessibility, like the pay-what-you-can model for vegetable shares, or making gardens and farms physically accessible to all people, are also to be incorporated in the picture of a food sovereign Fredericton. Another measure that could be taken on a larger government level and that Hayes Farm already promotes

is guaranteed annual income: “I think universal annual income, or guaranteed annual income, we need to keep weaving that into our messaging, because I think that’s the only way we’re really going to make things accessible, and not always have to talk about the homeless or the, you know, poor people.” (Helen, Research Meeting on July 14th). Such measures were proposed by some survey respondents as well (CSA customer survey and Crowdfund contributors survey).

Second, on the cultural level, there needs to be quite a cultural shift for the general population to change their attitude towards food and rediscover how to eat and grow locally. One way to do so is to focus on children, as Nancy explained:

I figure that where you're going to get the best traction is through the kids. You get them excited about food, and they come home and they say, “look what I was able to do, can we grow peas in a Styrofoam cup in the classroom? Can I grow peas in the backyard?” And then I've seen, you know, parents will, who want to support their kids are planting peas in the backyard. Had, up until that point in time, had no inclination of wanting to do it whatsoever. And you have kids that will come home, home and say “I don't really want pizza again, could we have some broccoli because I had that at my school lunch program and it tasted really good. And you know, parents that didn't put broccoli on a plate because they never eat it, because their parents didn't give it to them. And so now they're trying to incorporate broccoli. [...]

So when you say how can we, you know, take society and the culture and trying to get it to move? I mean, we can have all the best intentions and tell the best stories. But you're competing for all the other messaging that people have to contend with on a day-to-day basis. And *get to the kids. And you get the kids to come home and say “this is what I learned. And this is what I would like to try and this is what I would like to eat”.* You can then move family. (Interview with Nancy: 52:20, emphasis mine)

Clara also echoed this need to focus on children to bring about a broad culture change about food: “If the children learn from the early age to be close to plants and be close to farming, that could be the first step for the, for the changing of the world. Because that's what we need to do is, is that those little ones are the ones that really can do more effectively, effectively, but again, try to cope and gathering knowledge and information.” (Clara, in the appreciative inquiry: 1:07:04)

Robert and Isabella also pointed out to the importance of reaching out to children and of integrating food in the school curriculum. However, more than just raising the next generation’s awareness

about how to grow and transform food, exposing the children to positive, human-scale and viable farming environments could help reverse the general tendency to despise agriculture as an occupation and can contribute to fostering local agriculture in the long run:

In fact, it's a culture change. Kids don't grow up in New Brunswick thinking, "gee, I want to be a farmer. That's going to be a great life". So in the absence of farmers, we have, you know, great farmland that just sits idle. And they can be productive, you know, but it's, it takes us entrepreneurs that can see what the opportunity is to make a viable income for themselves and their families." (Interview with Nancy: 44:46)

Indeed, it is great to say that we need more small, local farms, but we also need farmers to operate them. Currently, however, the profession of farming is not held in high esteem by the general public and doesn't hold a lot of prestige in society, despite the fact that it represents the basis of our society, the reason why we can eat every day. Tying this lack of acknowledgement to the hard, valuable and skillful work that farmers are doing, Dan explained:

It's, you know, like, to me, the profession of agriculture should be up there with every other kind of profession, right? But like, when you go to your dentist, he's not the one answering the phone and picking up the equipment and doing that, you know what I mean? He's got people, he's got a team, because that's the nature of the business and the income that they can command. [...] But like in farming, and you're doing everything yourself, you're wearing so many hats, and yeah, you get tired, that's for sure. (Life history with Dan: 15:44, emphasis mine)

Another challenge that necessarily comes with systemic change is decolonization. Although this is a really complex concept that does not have only one meaning and orientation, many of our interlocutors pointed out to us the prime importance of decolonizing Hayes Farm in order to be able to continue their collaboration with their Indigenous partners but also to bring about systemic change that is ethical and non-violent. According to Jean-Christophe, the first thing that a community farm should do is to decolonize, de-hierarchize and de-commodify its organization (Interview with Jean-Christophe). Here, I understand "first thing" to mean "main focus", because decolonization indeed is a long and complex process and thus not a box that could

be easily checked to then move forward with other goals or actions. Bringing about radical structural change is nothing easy, as Helen shared with me:

I still have to, you know, participate in this very structure-based system that's still a system that's built on fear [...] And my concept for Hayes Farm is for it to be built on the concept of abundance and trust. And *I'm just finding, you know, I want to decolonize things, but stuff keeps coming back to, saying, "No, no, you still live in this system. And you have to, if you want to get a grant, you still have to be a nonprofit with these things in place". And it's, it's kind of straddling these two worlds. It's crazy.*" (Life history with Helen: 1:29:15, emphasis mine)

In order to decolonize itself, Hayes Farm should review its structure and its way to work among employees and between the staff and the students, but it should also allow for a lot of responsibility from the different communities around the farm (Interview with Jean-Christophe). In that sense, Hayes Farm already does a good job with Indigenous communities, as they achieved to create meaningful relationships and successful partnerships with Indigenous organizations that, for example, allow many Indigenous students to access the RFI program by funding them to participate in it. Hayes Farm also put an emphasis on working with Indigenous instructors and mentors to further decolonize their curriculum and the working environment on the farm.

However, far less attention and accommodation has been devoted to the Acadian, or French-speaking community of New Brunswick that also strives for recognition and cultural revival. Again, according to Jean-Christophe, a community farm in New Brunswick that works towards decolonization should be at least a bilingual school, offering programming and services to both the Francophone and the Anglophone community. He recognized though that it is hard to offer a bilingual curriculum and bilingual services without excluding anyone, for example in the hiring process (Interview with Jean-Christophe). Human resources and funding are also some of the factors preventing Hayes Farm from implementing even more inclusive and more progressive programming. For example, offering the RFI program totally or partially in French would mean

hiring bilingual or Francophone instructors, which might not be possible in the moment considering the farm's limited resources.

Decolonizing also implies decolonizing our minds to a certain extent. Nathan gave the example of *netukulimk*, a Mik'maq concept that "is basically sustainable harvesting, is only taking what you need for you and either your family or your community, leaving something behind so that it can regenerate, and this ongoing for at least seven generations, in perpetuity, forever" (Interview with Nathan: 47:49). More than a concept, *netukulimk* is a philosophy, a way of being in the world, managing resources and of living with each other responsibly and respectfully that the Mi'kmaq people continue to honor through rituals and practices (Prosper, McMillan and Davis 2011). However, it is hard for Indigenous people in New Brunswick to advocate for self-governed access to the forest based on *netukulimk* because it runs counter to capitalist anxieties about the loss of private property and the prospect of the tragedy of the commons, by which we imagine that if everyone had access to a common resource, it would be depleted due to human greed. Hence, decolonization has to take place as much in the structures of our organizations as in our minds, passing by our interactions with one another and our environment.

Decolonizing

I find many of [Jean-Christophe]'s ideas echo my own. This kind of radical change excites me - I'm very weary of having to straddle capitalism (maintaining boards, grants, employees, etc.) and the gift economy (those who want to be here will naturally gravitate to our "golden bubble" and develop and share their gifts).

[Jean-Christophe] also mentioned the need for French language programming. Hayes Farm is limited in capacity, so our vision has always been to develop a community farm model that works then replicate it throughout the province or the region. We've always felt it might make more sense to share our curriculum with a community willing to create a "French-only" version of Hayes Farm since we need more farms anyway. The same would be possible in Indigenous communities wishing to deliver curriculum in their own language.

Helen

Finally, one last challenge that was raised by our interlocutors and that the farm faces especially in times of pandemic is the whole question of community participation. As much as it is great to offer a lot of activities and services for the community, reaching out to the people and attracting people to participate in those activities is not as easy as it sounds. As Nathan said, "Despite it, I think this is the fifth cohort year, most of the community doesn't know the farm is here. And there's still a lot of first-time visitors and they're still like, a lot of like, spreading the word. I think that's, that's a slow organic thing. But I guess, it's just a challenge that I thought [of]." (Interview with Nathan: 37:16).

Community participation is also a concern that the core team at Hayes Farm tries to balance with the reality of financial and human resources available. Alice talked about some initiatives at

the farm that were explicitly asked by the members community on various occasions (surveys, “bean polls”, design charette⁹, etc.) but that were hard to assess in terms of turnout:

The example that's coming to mind is like that, one of the main suggestions that came out of the design charrette was demonstration plots. So like, Yeah, we do a lot of the row crops and we do have a lot of different things going on. But using, we decided kind of the riding ring area where the soil is especially marginal, to show different ways that you can grow if you only have a balcony, or if your house is like perched on a pile of fill or you know, whatever the case may be. And so we've tried to like there's like, [Nicole] took that on really quite brilliantly. And there's like that was one lasagna garden, there's potato towers, and there's a vertical planter and there's things being grown in containers.

And I've been, that's, it's the skeptic in me that's like, “Well, let's not, let's not make sure we invest too much energy in this without having the community participation”. *Because we don't want to just do it for the sake of doing it, we want to do it because we, we think we understand that, that the community is interested in this.* And aside from the, I mean, we've certainly had more tours and welcoming more people on farm outside of the open farm days, as compared to last year. But those, those kinds of demonstration, either that, either the demonstration area or the demonstration, like other activities, or items, or whatever you want to call them themselves, I don't feel have gotten a lot of traction. [...]

As far as I can tell, the uptake isn't really there yet for those things. *So as much as they are enjoyable, and they're cool to have here, it becomes like more of a drain on our human resources than it is a benefit to the community.* [...] I just feel, *I just feel a little bit of that, like gap between what we think is what we've been told and what we think is desired by the community and relevant for what they're interested in, and then, like, their actual uptake on engaging in that thing.* (Hayes Farm challenges through the pandemic: 19:12, emphasis mine)

This difficulty in turning community interest into community participation was also noticeable in the survey results we collected. We asked our survey participants to check two rows of boxes to indicate what activities and programming a community farm should offer and which activities they would actually participate in. Our first observation was to notice the hard-to-miss discrepancy between the two sets of answers: for almost all activities, the number of responses was way higher for wanting to see the farm offering an activity than for actually participating in it.

⁹ A design charrette is a tradition based in architecture in which the community is invited to take part in brainstorming and strategic planning. Hayes Farm organized a virtual design charette in June 2020 in which I was the facilitator.

It is understandable why many people would suggest or ask for community activities but would not take part in it. Time constraints, distance, family obligations might get in the way of participating actively in what they were interested in to start with. Other times, even if someone thinks a certain service or activity would be great to offer to the community, that person might not feel the need to participate in it. This could be the case of a community tool shed for someone who is already well-equipped at home, or of the children programming for a childless couple. Interestingly however, the numbers in the survey do not reflect the actual participation in activities and programming; they only reflect the respondents' interest in eventually participating in such activities.

While the portrait this data paints seems, as Alice said, a little pessimistic, we should rather think of it as an ongoing challenge to take into consideration. If the farm takes it as a rule that perhaps only around 10% of interested people are likely to show up for activities, the farm team could more easily estimate the number of participants to upcoming events based on how many people showed interest on social media or through direct communication for example. Another related challenge is the difficulty in finding individuals who will engage with the farm on the long term and who will participate not only in programming and activities, but also in decision-making:

I guess what I'm kind of trying to focus on is like the, the difficulty in engaging people in like, a bigger process. And, you know, that's certainly obvious, like at the board level too, [Helen] is always like, [Helen] and [Nicole] have been so consistent and so great, but like *to find other board members to, like, engage in like a longer term kind of way, it's been a really challenge.* And so even like, the board level is like a pretty big, you know, high level thing. [...]

It's been made pretty clear that there are a lot of people that are very engaged and do have a good grasp on what we're trying to achieve. And whether it was, you know, just, just timing or, or platform or, for whatever reason, we didn't get the group we wanted [for the design charette]. I think it's also just like, people feel the pressure of like, I don't want to be responsible for like making these decisions kind of thing. And I wouldn't be surprised if that, if that was something that played into it, too, you know, *if people really like, you know, a project like this, but maybe find it hard to like find ownership with it or like are timid to kind of claim responsibility or engage in that*

level of like, decision making more or direction. (Hayes Farm challenges through the pandemic: 7:11, emphasis mine)

Taking back community action and taking back politics is not an easy challenge to take up. Perhaps this issue brings us back to the political and cultural shift we were talking about earlier. Currently, however, we have to acknowledge that not everyone in the community is on the same page and has the same interest (or capacity) in getting involved in the local food movement. Dan said, when it comes to the source or healthiness of the food people eat, including the interns who are learning to grow local food by themselves:

This culture of just you know, going of outsourcing your meals is, is something that I shake my fist at, and I'm on a mission to, to try to break that cycle for a lot of people. [...] And it's just, I get it, it's fine. *We're all on a spectrum. But I'd like to be able to move folks along a little bit on that. And I'd like to see more real food around than all this edible-food-like substances.*" (Life history with Dan: 46:51)

Similarly, Emily also talked about that spectrum of concern around food and politics and how it should be taken into consideration in any food movement:

Well, I think there's kind of, not like a hard split down the middle, but I think there, I think there's kind of different levels of concern. Like, I think there's some people who don't care, want to buy cheap food at Walmart, and just really want, like, the cheapest food available, and like, "Why would you pay more?" And there's lots of, and then I think there's a step, kind of connected to that, with people who I've heard who were like, "Ah, I know, I shouldn't buy at Walmart, but like, I'm super busy. And I have a big family. And I'm super, like low income. And so like I have to". [...]

So I think there's kind of like, partly, there's folks who maybe don't, don't really care about food sovereignty, they don't think about it, maybe because they don't have to, or just because they don't have time or like all those reasons. And then I think there's folks kind of who are interested and engaged in doing it. And that's at various levels, right. [...] And so I think there's some people who are like, deeply seriously committed to that. And then I think there's kind of the middle way of like some folks who are like mainly doing that, but also understanding that like, for financial or just like time management reasons. *So I think there's a big spectrum in our community of concern around food sovereignty. And I think there's a lot of different reasons why people might have different level of concern.* (Interview with Emily: 27:24)

Following Dan's idea of moving people along this spectrum of concern, maybe a good approach to bringing about the social change that we want to foster, slowly but surely, and without

losing hope in our ideal and our convictions, is to continue what the farm already does best, exposing as many people as possible to local food and the knowledge and know-how that comes with it. One of the ways to achieve this is through Open Farm Days, farmers' markets, cooking classes, food samples, workshops and demonstrations. It might not be exactly obvious how many people are being mobilized and how many of them will be changed, but these efforts are definitely worth pursuing. Emma summarized this advice cleverly during the appreciative inquiry:

So introducing people to the food in a way that, you know, you're not purchasing it or whatever, they can try it for free, having cooking classes, having getting the community together, you can incorporate the knowledge sharing in that as well. So highlighting a particular vegetable and all the different ways you can pare it, how it's grown, the benefits to your body. I mean, there's so many things that you can do with that just to celebrate the, the food that we can grow in our community and highlighting local food and how that's, how important it is to have that relationship with the things that are grown locally and sourced locally and the benefits that can have on, on your overall health and well-being. (Emma, in the appreciative inquiry: 48:00, emphasis mine)

Community Engagement

Most people are passionate about hands-on food action that is diversified, rhythmic and entertaining as opposed to the heaviness and pressure of politics, decision-making and board meetings of food politics.

This resonates so greatly with me. As co-chair for 11 years, the majority of my own engagement and experience with NBCHG has been that feeling of "heaviness and pressure". It's actually kind of sad...but it's also an eye-opener and my main motivation for talking about, first, decolonizing the governance structure of the organization so that it's truly engaging for everyone involved and, second, advocating for transition tools like Guaranteed Annual Income so we lessen our funding pressure and make Hayes Farm more accessible to more people.

Helen

Lessons on Relationships and Collaborative Research

Writing this section is not a simple endeavor for me. As a research team, we cannot simply look at our participants' answers and say "here is what we discovered, here is what we know now". First, what we learnt on the collaborative research process and the nature of relationships, we learnt it through the whole research project itself and through the interactions and conversations we had with one another, with different partners and with our research participants. Second, we cannot say that we "learnt something" in a definitive kind of way, as it were a tangible object that we just discovered and to dug up from the dirt. Rather, we were and are still in an ongoing process of deepening and widening our understanding of what collaborating and building relationships means. We definitely grew through our collaboration and come out of it stronger and, hopefully, wiser.

It's All About Relationships

The first thing that we noted about relationships is that, as much as they could get started with a snap of the fingers, they take lots of time, patience, understanding and generosity to be able to grow. When we asked our interlocutors "what brought you to engage with Hayes Farm in the first place", serendipity played a major role for a lot of them, and affinity made the magic. Dan was looking for accessible land in a quieter region to continue farming on a smaller scale and found that the farm manager position at Hayes was just "a natural fit", so he sold his operation in Ontario and relocated to New Brunswick with his whole family (life history with Dan). Similarly, Robert, Hayes Farm's landowner, met Helen through seeking her husband's services as an energy-efficiency consultant for another family farm where Robert was helping with snowplowing (interview with Robert). Nancy and Helen started collaborating on setting up community gardens,

and eventually NBCHG, after they met at a community event that was organized by Greater Fredericton Social Innovation, the organization Nancy is working for. Similarly, Nathan engaged in the RFI program after he met Alice at a networking event and noticing that one student in his cohort at University of New Brunswick had done the program before. My own initial connection to Hayes Farm through this little business card I looked back at once in Quebec is another example of such unexpected beginnings of collaboration!

Serendipity and affinity are often not sufficient to get people to work together. There needs to be an initial connection that is enacted between two networks of relationships, and most often events and places in which people with similar interests will gather is where those connections happen. Hence the whole importance of a community farm in being a connector for people in the community. The original common interest that brings people to interact together and to develop a relationship also helps to define and nurture this relationship further down the road. This was expressed by our interlocutors as a “natural fit”, a “natural connection” or a “natural progression” (interviews with Dan, Isabella and Nancy). This initial affinity may also be the reason why about half of our participants said that engaging with Hayes Farm did not change their attitude nor their behavior towards food and the environment, while engaging with the farm was an eye-opening experience for the other half. Nancy explained how her engagement with NBCHG did not change her attitude towards food and the environment but rather reinforced them:

I kind of see them [Hayes Farm and NBCHG] as being expressions of my opinions about food and the environment. Okay, and taking the core values that I had and bringing into an action. Okay, as opposed to having really triggered any kind of fundamental change. It's been a learning process to be sure. But only I think in terms of expanding my knowledge base, as opposed to creating fundamental change of values. (Interview with Nancy: 23:24)

I must say here that trying to fit relationships into boxes and to explain out what conditions are necessary for them to take off and to flourish does not make any justice to the fact that

relationships are holistic, complex and multi-faceted. A relationship could be singled-out for the sake of analysis, but in reality it never exists in a vacuum: it is always enmeshed in a complex web of other relationships bonding each party to an uncountable number of people, places, events, non-human living beings and ideas. In that sense, individual relationships are embedded in an ecosystem of relationships and there are significant overlaps between such ecosystems on a bigger scale. As we reflected on before, this also implies that some relationships might be experienced as incompatible with one another and become an emotional and ethical maze that we have to tread carefully.

One way to think about relationships in their wholeness and their complexity is through the Mi'kmaq concept of *netukulimk* that Nathan exposed earlier. What I want to propose here is not to appropriate an Indigenous concept and make it fashionable and usable for settlers, but rather to broaden our way of understanding relationships so that we could better participate in decolonizing our way of interacting with each other and living in the world. As I could not escape totally the western worldview that my education and culture provided me with, integrating Indigenous worldviews in collaborative efforts can get us closer to what is called “two-eyed seeing”. Nathan explained the concept of two-eyed seeing as “[...]allowing both a Western and Indigenous worldview to coexist. And like learning from both and, and really like accepting both. And the whole, the seven like generational teachings of a Wabanaki worldview, like, woven into like a modern worldview, would have that sustainability built into it like inherently.” (Interview with Nathan: 53:34) While two-eyed seeing is definitely key in moving towards sustainability and food sovereignty, I believe it is also essential in fostering respectful and meaningful relationships with one another and with the environment.

While the concept of *netukulimk* is mostly known for its implications for ecosystem management and Indigenous stewardship, at its core it speaks to how we should relate to one another and to Mother Earth. Indeed, *netukulimk*

embeds understandings as to how a person should live their life on earth where Spirit guides the heart, mind and actions. *Netukulimk* governs the physical, emotional, cognitional, social and spiritual relationships a person has with everything, including the physical features of the land, the rhythms and cycles and patterns of *Wskitqamu* (Mother Earth), and all her living beings and nonliving things.[...] *Netukulimk* begins when a person learns to weave respect, responsibility, relationship, and reciprocity into every aspect of his or her life ... everything they do to *Wskitqamu* and on *Wskitqamu*. It is more than a mental concept because it is a profound way of “being and knowing” that guides one’s understandings of how to live within *Wskitqamu* and how to live in harmony. (Government of Nova Scotia 2020: 1)

Netukulimk is a particularly strong and potent way to think about relationships because it considers the different ways in which we can connect to one another (that is, on the physical, social, spiritual and intellectual levels) and because it conceives of relationships as extending beyond the human realm. The principles of *netukulimk* apply to four different scopes of connections, from the most intimate to the most holistic: relationships start with the self, then extend to the family and, further beyond, to the community, to finally encompass the whole environment in which all three others dwell (Government of Nova Scotia 2020). None of these planes is more important than the other, just as no living being is more important than the other (Marshall 2013). It thus becomes important to strike a balance between these different levels of our lives and to weigh our relationships accordingly.

More importantly, *netukulimk* is based on four core values, respect, responsibility, relationship and reciprocity, that need to be remembered at all times when honoring our connection to each other and to our ecosystem (Government of Nova Scotia 2020). These values align with Shawn Wilson’s principle of relational accountability and the feminist ethics of care we exposed earlier. In order to form ethical relationships, respect and reciprocity need to be built into them, so

that both parties benefit equally from the relationship they have with one another and that they share what we might call the “burden of care” equally. Respect, in turn, involves mutual respect and acknowledgement of each other’s qualities, worth and autonomy, and in that sense, it starts with self-respect. Because relationships are also holistic and transcend any single dyad, respect also involves the community and the environment in which the relationship is grounded. Finally, responsibility, like Wilson’s relational accountability, highlights each person’s moral, ethical and spiritual obligations in their connections with other people as well as with other living and non-living entities.

Responsibility in relationships also involves the moral obligation to care for one another and to look out for each other. In times of pandemic, this often meant maintaining a connection and checking in with the ones who are dear to us and whom we work with. One excellent example in that respect is Alice’s diligence and proactivity in sending out emails to the farm’s different partners to let them know about the farm’s programming and to catch up with them. Many programming partners highlighted how appreciated and helpful it was that Hayes Farm reached out to them on many occasions to propose activities, highlight opportunities and share knowledge without being solicited in the first place (Erika, Jennifer and Emma, in the appreciative inquiry).

Importantly, people coming together in a communal space and working on a collective project like a community farm have the obligation to contribute to creating a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment together so that all could thrive and feel well. Although this is not something that is easy to achieve in the midst of our society’s colonial legacies and the perpetuated violence it entails, taking up this responsibility to truly care for one another and for our common environment seems to be a first step for healing and decolonizing ourselves and our society. As it was highlighted in the previous section, the specific atmosphere, the welcoming environment and

the healing space that the farm constitutes are important forces attracting a variety of people to Hayes Farm. One example is Nathan's conception of the farm as a golden bubble and statement that a community farm should be, more than a mere source of food, "a source of like that community feeling" and a safe space (interview with Nathan: 36:36) Many programming partners also highlighted how important it was to them that the farm crew was welcoming, flexible and inclusive, as Erika explained:

And also flexibility, like the sometimes the time, you know, you're kind of working with like, "I can't get there" or it was too, sometimes it was just like, things were difficult timing-wise, we just tried to do all, sometimes too much all at the same time. And they're very accessible, understanding and flexible with, with that. [...] *People [were] also very welcoming when we when we came there, and you know, being with folks who are not always welcomed ever in all spaces, never had to worry about that. We were always so really welcomed. Like, that's nice.* (Erika, in appreciative inquiry: 12:52)

However, even with the best intentions, relationships can go awry and people can get hurt in the process. Relational accountability then means taking the right decision by evaluating whether it is better to let go of a relationship or to rebuild it on better bases and acting responsibly based on this decision. In this case, a feminist ethics of care is helpful for thinking through the implications for all parties based on the relationships that tie them together and the unique context in which conflict or tension arises. Unbridgeable misunderstandings, unreconcilable obligations, constant lack of reciprocity or a threatening environment might all be good reasons for ending a relationship, and in some cases for breaking off all ties. If a person's integrity and safety is not at risk, taking responsibility in our relationship with others also means taking the time to end those relationships well, to respect people's decision and to honor what has been contributed by all parties and what has been accomplished together. This is what I initially thought of doing when our relationship with Hayes Farm's Indigenous partners was severed, at least in terms of research.

However, as Anna generously advised me early on the research project, misunderstandings, faux pas and unintended harm should not necessarily mean the end of a collaboration or the termination of a relationship, especially working with Indigenous people. Trust needs to be rebuilt and the relationship needs to start anew on good foundations, and the best way to do so is to continue to just show up without being offended by what happened previously, to come to people with a good heart and to be ready to listen, to take responsibility for your acts and to work on yourself (personal communication with Anna, August 12th 2020). In that sense, the very moments when I thought I screwed up Hayes Farm's relationships with their Indigenous partners, and felt extremely guilty and powerless about it, turned out to be opportunities to spark important discussions, work through difficult topics and set progressive projects in motion. For example, the discussion I had with Anna and the meeting we had with her as a research team afterwards contributed to the felt importance to set up a Wabanaki Advisory Circle to work on decolonizing Hayes Farm in close collaboration with the Indigenous community.

Coming Full Circle: The Process and the Outcomes

Collaboration is not a linear process with a clear end line: like relationship-building, it is a circular, continuous and holistic process. Hence, answers to our question “What can our research project, as a collaborative process, teach us about the nature of relationships and the dynamics of relationship building?” are to be found all throughout this work, as different sections were written in different moments of the collaboration process but were reviewed and reworked by all members of our research team at different points in time that would be hard to line up on a clear timeline. Discussions that we had in the past might bring about insights that we gained later on, and recent reflections might draw us to revisit past events and pick up on thoughts that we had discussed and written down before. This is not dissimilar to any writing process, except that, for this research

project, writing, researching and collaborating are deeply intertwined with one another, making it hard to discern where one ends and where the other begins.

Collaborative research is also circular in that its process is as important as the outcomes, if not even more so in some respects. It has power and potency not only in the knowledge it will produce at the end of the investigation, whatever form that might take, but also in how it brings people together and fosters change through the discussions and actions it triggers. Collaborative research is based on conversations and the sharing of ideas and stories between a whole range of partners. It takes its source in existing and yet-to-be-constructed relationships and strengthens them in the process: by engaging many people in reflecting, brainstorming and envisioning together, collaborative research activates connections and cultivates relationships between different actors in the community. It is not impossible that some connections are also severed in the process due to blunders, lack of timing, misunderstandings and unexamined colonial legacies but, as I explained earlier, if we achieve to overcome those difficulties, they could lead to strengthening the very relationships that were initially severed.

Finally, collaborative research is circular because it allows for mistakes and makes room for learning and reflecting together. At times, it might look fuzzy or even stagnating because, as Alice stated earlier, it moves backwards and sideways before eventually moving forward. However, we should not be frustrated by the slowness of that process and try to rush our way through it despite structural constraints and cultural expectations about efficiency. If there is one thing that we learned through carrying our research project is that collaboration takes time, a whole lot of time, and that most of this time turns out to be devoted to building up strong, meaningful and ethical relationships. Hence, the time that is needed to respectfully and dutifully set up genuine

collaboration should be acknowledged and honored, both by the researchers and by the community with how they work.

Through our research project, we also came across some tools that the farm could reuse in the future. The most promising of those is the appreciative inquiry, which turned out to be a very fruitful approach for both the insights it yielded and the enthusiasm it sparked amongst our participants. The latter is a truly invaluable attribute since, as we have noted before, truly engaging the community in strategic planning can be a challenge that can become daunting and disheartening for the farm's core team. Because of its communal and non-violent process, appreciative inquiry can also become a useful tool, although not the only one, for decolonizing Hayes Farm's structures. It is for sure an approach that Hayes Farm's team is looking forward to adopting in the future, whether in the precise form of the appreciative inquiry or not, as Helen explained during one of our research meetings:

I think [...] the fact that it's called an appreciative inquiry, that was very clear that they [the participants], they didn't see it as a burden to gather and share these thoughts. In fact, I think, each of them, in their own way, said how much they loved the fact that they could contribute. Like they, they could, they were being listened to. And I think there was even the concept that that continues, like they knew that this was being done for a research paper specifically, but I think this is part of that, you know, advisory circle kind of concept that they, they can actually have meaningful engagement with us. So I think that was very clear. And it's, that's, the takeaway would be that we find a way to, to do this with our partners in some way, shape or form on a regular basis, like a regular meeting maybe, like annually or whatever. But we should, we shouldn't lose that. (Helen, research meeting on July 14th 2021: 2:27)

If a useful approach to community engagement and strategic planning would be the only positive outcome of this research, it would already be wonderful. Collaborative research also involves reexamining what the goal and the role of research is. In community-based research, the knowledge that we can build together, share with one another through stories and discussions and then turn into concrete action, surpasses by far any kind of knowledge that a single person can

amass and pride oneself over. In that sense, the “knowledge” that came out of this research and that can be snatched from this thesis is but a pale and incredibly spotty version of the living knowledge that exists in the community around Hayes Farm. I have no pretention of enlightening the academic world with valuable and original knowledge to be consumed and reused in the pursuit of other scholars’ academic career. My only wish in regards to academia is that, perhaps and luckily, future generations of audacious researchers could learn from my mistakes and find inspiration in my experience with collaborative research and my irreverent calls to change to status quo in western universities and in how we do research.

The true value of the knowledge that was activated, uncovered and reaffirmed throughout this research lies, I believe, in what the community that holds it decides to do with it. All of us in the research team know and acknowledge since the beginning of the project that there is not only one agenda driving this research. Yes, this thesis was one of the expected outcomes of this research and I never shied away from acknowledging that, at the end of the day, I needed this piece of paper for my academic achievement and my career. However, we also decided early on that, to truly serve Hayes Farm and its community, this research had to have very real and useful outcomes for the farm’s strategic planning and for the accomplishment of its mission. Moreover, this thesis is not sufficient for fulfilling my part of the deal: no matter how reader-friendly a Master’s thesis could be, it is still not a ready-to-use and easily searchable document for strategic planning and eventual consultation. Thus, we will also collaborate on a more concise research report that will highlight the main takeaways from the research that could be used for strategic planning and that is to be delivered by March 2022.

EPILOGUE: LOOKING FORWARD

When I told my oldest brother that I had 130-something pages of my thesis written down, he looked at me perplexedly and said: “130 pages? I guess que t’as beaucoup de choses à dire.”¹⁰ I still don’t know for sure whether he was being sarcastic or not, but my guess is that he was. This episode troubled me right in the middle of the final stretch to get this thesis done on time and got me wondering. Where am I going with this research? Does what I’m writing in my thesis make any sense at all? Will it be faithful to the discussions I had with my research partners and with our research participants? Will it serve any purpose? Will it be genuinely read by anyone else than my thesis committee? Was it all worth it?

While I do not have all the answers to these questions, and even if I would, I should definitely not be the only one answering them, I do think that engaging ourselves body and soul in this research project and believing in it throughout was worth it. I also do know that this thesis is ultimately just that: a long piece of paper that people might or might not read. While I could be disheartened by this possibility, I rather take it as an engagement to fulfilling my part of the deal and to turn what came out of this research into usable and useful outputs for Hayes Farm. Hence, rather than being the end of our research project, this thesis is just a milestone in it, as was the research proposal in the fall 2020. Our collaboration extends beyond this paper and could not be contained by it. Likewise, the effects of our research project might be subtle, but they are most valuable in what the community gained through it, as living knowledge and ongoing collaborations.

Some contributions of this research, both for the community around Hayes Farm and for academia, include a better understanding of what food sovereignty means in New Brunswick, an

10. “130 pages! I guess that’s because you have a lot of things to say.”

attempt at defining the community farm model by the community that supports it, a contribution to reflections on establishing relationships and decolonizing research, a viable example of carrying collaborative and community-based research at the Master's level, and a call for greater attention to care in academia and in research. It is true that this research project was and still is ambitious and that we cast the net far and wide, but I think that, against all odds, we aptly lived up to what we set out to originally.

In terms of food sovereignty, we have a clearer vision of our common ideal for Fredericton and for New Brunswick. Food production would be incorporated in all possible ways to city planning and to community life, making food as local and accessible as possible year-round. There would be large number of small regenerative farms throughout the province rather than a small number of industrialized farms and they would be supported both by the community and by the government. People would have the tools, the resources, the awareness, the know-how and the connections necessary to reclaim their power, their knowledge and their identity through food. Individuals and communities would be able to work together in a decolonized way, creating abundance from trust, love and reciprocity. This vision is for sure idyllic, but it is meant to be as it is the direction in which we are looking together and towards which we are working on a day-to-day basis.

As for what a community farm should be, we learned that its main role, and the most important one, is to be a connector and to enable relationships to build. Indeed, it has the people to connect people together, but also to reconnect them to the knowledge of their ancestors and of their fellow citizens, with the land on which they live and upon which they benefit for their subsistence, and finally with other living and non-living beings beyond the human realm. A community farm is also, and should remain, a tool for radical and positive social change. It has the

power to take action and to mobilize the community in instill the transformations we need to bring about our common vision. Finally, a community farm is a healing place for a lot of people in the community and it should be recognized as such. It creates a peculiar environment where we can learn to be ourselves and to respect each other outside of the premises of colonialism and neoliberalism.

Relationships and meaningful connections are also the backbone of a community farm. This research project gave us an opportunity to reflect on the nature of relationships and the process of relationship-building. Perhaps it confirmed what we already knew: that relationships take time and generosity to build, that they have to be treated carefully and that they come with as many responsibilities as benefits. We did learn however that extending the hand of friendship to our relations, had they been previously severed or not, is often what will deepen relationships and make individuals and communities grow stronger together. We also learned to consider relationships in a holistic way, in a way that binds us through mutual respect, care and responsibility. Hence, it brings flesh and sensitivity to the claim that everything that is done at Hayes Farm is relationship-based.

As regards the academic world, we do hope that we have been bold enough to carry a research in our very own way and that we successfully demonstrated that it is not only a viable, but also a promising model of community-based research, suitable for the Master's level. We broke away from the prescribed and linear mold of graduate ethnographic research and showed that it is possible to meaningfully engage with the community and to be part and parcel of bigger processes, while recognizing the limited scope and timespan of any given research. Through negotiations, hesitations and discussions, we achieved to go past the fatality of helplessly perpetuating colonial legacies in research relationships and to envision better ways of working together as allies.

Finally, this research also recognizes and emphasizes the tremendous importance of care in research, in academia and in community initiatives. Caring for each other is an integral part of doing collaborative research and of building a sense of community. Likewise, it should also be valued, honored, and encouraged in academia, since it is the key to alleviating the psychological distress many students and faculty experience in graduate school and to building a real sense of community and collegiality in universities. This is especially true in times of pandemics, when students have been sent home with destroyed research projects due to sanitary restrictions.

Although we could not pretend that the pandemic was not an ever-present reality during our research – in fact, our whole research project has been shaped by the pandemic and its many side effects – we wanted to be able to envision what the future would look like after the pandemic. The pandemic brought into focus how resilient and important Hayes Farm has been throughout the crisis, mainly for supporting its community and connecting people together when everyone needed it the most. However, we decided not to focus too much on what the farm could do to mitigate the effects of the pandemic and to rather allow ourselves to think *beyond* the pandemic, learning from the experience it represents and the challenges it brought to better craft a plan for what we will do next. This is, we believe, the enacted power of engaged and future-oriented research.

This thesis is not the end of our research project nor of our collaboration together. We still have a lot of questions to explore and challenges to take up. How can we make the community farm model more easily replicable? How could we better engage the Francophone community and achieve somehow a “three-eyed-seeing” perspective on food sovereignty and sustainability? How can we concretely decolonize an organization like Hayes Farm or NBCHG? This thesis is but just another halt at a scenic lookout in our journey towards food sovereignty that allows us to see where we are now, where we came from and where we want to go from now – together.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Sample Interview Guide

1. Can you start by telling me a little more about yourself? What is your current occupation, your background, and your role in the community (if applicable)?
2. How did you get involved with Hayes Farm in the first place? How would you describe your relationship with the farm?
3. What draws you to engaging with and/or supporting Hayes Farm?
4. Did your experience with Hayes Farm lead you to change your behaviour and attitude towards food and the environment?
5. What images come to your mind when you think of a farm [in New Brunswick]?
6. What images come to your mind when you think of a community?
7. How do these two concepts intersect? How would you define a community farm?
8. What purpose should a community farm serve?
9. Are you familiar with the concept of food sovereignty?
 - a. NO → Can I introduce you to the concept before we move on?
 - b. YES → How would you define food sovereignty?
10. When you imagine food sovereignty in your community or your region, what does it look like?
11. What do you think could be done in your community to increase food sovereignty?
12. By joining us for this discussion, you are taking an active role in your food system, and we thank you for that! Do you have any last thoughts, ideas, or questions?

Appendix 2: CSA Customer Survey

1. What motivated you to participate in the veggie box program? Please describe:
2. How many people has your veggie box typically fed on a weekly basis?
3. What percentage (%) of your weekly food budget did your veggie box represent?
4. On a scale from 1 to 5, how would you describe your access to healthy and local food on a daily basis?
5. Do you find it challenging to access healthy and local food throughout the year?
 - a. No
 - b. Yes, due to transportation difficulties
 - c. Yes, due to lack of availability
 - d. Other
6. Has the pandemic altered your access to local and healthy food?
 - a. No
 - b. Yes, positively.
 - c. Yes, negatively
 - d. For answers b or c, please describe how:
7. What do you think of Hayes Farm's pay-what-you-can model?
 - a. Supportive
 - b. Unsupportive
 - c. Other
 - d. Please describe why:
8. How did you first hear about the farm?
 - a. Social media

- b. News media (print, radio, online)
 - c. Word of mouth
 - d. Advertising (posters)
 - e. Programming partner. Please specify which one:
9. What is your preferred method to hear about community initiatives?
- a. Email/newsletter
 - b. Social media. Please specify which:
 - c. Word of mouth
 - d. Advertising (posters)
 - e. Radio
 - f. Web search
 - g. Other
10. Other than the veggie box program, how else have you engaged with Hayes Farm? Select all that apply.
- a. Open Farm Day veggie stand
 - b. Open Farm Day tours and activities
 - c. Paid educational programming
 - d. Free educational programming
 - e. Volunteering
 - f. Financial contribution to crowdfund
 - g. Board, planning, or review committee
 - h. Tour with another organization
 - i. Other

11. Has your connection with Hayes Farm led you to change your ATTITUDE towards food and the environment? Please describe how:

12. Has your connection with Hayes Farm led you to change your BEHAVIOUR towards food and the environment? Please describe how:

13. On a scale from 1 to 5, how involved do you feel with our community farm?

Food system: A food system is a “complex web of activities” that aims to look at all aspects of food, including its “production, processing, transport and consumption”. (University of British Columbia. 2020. Just Food Educational Resource: Glossary of Terms. <https://justfood.landfood.ubc.ca/glossary-of-terms/> Accessed December 14th 2020.)

14. On a scale from 1 to 5, how involved do you feel in your food system?

15. On a scale from 1 to 5, how meaningfully connected do you feel to the food you eat on a daily basis?

16. In one word, what comes to your mind when you think of a farm?

17. In one word, what comes to your mind when you think of community?

18. What activities and programs should a community farm offer? Which ones would you participate in? Check all boxes that apply (see below).

Activity	A community farm should offer:	I (or my family) would participate in:
Children programming		
A gathering space		
A tool shed/ a lending library		
A growing space		
A cooperative growing space		
Regular veggie markets		
An orchard (for education and food)		
Animals (for education and food)		
Demonstration of growing methods		
Veggie U-picks		
Cooking workshops		
Social/sharing time		
Educational programming		

Appendix 3: Crowdfund Contributor Survey

19. Where do you live?

- a. Fredericton region
- b. New Brunswick
- c. Other province
- d. Other country
- e. For answers b, c or d, please specify:

20. What motivated you to contribute to our crowdfund campaign? Please describe:

21. On a scale from 1 to 5, how would you describe your access to healthy and local food on a daily basis?

22. Do you find it challenging to access healthy and local food throughout the year?

- a. No
- b. Yes, due to transportation difficulties
- c. Yes, due to lack of availability
- d. Other

23. Has the pandemic altered your access to local and healthy food?

- a. No
- b. Yes, positively.
- c. Yes, negatively
- d. For answers b or c, please describe how:

24. What do you think of Hayes Farm's pay-what-you-can model?

- a. Supportive
- b. Unsupportive

- c. Other
- d. Please describe why:

25. How did you first hear about the farm?

- a. Social media
- b. News media (print, radio, online)
- c. Word of mouth
- d. Advertising (posters)
- e. Programming partner. Please specify which one:

26. What is your preferred method to hear about community initiatives?

- a. Email/newsletter
- b. Social media. Please specify which:
- c. Word of mouth
- d. Advertising (posters)
- e. Radio
- f. Web search
- g. Other

27. Other than contributing to the crowdfund campaign, how else have you engaged with Hayes

Farm? Select all that apply.

- a. Open Farm Day veggie stand
- b. Open Farm Day tours and activities
- c. Paid educational programming
- d. Free educational programming
- e. Volunteering

- f. CSA veggie box program
- g. Board, planning, or review committee
- h. Tour with another organization
- i. Other

28. Has your connection with Hayes Farm led you to change your ATTITUDE towards food and the environment? Please describe how:

29. Has your connection with Hayes Farm led you to change your BEHAVIOUR towards food and the environment? Please describe how:

30. On a scale from 1 to 5, how involved do you feel with our community farm?

Food system: A food system is a “complex web of activities” that aims to look at all aspects of food, including its “production, processing, transport and consumption”. (University of British Columbia. 2020. Just Food Educational Resource: Glossary of Terms. <https://justfood.landfood.ubc.ca/glossary-of-terms/> Accessed December 14th 2020.)

31. On a scale from 1 to 5, how involved do you feel in your food system?

32. On a scale from 1 to 5, how meaningfully connected do you feel to the food you eat on a daily basis?

33. In one word, what comes to your mind when you think of a farm?

34. In one word, what comes to your mind when you think of community?

35. What activities and programs should a community farm offer? Which ones would you participate in? Check all boxes that apply (see below).

Activity	A community farm should offer:	I (or my family) would participate in:
Children programming		
A gathering space		
A tool shed/ a lending library		
A growing space		
A cooperative growing space		
Regular veggie markets		
An orchard (for education and food)		
Animals (for education and food)		
Demonstration of growing methods		
Veggie U-picks		
Cooking workshops		
Social/sharing time		
Educational programming		

Appendix 4: RFC Graduate Survey

1. How did you get engaged with Hayes Farm in the first place? Please describe:
2. Other than contributing to the crowdfund campaign, how else have you engaged with Hayes Farm? Select all that apply.
 - a. Open Farm Day veggie stand
 - b. Open Farm Day tours and activities
 - c. Paid educational programming
 - d. Free educational programming
 - e. Volunteering
 - f. CSA veggie box program
 - g. Board, planning, or review committee
 - h. Tour with another organization
 - i. Other
3. How would you describe your relationship with the Farm?
4. What was your goal or your motivation in pursuing the Regenerative Farming Certificate (RFC)?
5. Has your connection with Hayes Farm led you to change your ATTITUDE towards food and the environment? Please describe how:
6. Has your connection with Hayes Farm led you to change your BEHAVIOUR towards food and the environment? Please describe how:
7. In one word, what comes to your mind when you think of a farm?
8. In one word, what comes to your mind when you think of community?
9. How do these two concepts intersect? How would you define a community farm?

10. According to you, what purpose should a community farm serve?

Food system: A food system is a “complex web of activities” that aims to look at all aspects of food, including its “production, processing, transport and consumption”. (University of British Columbia. 2020. Just Food Educational Resource: Glossary of Terms. <https://justfood.landfood.ubc.ca/glossary-of-terms/> Accessed December 14th 2020.)

11. On a scale from 1 to 5, how involved do you feel in your food system?

12. On a scale from 1 to 5, how meaningfully connected do you feel to the food you eat on a daily basis?

Food sovereignty: Food sovereignty is generally defined as “the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems” (Nyéléni Forum 2007) .

13. When you imagine food sovereignty in your community or your region, what does it look like?

14. What do you think could be done in your community to increase food sovereignty?

15. What do you think Hayes Farm could do to foster food sovereignty in your community?

Appendix 5: Sample Information and Consent Form

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Study Title: Moving towards food sovereignty together

Main Researcher: Véronique Hamel

Researcher's Contact Information: **v_ham@live.concordia.ca** 1-819-967-1991

Faculty Supervisor: Mark Watson

Faculty Supervisor's Contact Information:

mark.watson@concordia.ca 514-848-2424 ext. 2127

Additional researchers:

Claire May: **hayesfarm.claire@gmail.com** 506-260-7932

Edee Klee: **fredfoodies@gmail.com** 506-260-8908

Carol Muncer: **garden@nbchg.org** 506-449-3768

Source of funding for the study: none

You are being invited to participate in the research study mentioned above. This form provides information about what participating would mean. Please read it carefully before deciding if you want to participate or not. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of the research is to look more closely at the community farm model in New Brunswick and how it can help improve food sovereignty in the region.

Food sovereignty is generally defined as “the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems” (Nyéléni Forum 2007)¹¹. Hence, food sovereignty places people’s decisions, preferences, and concerns at the centre of food production.

This research thus looks at how people in the community around Hayes Farm envision their ideal food system and how the community farm model can contribute to turning this vision into reality.

B. PROCEDURES

If you participate, you will be asked to do an interview that should last about 60 minutes. The interview is semi-structured, meaning that the interview questions are broad and open-ended. They are starting points for you to develop on a theme as you wish with some input from the researcher if you need it. You can go at your own pace during that interview, you can decide to skip some questions and you can ask for clarification at any time.

In total, participating in this study will take 60 to 90 minutes.

¹¹ Nyéléni 2007: The World Forum for Food Sovereignty (2007). Declaration of Nyéléni. Conference Report. Nyéléni: World Forum for Food Sovereignty. Online: <https://nyeleni.org/IMG/pdf/DeclNyeleni-en.pdf>. Accessed October 10, 2020.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

You might face certain risks by participating in this research. These risks, although very unlikely, include psychological discomfort and remembrance of past traumatic experiences. If any of those situations arise, you are encouraged to tell the researcher about your discomfort. You will be able to determine with the researcher whether you want to avoid a certain topic, end the interview or discontinue your participation in the research altogether. The researcher will provide help or resources if necessary. You can always decide to simply skip a question if it makes you uncomfortable.

This research is not meant to benefit you personally.

D. CONFIDENTIALITY

We will gather the following information as part of this research: your name, your role within the community, your experience with Hayes Farm and with farming in general, your definition of what a community farm is, your understanding of food sovereignty, your vision of the ideal food system and your ideas for concrete ways to move towards that ideal. We will *only* gather the information you choose to tell us.

We will not allow anyone to access the information, except people directly involved in conducting the research. We will only use the information for the purposes of the research described in this form.

The information gathered will be identifiable. That means it will have your name directly on it.

If, however, you wish your information to be anonymized, then we want to let you know that this is possible too. We will then remove all identifiers (name, personal characteristics,

occupation, date of the interview) from the information you provided so that no link can be made between you and your information.

You can keep my name on the information I provide.

Please anonymize the information I provide: remove my name and all possible identifiers from my information.

We intend to publish the results of this research. Please indicate below whether you accept to be identified in the publications:

I accept that my name and the information I provide appear in publications of the results of the research.

Please do not publish my name as part of the results of the research. Please use a pseudonym instead.

We might record the interview as a means to conduct richer data analysis later on in this research. Please indicate below if you want this interview to be recorded:

I accept that this interview be recorded.

Please do not record this interview.

We will protect the information by storing the recordings of interviews locally on the main researcher's personal computer. This computer is protected by a password and is thus protected from unauthorized access. Only the researchers and the supervisor will have access to the information during and after the research project.

We will destroy the information five years after the end of the study.

F. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

You do not have to participate in this research. It is purely your decision. If you do participate, you can stop at any time. You can also ask that the information you provided not be used, and your choice will be respected. If you decide that you don't want us to use your information, you must tell the researchers before August 1st 2021.

There are no negative consequences for not participating, stopping in the middle, or asking us not to use your information.

G. PARTICIPANT'S DECLARATION

****Important note****: Please print this page and sign it manually. Then, scan or photograph the signed page and send it via email to v_ham@live.concordia.ca. This electronically transmitted signature will have the same weight as a physical signature.

I have read and understood this form. I have had the chance to ask questions and any questions have been answered. I agree to participate in this research under the conditions described.

NAME (please print): _____

SIGNATURE : _____

DATE: _____

If you have questions about the scientific or scholarly aspects of this research, please contact the researchers. Their contact information is on page 1. You may also contact their faculty supervisor.

If you have concerns about ethical issues in this research, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 or oor.ethics@concordia.ca.