

**Histories of Othering, Practices of Solidarity,  
and Prospects for Emancipatory Convergence  
Among California's Food and  
Farming Movements in Times of Resurgent  
Rightwing Power**

Antonio Miguel Roman-Alcalá

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**Histories of Othering, Practices of Solidarity, and Prospects for Emancipatory Convergence Among California's Food and Farming Movements  
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**Een geschiedenis van othering, het tonen van solidariteit, en zicht op emancipatoire convergentie tussen voedsel- en landbouw-bewegingen in Californië ten tijde van herrijzende rechtse macht**

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### *Dedication*

This dissertation is dedicated to the past, the present, and the future. It is dedicated in memory of my grandparents who recently joined the ancestors: Ruth Solmitz Alcalá and Jorge Humberto Alcalá. It is also dedicated a mi mamá, without whom this work simply would not have been possible to complete. And it is dedicated to all those who (do and will) struggle against dreadful realities and uninspiring possibilities, and spend their days building a more beautiful world regardless of the pains, the haters, or the challenges.



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## Acronyms

**AIM:** American Indian Movement  
**ALBA:** Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association  
**AMMP:** Alternative Manure Management Program  
**ARC:** Agroecology Research-Action Collective  
**BIPOC:** Black, Indigenous, (and) People of Colour  
**BPP:** Black Panther Party  
**BRT:** Black radical tradition  
**CAFA:** Community Alliance for Agroecology  
**CAFF:** Community Alliance with Family Farmers  
**CalCAN:** California Climate and Agriculture Network  
**CASFS:** Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems  
**CCOF:** California Certified Organic Farmers  
**CDFA:** California Department of Food and Agriculture  
**CFJC:** California Farmer Justice Collaborative  
**CSA:** Community Supported Agriculture  
**DACA:** Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals  
**DAG:** Diversity Advisory Group  
**DEI:** Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion  
**ERPI:** Emancipatory Rural Politics Initiative  
**EZLN:** Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional  
**FNDI:** First Nations Development Institute  
**FVH:** Fruit, nut and vegetable crops  
**HEAL:** Health, Environment, Agriculture, and Labor Food Alliance  
**HRI:** Historical-Relational-Interactive

**IWW:** Industrial Workers of the World  
**JAFSCD:** Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development  
**NAFTA:** North American Free Trade Agreement  
**NBFJA:** National Black Food and Justice Alliance  
**NFFC:** National Family Farm Coalition  
**NGO:** Non-Governmental Organization  
**NPIC:** Non-Profit Industrial Complex  
**NYFC:** National Young Farmers Coalition  
**NLP:** National Land for People  
**PAeP:** People's Agroecology Process  
**POC:** People of Colour  
**ToCs / ToC:** Theories/Theory of Change  
**UFW:** United Farm Workers  
**US:** United States  
**USDA:** United States Department of Agriculture  
**USFSA:** US Food Sovereignty Alliance  
**4Rs:** Recognition, Redistribution, Representation, Regeneration



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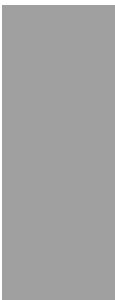
## Abstract

Since roughly the mid-2010s, rightwing politics have reappeared with force in various national arenas, laying out threats to social justice and ecological health on top of preexisting neoliberal-era social and ecological crises. This rise of the Right, and the consequences thereof, are tied to rural people, places, and processes, and agrarian politics in particular. Within this context and these links, those interested in progressive change that might push back against this rightwing surge have sought ‘convergence’ among various ‘emancipatory’ political movements: a stronger counter-hegemonic force through greater unity amidst movement diversity. Focusing on the case of California (where the author has spent decades engaged in food and farming movements), this research attends to the key role of ‘Others’ within the continuing interactive dynamic of rightwing and emancipatory politics. I look historically and at today’s rural and agrarian ‘Others’ – those who have been Othered or marginalized by their social class positions – to answer my central research question: *How do agrarian and rural movements in California describe and manifest emancipatory politics, and in what ways and to what extent might these politics counter historical trajectories and current manifestations of rightwing politics?* Utilizing a qualitative, historical, and relational activist-scholar methodology, informed by critical realism and critiques of purely positivist science, the study gathered data through secondary historical literature reviews, document analysis, and interviews and participant observation with food, farming, agrarian, and rural constituencies: farmworker-focused community organizations, environmental justice and urban food justice activists, ecofarming initiatives, people of colour farmers, Indigenous organizers, and agroecology researchers.

The study finds that emancipatory food and farming movements in recent decades are increasingly radical (meaning critical of and seeking to overcome capitalism and the capitalist nation state), as the voices of people of colour have been more often heard and heeded, both in movements and in society

at large. Although ‘emancipation’ means different and contradictory things across the movements I studied, this convergence towards radicality is notable and indicates shifts in societal conditions (particularly regarding race and racism). Solidarity in work across difference is challenged by race, economic class, gender, and other axes of marginalization and Othering, and different theories of change among movement groups and sectors, especially with regards to capitalism and the state. Multiple resulting tensions are navigated by movements, to varying degrees of conflict and synergy. Emancipatory food movements work against rightwing politics when strategies of ‘assimilation’ (uptake of mainstream values, goals, processes) and ‘valorization’ (defense and articulation of the values of being non-mainstream) used to counter Othering are complemented with efforts to create a larger ‘we’ across differences, while honoring those differences: a strategy of ‘differencing’. In the contemporary moment of racial reckoning in US society, assimilation, valorization, and differencing efforts have brought about greater alignment between the traditionally white-led ecofarming sector and more people of colour-led sectors, leading to more radical rhetoric and practice. Taken together, the research conclusions suggest that if supported by sympathetic scholarship and the less-radical sectors of food movements and civil society, new radical food movement directions may continue to develop as important beacons for emancipatory politics and barriers to rightwing political strength. An aspect of the new knowledge generated in this research is its emphasis on *non-state* movement elements and strategies. By conceptually unpacking and historicizing strategies against Othering and analyzing food movement theories of change – with analyses refracted through critical agrarian studies literatures and codeveloped by way of Black and Indigenous radical theories – I have concluded that non-state ideologies and actions are crucial to food movements’ deepened impact, on their own terms, but also in terms of opposing the rise of rightwing politics.

*Dutch thesis title*



## Een geschiedenis van *othering*, het tonen van solidariteit, en zicht op emancipatoire convergentie tussen voedsel- en landbouwbewegingen in Californië ten tijde van herrijzende rechtse macht

Sinds ongeveer halverwege de jaren tien van deze eeuw is politiek rechts weer sterk aanwezig in diverse landen, wat een bedreiging vormt voor de sociale rechtvaardigheid en ecologische gezondheid. Dit komt nog bovenop sociale en ecologische crises die ontstaan zijn in het neoliberale tijdperk. Deze opkomst van rechts en de gevolgen daarvan raken bewoners, plaatsen en processen op het platteland, en vooral de landbouwpolitiek. Binnen deze context en deze verbanden hebben voorstanders van progressieve verandering die deze rechtse golf zou kunnen tegengaan gezocht naar 'convergentie' tussen verschillende 'emancipatoire' politieke bewegingen: een sterkere tegenkracht door grotere eenheid in de diversiteit van bewegingen.

Dit onderzoek is gericht op Californië (waar de auteur tientallen jaren betrokken is geweest bij voedsel- en landbouwbewegingen). Het belicht de sleutelrol van 'others' (anderen) binnen de voortdurende interactieve dynamiek van rechtse en emancipatoire politiek. In dit onderzoek staan de 'others' van vroeger en nu die op het platteland wonen en/of werkzaam zijn in de landbouw centraal; de mensen die op grond van hun sociale klasse tot 'others' zijn verklaard of zijn gemarginaliseerd. De centrale onderzoeksvraag is: *Hoe beschrijven en realiseren agrarische en plattelandsbewegingen in Californië een emancipatoire politiek, en op welke manier en in welke mate kan deze politiek ingaan tegen historische patronen en huidige uitingen van rechtse politiek?*

In dit onderzoek wordt gebruikgemaakt van een kwalitatieve, historische en relationele activistisch-wetenschappelijke methodologie, gebaseerd op kritisch realisme en kritiek op zuiver positivistische wetenschap. De data zijn

verzameld door middel van secundair historisch literatuuronderzoek, documentanalyse en interviews met en participerende observatie van personen en groepen uit de voedsel-, boeren-, agrarische, en plattelandsgemeenschap: plaatselijke organisaties die zich richten op landarbeiders, activisten op het gebied van milieurechtvaardigheid en stedelijke voedselrechtvaardigheid, initiatieven voor ecologische landbouw, boeren van kleur, inheemse organisatoren en onderzoekers op het gebied van de agro-ecologie.

Uit het onderzoek blijkt dat de emancipatoire voedsel- en landbouwbewegingen de laatste decennia steeds radicaler zijn geworden (ze staan kritisch tegenover het kapitalisme en de kapitalistische natiestaat en proberen deze achter zich te laten) omdat de stemmen van mensen van kleur vaker hoorbaar zijn en aandacht krijgen, zowel in de bewegingen als in de samenleving als geheel. Hoewel 'emancipatie' in de voor dit onderzoek bestudeerde bewegingen verschillende en tegenstrijdige betekenissen heeft, is de tendens naar radicalisering opvallend. Deze wijst op verschuivingen in maatschappelijke omstandigheden (met name ten aanzien van ras en racisme).

Solidariteit op het gebied van werk die verschillen overstijgt, wordt op de proef gesteld door ras, economische klasse, gender en andere redenen voor marginalisering en *othering*, en door verschillende theorieën over verandering die groepen en sectoren van de bewegingen hanteren, vooral met betrekking tot kapitalisme en de staat. Dit zorgt voor allerlei spanningen waarop de bewegingen reageren met verschillende gradaties van conflict en synergie.

Emancipatoire voedselbewegingen werken rechtse politiek tegen wanneer strategieën van 'assimilatie' (overname van mainstream waarden, doelen, processen) en 'valorisatie' (verdediging en uitdrukking van de waarden van het niet-mainstream zijn) die worden gebruikt om *othering* tegen te gaan worden aangevuld met pogingen om een breder 'wij' te creëren dat verschillen overbrugt, terwijl die verschillen worden gerespecteerd. Dit is een strategie van *differencing*. In het huidige klimaat van raciale bewustwording in de Amerikaanse samenleving hebben inspanningen gericht op assimilatie, valorisatie en *differencing* ervoor gezorgd dat de van oudsher 'witte' sector van de ecologische landbouw en meer door mensen van kleur geleide sectoren meer op één lijn zijn gekomen. Dit heeft geleid tot een radicalere retoriek en werkwijze.

Alles bij elkaar wijzen de onderzoeksresultaten erop dat nieuwe radicale voedselbewegingen zich kunnen blijven ontwikkelen als een belangrijk baken voor emancipatoire politiek en tegenwicht voor rechtse politieke kracht, mits gesteund door sympathiserende wetenschappers en minder radicale sectoren van voedselbewegingen en het maatschappelijk middenveld. De nadruk op

elementen en strategieën van *niet-gouvernementele* bewegingen vormt een aspect van de nieuwe kennis die in dit onderzoek is ontwikkeld.

In dit onderzoek zijn strategieën tegen *othering* conceptueel ontleed en gehistoriseerd en zijn theorieën over verandering die voedselbewegingen hanteren geanalyseerd. Daarbij zijn de bevindingen getoetst aan de kritische agrarische onderzoeksliteratuur en mede ontwikkeld aan de hand van radicale theorieën van zwarte en inheemse bevolkingsgroepen. De conclusie van het onderzoek is dat niet-gouvernementele ideologieën en daden essentieel zijn voor een diepgaandere invloed van voedselbewegingen, op hun eigen voorwaarden, maar ook in termen van verzet tegen de opkomst van rechtse politiek.



## Preface

The ideas sparking the work of this dissertation began in 2017 with a conversation with Jun Borrás at the International Conference of La Vía Campesina in Derio, Basque Country. From there, I pursued the dissertation's themes of rightwing politics, emancipatory alternatives, and social movement dynamics through informal and formal "research" processes, including most valuably active participation in food movement efforts locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally (but focusing on my home base of California). Over the four years of official study, I have published a handful of related papers and blogs, hosted related webinars and conversations during the Covid-19 era, and developed the ideas contained within through repeated conversations with fellow researchers, activists, activist-researchers, friends and family. I can't appreciate enough how essential these conversations have been to the development of my understanding and ideas. For those interested, previous iterations of the material in this dissertation appeared in peer-reviewed journal articles (listed in references). This includes sections of Chapter 2 (based on a sole-authored article on "agrarian anarchism") and Chapter 4 (based on a co-authored article on the rise of US rightwing populism, and a single-authored paper on strategies against Othering). As usual, it is the author's responsibility to take credit for any failings of the resulting work: no doubt this is true. Yet, surely, given more time, dialogue, and collaborative reworking, the work's mistakes and limitations could have been better mitigated, while the responsibility for its contents could have been spread around further. This reminds me how academia could better allow research processes that are more inclusive, participatory, dialogical, and long-lasting. Until then, I hope this work serves some valuable purpose beyond my own.





## 1

## Introduction: Crises, Convergence, and Agrarian Social Movements

### 1.1. Crises of the Capitalocene

The twenty-first century has presented many challenges to social justice and ecological health. Ecologically, the era of human-induced climate changes has unequivocally begun, bringing with it climate disasters to all corners of the earth. Catastrophic floods, droughts, wildfires, and crop failures hit rich and poor countries alike, although with differential impacts. Humans are not the only victims, of course, as biodiversity contracts, species and habitat are lost, and seemingly irreversible changes to land, water, geology, and climate undermine prospects for the continuity of biological life on the only planet known *to* sustain life. This contextual macro-crisis is often framed in terms of the ‘Anthropocene’ – a new era in which ‘humans’ as an undifferentiated category contribute to, and are victims of, climate change, thus defining a new geological era of human influence. The Anthropocene concept has its problems and detractors, however (see Moore 2016). In pointing to the differentiated influence of varying human groups *on* climate change, as well as climate change’s differentiated *impacts* on such groups, critiques of the Anthropocene framing take issue with its political lumping together of all humanity (against the reality of a heavily unequal world), its ontological separation of ‘humans’ and ‘nature’, and the ways its discourses elide the central role of capitalism in driving growth-oriented expansion, extraction, and pollution processes. Moore (2016, 2017a) and others have called instead for recognition that we are living through the ‘Capitalocene’. Other scholars have addressed the particular relevance of Anthropocene/Capitalocene debates to agriculture and food systems (Reisman and Fairbairn 2020), but the important point is that global ecological systems – and food systems within them –

are undoubtedly in crisis, a crisis wrapped up in development processes and prospects.

The political sector looks no better. Liberal-capitalist republican democracy – the reigning champion in battles between competing political systems since at least the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union – is on the ropes, if not down for the count, pummeled by elected leaders around the world who openly scorn liberal values of tolerance, free debate, and equality under the law.<sup>1</sup> Some have described this as a surge of authoritarianism and populism, describing national leaders like India's Narendra Modi (Chacko 2018), Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro (Fortes 2016), Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Gürel et al 2019), or France's Marine Le Pen. More broadly, these are all formations of rightwing politics. Among many, McCarthy (2019: 302) offers one description of this contemporary condition:

Authoritarian and populist political configurations have emerged and either taken control of the state or come increasingly close to doing so in a very large and growing number of polities around the world over the past decade, including many of the world's largest, most powerful, and most iconic democratic countries. Although the specific trajectories and genealogies of these political formations are always unique at some level, they also share many general features: nationalism articulated and justified in the name of frighteningly exclusive and often racialized iterations of “the people”; the demonization of alleged enemies internal and external; support for and selection of authoritarian leaders who rise to power by exciting such fears and promising simple, direct, often brutal action to protect and strengthen the nation; and contempt for and direct assaults on democratic norms and institutions.

On the ground, the rise of such authoritarian and populist demagogues has led to increases in polarization, street violence and hate crimes, political instability, and uncertainty about the future. In addition, the wave of rightwing victories has served largely to consolidate and exacerbate the environmentally extractive tendencies of industrial society. This condition is hyper-present in the United States of America (US), where the surprise 2016 election of elite scion, failed real estate businessman and reality TV star Donald J. Trump to the presidency shocked many. During his tenure,

the shock did not let up, with the Trump administration's litany of scandals, improprieties, disasters and attacks continuing unabated, generating pundit incredulity and generalized stress among the populace.

Then came the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020, upending societal stability that was already in short supply. In the US, where I am from and where this research project is based and focused upon, (post)pandemic conditions were additionally rocked by months-long uprisings against police brutality and the racialized, anti-Black societal order upon which it stands. The contrast of a racist president forwarding a barely masked white supremacist/white nationalist agenda (Maskovsky 2017), and a populace – urban and rural, multi-ethnic, and besieged by social isolation and economic crisis – rising up to proclaim that 'Black Lives Matter' – could not seem starker.

#### 1.1.1. Trump studies, the white working class, and Othering

Academically, 'Trump studies' has exploded since the 2016 US election – seeking to understand his rise, his constituency of voters, and ways to counteract Trumpism's corrosive effects on society. This dissertation began its formation in 2017, as part of this 'Trump studies' wave. Based on my experience in 'food justice' and 'food sovereignty' movements, I desired to understand the Trump 'problematique' from two particular vantage points. First was to focus on the rural and agrarian aspects to Trump's victory and his political lineage. This precisely was the call of the 'Emanipatory Rural Politics Initiative' (or 'ERPI'), initiated in 2017 by a collective of critical agrarian scholars and their respective institutions, which suggested a key role for rural and agrarian scholars in understanding the regressive political moment and potential responses, globally and nationally (see Scoones et al. 2018). Second was to investigate these aspects from the perspective of sectors of the US population that have been historically marginalized (including those sectors in food and farming contexts) and that continue to face marginalization under Trump and the established political-economic order.

Plenty of scholars have tackled questions regarding the role of the (rural) 'white working class' in relation to the rise of Trump, perhaps inadvertently constituting these as *the most salient* questions. That is: why did the white majority (including working class and rural voters) vote for

Trump? For instance, Gidron and Hall (2017: 58) looking at populist revivals across the globe say they seek to contribute to the question ‘why is there so much support for populist candidates and causes on the populist right among white working-class men?’ As well-known populism scholar Cas Mudde and co-author Cristobál Kaltwasser (2018: 1674) noted at the time,

The shock outcomes of Brexit and Trump took both academics and pundits by surprise. Struggling to come up with a quick explanation, two camps emerged. One argues that Brexit and Trump are the consequences of “economic anxiety,” the other hold that “cultural backlash” is the key explanation. Thousands of news articles have since been published on the merits of both approaches, while a new coterie of academic research has started to build up around it too.

Some analysts, especially in popular media, indeed settled on theses of either ‘cultural backlash’ (sometimes called ‘racial backlash’ because of the strong influence of white status anxiety; see Inglehart and Norris 2017) or ‘economic anxiety’ (that is, populist nationalism in response to neoliberalism-wrought immiseration; e.g. Zeitz 2017). Most scholars building on existing theorization of populism, however, have consciously addressed the combination or interaction of these perspectives (e.g. Gidron and Hall 2017, Manuel 2017, Mudde and Kaltwasser 2018). As Edelman (2021: 506) put it:

The “economic” and “racial resentment” explanations for the rise of Trump, and of authoritarian populism more broadly, cannot be neatly separated. Much of the U.S. population suffers severe economic stress, which in turn generates physical and emotional stress, and this is closely associated with fear and hatred of outgroups and susceptibility to authoritarian appeals.

Those scholars who, like Edelman (2021), have opted to start with a combination of these explanatory factors, have also hinted at an implied relationality beyond the white working class itself: how do these factors of the white working class relate to *non-white* sectors? What of the relation of urbanity to rurality? How has whiteness and economic class evolved and intersected in generating this electoral outcome? Indeed, paying attention to non-white voices would have shown immediately that Trump’s election was not a ‘shock’ to all observers. Many writers and activists have contended with the political ill-treatment of Black, Indigenous, and other Peo-

ple of Colour (BIPOC<sup>2</sup>) and the role of persistent white supremacist racism and misogyny in US politics, from the country's reckoning with slavery and abolition, to today's 'Me Too' and 'Black Lives Matter' movements. I address today's Trump/rurality literature further on (in Chapter 3), but here I note simply that, while helpful, the overarching electoral frame and white working class-focus of earlier studies insufficiently take up extra-parliamentary and BIPOC perspectives, and thus do not satisfactorily capture a complex, relational, intersectional (that is, multi-factorial) view of rurality, rural politics, populist nationalism, and emancipatory possibilities.

More recent efforts have indeed begun to address more specifically rural aspects of the particular US brand of 'authoritarian populism' (see Roman-Alcalá et al. 2021's introduction to a special issue in *Journal of Rural Studies* on the subject). But how various, varying, and often opposed rural, agrarian, and food-focused societal sectors contribute to both the construction and dismantling of authoritarianism and populism (as elements of rightwing politics) is yet to be fully explored in academic research, perhaps partly because of the newness of the contemporary phenomenon. For instance, farmworkers in the US are largely Latinx migrants, and migrants are regularly demonized and 'Othered' by Trump. This research posits as a starting point that 'Othering' – '*a set of dynamics, processes, and structures that engender marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identities*' (powell and Menendian 2016: 17) – is key to agrarian-political economy in the US context. But what can explain the contradiction that Latinx migrant workers are needed by the agriculture industry yet 'Othered' by political representatives associated with that industry's constituency? How does anti-immigrant discourse weigh on rural and agricultural realities, reflecting upward to state action and downwards to 'hearts and minds' across the conventionally-described two-party divide? Also, what do farmworkers see as their political options given this circumstance?

### 1.1.2. Critical agrarian studies and movement convergence

Meanwhile, since the mid-1990s an explosion in 'food studies' at large (including 'critical agrarian studies') have tackled concerns about ecological sustainability, but also social (in)justice in food systems, and the intersection of justice and ecology frames – as in 'food justice' and 'food sovereignty' studies.<sup>3</sup> Increased scholarly output has also included attention to US urban agriculture and food justice projects, which have been built

largely by people of colour to address interlinked ecological/social problems. Although social science researchers increasingly are integrating marginalized perspectives into their studies of food systems and food systems change, the relevance and insights from these studies have not been brought to bear extensively on the problematique of rightwing resurgence. There are parallel interests in development studies, with its longstanding interest in marginalized populations within changing political economies, in terms of race, ethnicity, caste, generation, gender, and so on (e.g. Agarwal 2003, Gidwani & Ramamurthy 2018, White 2012) – a literature which likewise could better be brought into dialogue with current research on rightwing US politics and its newer manifestations of ‘authoritarian populism’.

Furthermore, it has been an analytical (research) and practical (social activist) challenge to address a multitude of axes of marginalization, discrimination, and ecological degeneration within food systems *together*, as an integrated whole. How can we understand the relations within this whole? For instance, much has been made of the ‘small-scale’ and ‘eco’ agricultural sector and evolving ‘alternative food networks’ (Tregear 2011) that have emerged in the US as ideologically-driven responses to the corporate industrial agriculture mainstream, achieving even federal laws to create the ‘organic’ certification label and mainstreaming in market discourses of ‘Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability’<sup>4</sup>. Yet this sector is subject to the same capitalist market pressures as larger, more industrialized farms; it often utilizes the same undercompensated migrant sources of labour; its foundation of land is that which settler-colonialism stole from Indigenous peoples, and its agricultural wealth is thus by nature wealth consolidated on dispossession and genocide – however far removed. Environmentally-focused non-profit organizations have worked with ‘alternative’ and mainstream food networks and farms to encourage practical changes – but whether these strategies have made decent ecological headway is an open debate among movements: as one example, drip (rather than sprinkler) irrigation has allowed more efficient water use, while expanding water-thirsty tree crops into less irrigable territories; in turn compounding a groundwater over-drafting pumping crisis that industrial agriculture itself has created (see Arax 2019: 102). Drip irrigation, it seems, may simply redesign extractive agriculture while leaving untouched the human exploitation upon which it relies.

In practice, it is not clear if social justice struggles interested in fundamental changes to food systems are in fact aligned with environmental initiatives. One might even question if varying ‘pro-justice’ initiatives are aligned with each other, across reformist to radical interests and ideals – or if, for example, the interests of farmworkers on large-scale industrial farms can be meaningfully sutured to the struggles of urban working classes for access to healthy, affordable food.

To activists confronting unjust and environmentally harmful food and farming systems, I argue, these are not esoteric considerations. Even when unspoken, many activists grapple with the need to reach across social borders and gain buy-in from others for one’s own struggles, the need to find political solutions in dialogue with other sectors, and the need to build power collectively against entrenched systems of concentrated ownership and control. Academically, such needs, noted time and again, are sometimes brought together under the name of social movement ‘convergence’. ‘Convergence’ may be thought of as a moment of unity among counter-hegemonic movements, or among working people and non-elites more broadly (since at times these do not identify as part of ‘movements’ *per se*).<sup>5</sup> Unity can be objective and unselfconscious (as when convergent pressures from different political angles pressure the state to withdraw an unpopular policy), and it can be subjective and overtly worked towards. The latter kind of convergence is my main concern in this research, as it denotes passage from groups acting as classes ‘in themselves’ to acting ‘for themselves’, but *with others*. As one of my interviewees (a leader in an ecological farming organization) explained, regarding going against entrenched agribusiness power in California,

We can’t get bills passed unless we don’t piss off big Ag[riculture]. I mean, that’s what it really comes down to. We can’t get Ag bills passed most of the time unless we get the silence of big Ag. It’s just the way it works in agriculture policy here. Unless we had a much more robust and powerful bloc of multisectoral influence. I think personally that’s got to come from the environmental justice world. I just don’t see any other way because they’re very powerful; they’ve built a huge powerful political presence in the [state] capital over the past decade or so.<sup>6</sup>

The idea of convergence has been discussed by movements themselves for decades. Earlier revolutionary socialists debated the value of convergence with bourgeois republican parties in ‘united fronts’ against fascism,

as in 1930s Spain (Evans 2020). Early in the twentieth century, the main question seems to have been on how to unite the working class. Later, these debates more directly confronted how to combine class interests and specific issue – and identity-based movements into greater potential alliances (Laclau & Mouffe 1985), a concern that parallels the rise of the ‘so-called “new social movements”’ of the 1960s, which Nunes (2021: 60) describes as distinguished by ‘an attention to issues outside the sphere of production, an emphasis on questions of individual autonomy and self-expression, a sharp eye for the risks of hierarchical organizations and the limits of institutional interventions’. Convergence as a theme in social theory can be seen in uptakes of interest in global social movement convergence (Tramel 2018), ‘Left populism’<sup>7</sup>, and more seemingly-microlevel concepts like ‘intersectionality’ (Bohrer 2018). Intersectionality points out the complex nature of overlapping social identities and structures of oppression, suggesting that any effective political movement must appeal to and bring together various and diverse social groups, mounting a challenge to interlocked oppressions like white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalist class control. Such moments of unification can achieve changes at a surprising scale and pace, making the impossible possible, and have thus been discussed by both movements and sympathetic theorists as sorely needed. A long tradition of debate about convergence and convergence strategy can be found in the works of early US thinkers of various non-mainstream backgrounds, such as the formerly-enslaved abolitionist author Frederick Douglass and early feminist suffragette Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who debated whether to push for Black male voting rights in tandem with, or in advance of, the same rights for women. Many other thinkers, from the Black female journalist Ida B. Wells and her attention to the particular challenges of Black women in the US, to early Native American memoirist Sarah Winnemucca’s 1883 (semi)autobiographical pleas for better treatment of Indigenous peoples, shaped from the nineteenth century on the country’s sense of itself and its population’s understanding of political possibilities, including convergence.

Although the challenge of movement convergence is not new, some aspects of it are. Leftists have for centuries theorized how to unite working classes in diverse circumstances into common struggles against common enemies. This research project certainly builds on longstanding interest in development studies, critical agrarian studies, and food studies in political-



economic change from a leftist social change perspective. The main academic tradition relevant here is of the Marxist variety, with its central attention to class dynamics, but again, we should recall that many thinkers have contended with the same subjects from outside of Marxism proper or with Marxism as only one strand of their thinking.<sup>8</sup> Marxism has engaged with issues of social difference beyond economic class itself, going back to Friedrich Engels (1884) and Rosa Luxemburg's (1909) respective explorations of gender and 'the national question' and their relations to capitalist processes. Since that early theorizing, twentieth-century developments in theory and practice of social movement struggle have solidified the necessity of Marxist class theory that is intersectional. As the recently-formed Marxist journal *Spectre* puts it: 'How should the fact of difference – whether in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, sex, nationality, or something else entirely – impact our analyses of capitalism and strategies for bringing it to its long overdue end?' (Spectre 2021)

As an intersectional-Marxist approach would suggest, convergence among specific sectors of the working class must be understood with regard to the particularities of various subject positions, and how they articulate (or don't) in specific political times and spaces. This intersectional Marxism forms the theoretical starting point that this research project takes, in order to address the implications for potential food and farming social movement convergence of interwoven issues such as colonial legacies of land relations, the aspirations of 'alternative' agricultures, gendered and racialized social structures and outcomes, and political-economic changes. My interest in convergence, viewed from a consistently intersectional-Marxist perspective, forms a through-line to the study's theoretical framework, which also encompasses ideas and approaches from ethnic and cultural studies, political ecology, and the political theory of anarchism. This theoretical synthesis emerged from a recursive exploration of Othering as central to rightwing politics, and the emancipation-focused theoretical and social movement contributions of various sectors of Others'.<sup>9</sup> This exploration was informed by a *methodological* theory that attends consistently to the historical groundedness and ontologically relational nature of these contributions (see Chapter 3's methodological discussion based on Schiavoni [2017]). For instance, in beginning to look at Others and Othering, I found that the state-critical valence of theories and practices of Black radicalism and Indigenous resurgence suggested folding in insights from anarchism's more state-critical theories of emancipation.

This recursive and inclusive theory development links to my participatory, engaged methodology and ethic, which seeks to break down barriers between ‘theory’ and ‘movements’ and contribute to the development of both, ideally with resulting synthetic, dialogical forms of knowledge. The lens of Othering, alongside the through-line of convergence, led me also to some new conceptual-theoretical tools towards this end. In particular, to seeing how Othering’s opposite (solidarity) appears in three forms: *assimilation*, *valorization*, and *differencing* (see elaboration in Chapters 2 and 4). Along the way, I have had to grapple with food justice and food sovereignty as movement motivations, goals, and descriptions of political content; and the relation of such content to the elements of emancipatory change sought by movements: notably redistribution, recognition, representation, and regenerative human-nonhuman relations. In seeking to understand how rightwing politics and agrarian-political economy dynamically interrelate with emancipatory politics, these conceptual tools and theories in combination led me finally to look at the ‘theories of change’ in California’s rural and agrarian movements, and their influence on and relation to convergence (the subject of Chapter 6).

In order to reflect properly the recursive process of developing (in interaction with movement informants) this wide-ranging theoretical framework, I will elaborate on the study’s theoretical elements throughout the dissertation, chapter by chapter, woven together with empirical elaboration, rather than attempt a ‘massive theoretical exegesis at the beginning’ (Watts 2013 [1983]: xxiii).

### 1.1.3. The Californian case in context

Although the larger framing of this dissertation is located in national-level politics, and the shifts in federal governmental power indicating the rise of rightwing politics, the study proceeds informed both by global intersections and local specificities. I seek not to linger on or prioritize the nation-state view, instead seeing politics as always multi-scalar and relational across scales (Iles & Montenegro 2015, Roman-Alcalá 2016). Regarding the global, I bring in relevant literature on global food regimes (Friedmann & McMichael 1989, Friedmann 2005), other instances of rightwing politics in the contemporary moment, and internationally-generated movements and concepts like ‘food sovereignty’. Furthermore, the study narrows empirically on California. California as a case holds relevance for many development studies concepts, contexts, theories, and practices. California is

both an exemplar of dynamics seen elsewhere, and a unique case with its own dynamics. In this research, I treat California as not exceptional within the US context, acknowledge its similarities and similarly patterned connections with other agrarian (and other societal) changes and structures, but avoid presenting the state's dynamics as simply the same as the rest of the country or world – its differences and particularities, and uniquely consequential interactions with other regions, are noted in the research as relevant. As discussed further in Chapter 3, I selected California for linked personal, methodological, and political reasons.

As a brief introduction to California's place in agrarian studies interest, we might quickly outline how Bernstein's (2010) four central questions of agrarian-political economy might be answered for the state today. In terms of 'who owns what', 'who does what', 'who gets what', and 'what do they do with the surplus created by production', there is a relatively stark contrast (similar to capitalist agrarian economies globally) between owners of the land and classes of labour. Land concentration has a long pedigree, going back to the few but large Spanish land grants made under California's first era of European colonization. Large-acreage holdings continued under the Mexican era, and into the beginning of California's entry into the United States (via war-enforced annexation). '[I]n 1846, when the United States took possession [of California], over eight million acres of California land were held by some eight hundred Mexican grantees' (McWilliams 1978 [1935]: 13). Mostly, land use went to basic industry and extractive enterprise, such as logging, hunting, grazing cattle, and large-scale wheat production. Later land grants associated with the federal Morrill Acts of 1862 (which gave land to public universities to develop the frontier economy) and the same year's Homestead Act generated new dynamics of land access but this was still heavily weighted towards large land holdings (in part due to consistently fraudulent claims and later, workarounds for the grants' acreage limits), even if the Acts' stated intention was to support small-scale family homesteading. The railroad companies also accumulated acres, by 1870, some twenty million across the state (McWilliams 1978 [1935]: 15).

All of these government-driven processes of commodifying land and dividing it up among elites (and non-elites seeking social mobility via land and resource wealth) ended up excluding many non-European populations: Blacks, Chinese, Japanese, and others were prevented from owning

land by law and by discriminatory practice. Indigenous people were alienated from their original territories.<sup>10</sup> The result is today that land-owning demographics are very unrepresentative of the current composition of the state's population: according to a report utilizing United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Census data from 2012, white people own 90 per cent of California farmland while composing less than 40 per cent of the population (Spitler 2018: 1). Whites also compose nearly 80 per cent of farm operators, while 25,000 farmers and ranchers self-identifying as BIPOC make up the remaining 21 per cent (ibid). Indigenous people from almost 200 tribes (with about half being federally recognized) compose approximately 1.8 per cent of the population (California Court Forum n.d.), and collectively manage '511,000 of the state's 104 million acres' (Romero-Briones et al. 2020:7). Farmers themselves are more diverse than landowners (since many farmers lease land), but more whites own farms than any other category, while the state's labour force is almost universally composed of Latinxs and migrant workers (Spitler 2018: 1). Those workers are paid poverty wages (Martin et al. 2017, Strohlic & Rittenhouse 2013), and exposed to various dangers of industrial farm work, including pesticide exposure (CPR 1999), overheating (Wadsworth et al. 2019), and lack of access to healthcare (CIRS 2001), even during a pandemic (COFS 2020). Although the labour requirements of California's diverse agricultures are of course diverse, the intensive labour required in fruit, nut, and vegetable farming, makes labour a volatile issue in the state. According to Martin et al. (2017: 107),

California has led the nation in farm sales since 1950, when Los Angeles County had more farm sales than any other county in the United States, largely because of specialization in the production of high-value fruit, nut and vegetable (FVH) crops. California's farm sales in 2015 were \$47 billion, including \$18 billion from the sale of fruits and nuts, \$9 billion from vegetables and melons, and \$5 billion from horticultural specialties such as floriculture, nurseries and mushrooms. That is, \$32 billion, or two-thirds, of farm sales were from these FVH crops. The leading farm counties, Tulare, Kern and Fresno, each had farm sales of almost \$7 billion in 2015.

Largely because of this emphasis on FVH crops, 'Hired workers, rather than self-employed farm operators and their families, do most of the work on the state's largest farms that produce almost all labor-intensive FVH crops. Most California farmworkers were born in Mexico, and 60% of

crop workers employed on the state's crop farms have been unauthorized for the past decade' (Martin et al. 2017a: 30).

Another issue of 'who gets what' is water access, a fundamental precondition of successful agriculture in the arid and seasonally dry climate of California. Water access falls along lines of power and money, as corporate agribusinesses maneuver legally (and sub-legally) to divert snowpack from the state's Sierra Nevada range into their fields (see histories in Reisner 1993, Arax 2019). As far as surplus generation, while by no means even and consistent, surplus from agricultural and extractive industries have built family empires in land ownership and capital management that continue to this day (Simons 2021). The surplus generated by farming in California has contributed to the US's success in World War II, to California's rapid industrialization and urbanization in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and to the twentieth-century development of greater transnational capitalist agribusiness (see Walker 2004, Zlotniski 2019).

This study contributes to understanding emancipatory politics in rural and agrarian contexts, via analysis of illustrative examples from food and farming social movements in the historical and contemporary US – with a focus on California. By detailing the dynamics of struggles against Othering the study aids understanding of the multiple roles of Othering in recent politics, and ways social sectors have worked against Othering through various forms of solidarity. In analyzing the interaction of Othering and solidarity, in the context of larger societal forces and diverse subject positions, the study clarifies some of the issues that challenge, prevent, allow, or encourage convergence. The research thus uncovers some mechanisms involved in convergence, while understanding these as non-deterministic, taking place within non-linear historical, relational, and interactive contexts. It explores specific instances and rooted lineages of Othering and solidarity, developing conceptual tools to understand how these constitute and oppose rightwing politics, while making and unmaking existing and 'alternative' food systems.

## 1.2. Research questions

Based on the problematique and research gap described briefly here and elaborated further in Chapter 2, I have focused on the following central

research question: **How do agrarian and rural movements in California describe and manifest emancipatory politics, and in what ways and to what extent might these politics counter historical trajectories and current manifestations of rightwing politics?**

Sub-questions have been developed in moving from the historical to the contemporary:

1. **How has ‘Othering’ been constructed in US agrarian and rural contexts, and what attempts at countering Othering can be observed, since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century? To what extent have agrarian structures (over time and at multiple levels of analysis) been constructed through processes of Othering, and how and to what degree have movements for emancipation used strategies of solidarity?**
2. **What historical continuities are there past to present, both in the Othering and attempts to counter Othering, as well as any emerging/new trends being seen today that may in some way break/differ from the past, both toward and away from emancipation?**
3. **How do contemporary subaltern agrarian and rural movements in California conceive of ‘emancipatory politics’ and organize for it?**
4. **How and to what extent might these politics counter historical trajectories and current manifestations of rightwing politics?**

#### 1.2.1. Research motivation and relevance

My background is in organizing change in agrarian systems, starting as an urban farmer, and spanning a succession of roles in non-profit organizations, farm businesses, volunteering in unincorporated activist groups, and conducting research and teaching in both formal university settings and outside them. I am convinced of the evidence that major ecological and social problems result from the mainstream (corporate, capitalist, industrial) food system, and believe my life’s work is (in part) to address these

problems. As such, this research is personal, political, and a reflection of my long-term commitments to making change in the food system towards justice and sustainability. Important to shaping how this research developed – its initial foundation of thought and practice – was my early activism *outside* of food systems, wherein I was exposed to and took up anti-racist ideas in confronting issues like the late 1990s gentrification in my hometown of San Francisco (an issue that brought together dynamics of race, economic class, and migration status), as well as anti-imperialist ideas in participating in anti-war efforts in the early 2000s.

As I have moved from a position and identity as ‘activist’ (or ‘organizer’), to a life that involved the worlds of academia and research, I now find myself learning ‘activist scholarship’ by attempting to conduct it, and by learning from the example of others (Bevington & Dixon 2005, Borras 2016, Derickson & Routledge 2015). In previous papers and book chapters, I have looked at movements I have been involved with, with a critical eye. Mainly, this critical view is meant to gauge the movements’ effectiveness towards their stated goals (Havens & Roman-Alcalá 2016, Roman-Alcalá 2015, Roman-Alcalá & Glowa 2020). However, I have also long been interested in underlying and linked questions, such as understanding the potential role in progressive change of the (national) state; or how movements might cohere within circumstances of intensive diversity in identity, backgrounds, class interests, culture, worldviews, and belief systems. This dissertation study is motivated in part by a desire to continue the trajectory of this prior work, and to deepen my own theoretical, methodological, and practical tool sets in order to be more effective in both the ‘activist’ and ‘scholarship’ aspects of activist scholarship.

Within this scholar-activist tradition, there are different approaches. One central dichotomy is between those who study ‘the problem(s)’ and those who study ‘the solution(s)’. In favour of the first, some, like anthropologist Laura Nader (1972) advocate for ‘studying up’, in order to better understand and better counter the power of the political and economic elites who are seen as driving processes of injustice and unsustainability. Many activists themselves, however, find that the problems are well known, and that facts are not the only drivers of action and change, and therefore that sometimes we need to focus on identifying and elevating the solutions to the problems, in order to refine them, expand them out from their origins, and connect those working to develop these solutions (‘solutionaries’) with other actors. That is, some see the role of scholarship

as more useful insofar as it provides models to emulate and support; inspiration, rather than continuous (and dreadful) reports about how this corporation is specifically lying and polluting, or that politician specifically manipulates and deceives. This study is motivated by a combination of these two interests. Knowing (from experience and previous research) that (a) social movements are capable of acting problematically in themselves, (b) action against problems is well-served by understanding the problems well, and (c) that the problems and solutionary movements within agrarian systems are actually imbricated, and not well described in black and white terms, it behooves change-seekers to understand the problems, the solutions, *and the ways they interact*. These roughly correspond to (in this study): the rise of the rightwing in the context of existing agrarian injustice/un-sustainability; the variety of social actors/movements already enacting strategies towards emancipatory change; and the complex spaces and political processes in which these competing interests collide and play out.

Thus, I am motivated to conduct this research to better understand these three components in nuanced and evidenced ways, in order to better intervene in each part effectively.

### 1.2.2. Relevance to development studies and ongoing theorization of the state

Typically, the United States of America is not seen as a ‘developing’ country. So why study it to understand development? One reason is that, in this time of Capitalogenic climate change, agrarian and environmental changes have begun to make less useful traditional distinctions among global economies, as the not-all-that-new phenomena of globalization links developed and developing countries all the more together. Certainly, distinctions between countries of poorer and richer, more or less industrialized, and so on, may be made. But through the same global political-economic development that has generated climate crisis, ‘third worlds in the first’ have been generated – growing pockets of destitution in countries considered ‘wealthy’ – and ‘first worlds in the third’ – a growing multipolarity of capitalist and political elites that are no longer so limited to the Transatlantic world. In terms of the political economies of agrarian and rural development, research is clear that ‘core’ and ‘periphery’ are linked in ways that distinguish the specificities of each place’s location within a global order, but also that bring them together through parallel processes. That is, processes of change advance in relationship, causing both uneven and unequal



development (Amin 1976, Rodney 2018 [1972]), but also *similar development* in forms of market organization, politics, environmental change, subjectivity formation, and social movement organization. For instance, investment decisions by actors in Brazil, China, and the USA affect the politics and ecological impacts of soy farming in Bolivia and most often consolidate extraction from periphery to core (or emerging core) countries. At the same time, the professedly anti-neoliberal politics of ‘Pink Tide’ Bolivia and Brazil have resulted in their targeting by the political power of national and international capital, leading to constitutional coups and rightward turns in administration (Andrade 2020, Tilzey 2019); this turn is also apparent in the US, exemplified by the election of Donald Trump, even if from very different origins. Brazil’s Jair Bolsonaro and Trump form part of a global surge in rightwing political state power – a surge that due to its link to rural populations and extractivist processes that particularly implicate rural industries, is of deep concern for critical agrarian studies (Arsel et al. 2021, Borras 2020, Edelman 2021). Such parallels, their interconnections and relationships, should be investigated at the level of countries, within them, and between them.<sup>11</sup> This study contributes to that larger project by looking more deeply at the specificities of the US case, contributing to critical agrarian studies concepts and analysis of potential use beyond the US.

Because many observers concerned with environmental sustainability and social justice are greatly disturbed by rightward-turning political developments (fearing exacerbation of an already precarious political-economic status quo), there has been a frantic grappling with the problems of rightwing resurgence and a search for effective responses. One such response has been a call for convergence among counter-hegemonic movements (and working people and non-elites<sup>12</sup> broadly such as peasants and Indigenous peoples), in order to build up the counter-power necessary to beat back regressive state administrations, whether at the ballot boxes, through public ‘hearts and minds’, or on the street (Borras 2020).

The challenge of convergence is not new, but – in today’s world of cascading crises, climate breakdowns, and complexifying social identities in diversifying polities like the USA – some aspects of it might be. Capitalism remains an underlying structural force upon which various key ingredients to the contemporary moment interact (for example, extractivism, state intervention, worker dynamics and changes in class composition as a result of political-economic shifts, dominant and counter-hegemonic

ideologies and discourses). Due to Marxism's well-developed attention to capitalist dynamics, Marxist class theory remains an essential tool for social theory that seeks to understand the current moment. At the same time, *intersectional* Marxism has been solidified as a branch within Marxism by twentieth and twenty-first century developments in theory and practice of social movement struggle – bringing in non-economic class elements to bear on class dynamics (in a non-reductionist way), and vice versa (Levien et al. 2018, Bohrer 2018, Bhattacharya 2017). This includes attention to such subject positions and influences as race, gender, indigeneity, (dis)ability, sexuality, immigration status, ethnicity, generation, and so on – attention deepened by Euro-Marxist interaction with BIPOC and non-Marxist thinkers. Such intersectional 'class and identity' dynamics require 'dialectical' analyses to see 'how working classes are constituted in and through (i.e. internally related to) multiple social differences' (McNally 2015: 131) and how relations operate within a social reality whole (McNally 2017).

Marxist theory also has a long history of theorizing the state (in both descriptive and normative registers), from Marx's and Engels' studies of the origins of the state, its class dynamic, and whether and how revolutionary movements could use state power to bring about a transition from capitalism to socialism. In coarse (or caricatured) form, contrasting to liberal theories that see the state as an arbiter standing above or aside competing social forces, Marxism has viewed the state as primarily an instrument of ruling (capitalist) class power. But this leaves out much of the nuance of its original thinkers and theorizing since. Much of the Marxist literature may agree in part with sociologist Max Weber's famous (1919 [2004]: 33) definition of the state as a 'human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory'. But Marxists are more concerned with how class power relations appear in state processes rather than assuming (as some following the Weberian tradition might) that the state and state actors institutionally act above or outside class dynamics. Weber's initial work has inspired 'Neo-Weberian' analysis of state operations which, in contrast to the Marxist and anarchist approaches preferred here, tend to take a 'top down' or *state-centric* view of states (rather than see them in dynamic interaction with social forces from below; see Seabrooke 2002), and to analyze states on their own terms and with regards to their own needs and ability to achieve their own ends (rather than assess the efficacy of states and varying state forms towards achieving normative goals of ecology or justice).

Antonio Gramsci (1971) was a twentieth-century Marxist who advanced state theorizing in multiple ways, developing ‘insights geared to explaining the state–civil society relationship, which had changed during the historically delimited era of mass politics in advanced bourgeois societies’ (Humphrys 2018: 36) – an era that continues to today. Gramsci’s concept of the ‘integral state’ challenged accounts of state (‘political society’) and society (‘civil society’) as dualistically contrasted, as opposed to dialectically related as a whole (Bosteels 2014), forming an early example of a state-*and*-society Marxist approach to state theory. Per Gramsci (1971: 263), ‘we might say that State = political society + civil society, in other words hegemony protected by the armour of coercion’. Humphrys (2018: 30) argues Gramsci’s ‘conception of the integral state can help draw out the complex contradictions and interconnections between capitalist social relations, civil society, political society and the state apparatus.’ This then grounds a theory of the state (as *state apparatus* – what typically is casually seen as ‘the state’) in ever-present antagonisms between elements within the integral state. Antagonisms are found in efforts to achieve or build hegemony via a ‘historic bloc’ – fractions of state and civil society leveraging every available institution (including media, education, political parties) to build a ‘common sense’ in favour of its political-social vision for society. Although ultimately still based on a Marxist view of the capitalist state as a location where the capitalist class shapes or attempts to lead society, Gramsci’s work emphasized the diverse manners in which this occurred, and the opportunities working classes had to operate on the field of the integral state, in both ‘politics’ and ‘society’, to seek hegemony via the state apparatus and civil society. Like Gramsci’s concern for hegemony as a combination of coercion and consent, scholars since have followed a line of inquiry into state-society relations that combines these considerations, such as Migdal’s (1994) and Fox’s (1993) work that proceeds from acknowledgement that contemporary capitalist states operate by balancing capitalist accumulation and societal legitimacy. Such balancing entails the generation of consent and various acts of coercion (enacted chronically via legal systems in order to reproduce class society, and in sporadic instances to quell disruptions arising from dissent to class society’s effects). The question remains of how legitimacy is maintained in specific instances, and how much legitimacy is important to a state’s continued functioning.

After Gramsci came Nicos Poulantzas (1969) and his debate with Miliband (1970), on the nature of the state as an instrument of class power. Miliband's description of and explanation for class power in the state pointed to the influence of state actors' existing social positions as owners of the means of production, their socialization in elite worlds, and the networked relationships among elites as influences on how the state (as a whole) ends up making policy – a theme taken up by William Domhoff (1967[2013]) and later analysts in the twenty-first century like Gilens and Page (2014). Poulantzas' concept of the state's 'relative autonomy' began from a structuralist view that emphasizes the state as a reflection of class forces in society, but also recognized that states involve their own interests, and that state actors act at times independently of (some fractions of) capitalist interests. The structuralist view, which translated into normative terms seems to delimit the agency of both working classes and political actors (as the state is wont to support capitalist development in the final instance), is also seen in Fred Block's (1977: 7-8) proposition that 'the ruling class does not rule;' that is, that 'the capacity of capitalism to rationalize itself [to reproduce its hegemony via consent and the rule of state law] is the outcome of a conflict among three sets of agents – the capitalist class, the managers of the state apparatus, and the working class. Rationalization occurs "behind the backs" of each set of actors so that rationality cannot be seen as a function of the consciousness of one particular group'. Gilens and Page (2014: 578) describe how

Block (1977) makes a critical distinction between "instrumentalist" Marxist theories like Miliband's, in which politically conscious members of ruling class use their economic resources to shape state action in their own material interests, and "structural" theories, in which the capitalist economic system itself tends to shape state policies and the preferences of its citizens—including workers, who are compelled to accept low wages and high capitalist profits for the sake of future investment and growth.

Poulantzas's later work (1978: 128-129) understood the state as inherently tied to the reproduction of capitalist relations, but as a contested space where the balance of class forces in society are congealed in state power moment to moment. Just as Marxism's view of social classes should be taken as processual and relational, rather than static and as a means of defining class elements ontologically, Poulantzas' approach to the state saw its form, its content, and its possibilities as contested by the action of

class agents inside and outside of its apparatus. To some socialists, following the descriptive state theories of Poulantzas and Gramsci leads normatively to a strategy inclusive of struggling for the apparatus of the state, as it remains an open possibility that the ‘balance of class forces’ could shift, allowing the state to advance certain working-class interests.<sup>13</sup> Bob Jessop is another influential Marxist state theorist, who has written extensively on Poulantzas and Gramsci. While insisting that no theoretical approach can effectively address the diversity and dynamism of actually-existing-states, Jessop (2007: 427–429) has advanced a ‘strategic-relational approach’ to thinking about the state, ‘in an attempt to overcome various forms of one-sidedness in the Marxist and state-centred traditions’. This approach combines state-centred and society-centred approaches (that is, those that focus largely on the state apparatus itself and state actors who compose it; those that focus more so on class forces within the larger society and their influence on state action) into an intended holistic ‘state-in-society’ view – which in my view approximates the Gramscian model of the ‘integral state’.<sup>14</sup> This is the approach I take in this study.

As the Marxism of Gramsci, Poulantzas, and Jessop indicate, there is importance in exactly who takes up powerful positions in the state apparatus – even if the state is somewhat structurally tied to (or determined by) capitalist relations. Theoretically, the opposite of Miliband’s analysis holds relevance to the class struggle for hegemony via the state apparatus: if elites socialized to be elites (via both wealth and access to political positions) can influence the state, so can non-elites should they be elected to office. Latin American politics offers examples in heads of state like Brazil’s Lula da Silva (who was born working class, illiterate until age 10, a union activist turned politician), Bolivia’s Evo Morales (the first Indigenous ex-farmer president of that country), and José Mujica (farmer and former Leftist guerrilla fighter who was president of Uruguay from 2010–2015). Closer to the US, Jess Gilbert (2015) has shown that *who comprises the state* matters at least to some extent. His study of ‘agrarian intellectuals’ born of Midwest family farm agrarian classes emphasizes how these intellectuals pursued agrarian development policy by combining bureaucratic expertise and state structures with a democratizing, egalitarian ethos of incorporating rural residents in policy-making and implementation. This project, however, was only an ‘intended New Deal’<sup>15</sup>, as it was beat back by conservative forces in capital, government, and civil society. The failure

of the ‘intended New Dealers’ to affect structural change in agrarian society, just as da Silva, Morales, and Mujica’s tenures failed to stop the ‘neo-developmentalism’ of their respective state-led capitalist development projects, however, speaks to limits upon state-focused strategies (Andrade 2020, Vergara-Camus & Kay 2017a, 2017b).

Marxism has relatedly offered theoretical contributions regarding the state’s relation to ecological harm and ecological change. Davidson (2012: 32) reminds us that ‘the neo-Marxist analyses of Jürgen Habermas, Claus Offe, and James O’Connor [argued] that the state’s dependence upon economic growth – and thereby the imperative that it defend conditions conducive to economic growth – represents an insuperable barrier to it facilitating any significant move towards ecological sustainability’. Indeed, contemporary analyses of even Left-leaning governments show an ‘extractive imperative’ built into the very edifice of states during – and in attempting to escape – the neoliberal era (Arsel et al. 2016). Although Arsel et al. (2016) are clear to define this imperative in terms of specific historical-economic-political contexts weighting on their recent Latin American cases, evidence going back to the original era of European colonization and proto-state-building attest to the longstanding consistency of states’ involvement in domestic and imperial forms of ecological extraction – linked to human labour exploitation (Patel & Moore 2017, Moore 2015). Building on this eco-Marxism and aspects of world-systems theory, the subfield of ‘world-ecology’ describes the (capitalist) state as most often playing the role at best of regulator of social upheaval in order to keep (generalized) capitalist accumulation functioning, and at worst, as ‘hand-maiden’ to the capitalist class, intervening in markets *and the not-yet-commodified* in order to expand capitalist power and production (Moore 2017). While Jessop, Gilbert, and others may dispute a too-deterministic reading of this kind of instrumental view, it is important to recognize such patterns of state behaviour, and keep these tendencies in mind in any work of political ecology, even if tendencies do not fully represent the diversity of state and state actions that are possible.

Eco-Marxism, while attentive to the (mostly harmful) role of the state in political-ecological change (Davidson 2012), does not extend out from this attention to normative criticism of nation-state power with regards to questions of emancipation and liberatory change. Anarchism, in contrast, consistently does. In that vein, this study also leverages insights from an-

anarchist political theory to more deeply consider the historical, contemporary, and potential future role of state power in agrarian change. As suggested, anarchists have also long theorized the state. From the late nineteenth-century theories of French geographer Élisée Reclus (2004) and Russian prince and natural scientist Peter Kropotkin (2019, 1892, 1902), the Italian Errico Malatesta (1965), and the German Gustav Landauer (1910 [2010]), to contemporary theorists inside academia (Gordon 2008, Springer 2016) and outside of it (CrimethInc 2017), anarchists have been known to emphasize the problematics of state power as a means towards emancipation. There are three main points from this lineage. The first is that state power stems from existing social hierarchies while creating and maintaining its own forms of hierarchy, in addition to and in combination with the hierarchies inherent in capitalist relations. The critique of hierarchy (and domination) itself is one that distinguishes anarchist state theory from both Marxist and Weberian forms. Secondly, the political hierarchies engendered in state institutions bring with them social roles that reproduce the overall hierarchical system, implicating even the most radical actors when they involve themselves in state positions (Baker 2019). This theoretical claim is supported by historical analysis of how emancipatory goals have been undermined when revolutionary social movements have taken state power, and how certain fractions of emancipatory movements are suppressed once other fractions took power; see for example Voline (2019) on Russia, Dirlik (1991) on China, and Evans (2020) on Spain. Anarchist scholar Iain McKay (2019: 148-149) describes Kropotkin's late nineteenth-century essay on the history and role of the state, which presents

an evolutionary account of the state, to indicate not only its principal features (i.e., that which makes the State a State) but also *why* it developed such features in the first place. Rather than the metaphysical notions of Marxism (the State simply as an instrument of class rule), he stressed that the State was indeed an instrument of class rule but of *minority* classes. More, its features — centralization, hierarchy, etc. — did not arise by accident but served this role in society. This meant that the same structure or same features could not serve different purposes — or social classes — and so rather than the conquest of power by socialists, it would be (to use the title of one Kropotkin's articles) a case of "The Conquest of Socialists by Power".

Modern anarchism emphasizes, against understandings of the state as a separate force that acts upon society, the fact that the state, like all other

social institutions, is the creation of the continual action of individual and collective human beings. This view is well described by Landauer's (1910 [2010]; quoted in Gordon 2008: 38) proposition that

One can throw away a chair and destroy a pane of glass; but ... [only] idle talkers ... regard the state as such a thing or as a fetish that one can smash in order to destroy it. The state is a condition, a certain relationship among human beings, a mode of behavior between men; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently toward one another ... We are the state, and we shall continue to be the state until we have created the institutions that form a real community and society.<sup>16</sup>

This leads most anarchism to focus in theories of emancipation or liberation on 'power from below' (so-called autonomous efforts), or 'power to' – the building of (re)productive alternatives to the state and capital – rather than seeking the 'power over' exemplified in state power.<sup>17</sup> It emphasizes *social* rather than narrowly *political* revolution – efforts to change society *throughout society and in immediately-accessible social relations*. Although not anarchists themselves, Piven and Cloward (1978) showed that it was disruptive action by masses of working-class people, rather than elite-driven state power itself, that drove some of the most substantive reform eras of US politics in the twentieth century – a message that fits anarchism's theories about how (state) power works: always from below. In studying Indigenous resistance to oil extraction in the Peruvian Amazon, Orta-Martínez et al. (2018: 8) remind us that '[p]rogress has often been a result of such conflicts, and many contemporary institutions that help maintain social order and peace have been the result of collective public actions, riots, petitions, peaceful marches, strikes, boycotts, community consultation, and everyday forms of resistance, that can provoke a crisis before ultimately creating a new, improved status quo'. Although many anarchists do not act disruptively to seek reform (but rather, in hopes of overcoming existing social relations in a more revolutionary fashion and fundamental way), the role of bottom-up power in shaping society is emphasized and prioritized in anarchism compared with many other traditions of the Left.

Hence, my approach to questions of Othering and solidarity, and the dynamics of convergence, takes off from a state-in-society approach, which assumes that the US state is generally pro-capital(ist), colonial, anti-ecological, and suppressive of counter-hegemonic social forces through



(chronic and acute) forms of coercion and the generation of consent. This ideological and institutional hegemonic project brings state action into greater objective and subjective alignment with ‘civil society’, and brings layers of the latter into tighter orbit with the state. The state requires legitimacy, but how and how much it seeks it varies state to state, context to context, and moment to moment (like the particulars of *how much* and *which kinds of* support the state deploys for capital, and for *which capitals* among many). The state as apparatus – wrapped up in pro-capitalist, colonial projects – is unavoidably implicated in Othering, but because it is a field of struggle over legitimacy (and the resources the state controls or guards), there are differences *within* the state (between state actors), and some elements of civil society (including Others) are bound to leverage the state for their emancipatory goals. Descriptively, the theories above indicate problematics of state power, although normatively they do not lead in the same directions regarding what this says for what movements ‘should’ do regarding addressing the state. I return to these normative questions in Chapters 2 and 6.

Looking at existing examples of agrarian injustices (including that indicated by the short introduction to California’s contemporary agrarian-political economy earlier in this chapter), it is relatively easy to spot the contradictory role of the state in questions of emancipatory process and outcomes. As anarchists might expect, the state (as in the state apparatuses of the US and California) has frequently, consistently been a purveyor of social injustice and ecological harm. Yet the state is also a potential force to arrest harmful capitalist action and the main guarantor of individual ‘rights’, and therefore still a site of political contention by subaltern classes (e.g. Franco & Monsalve Suárez 2017, Tarlau 2015). Some social movements address the state (and work for concessions from it), even though they may see it as implicated in originating their own Othering, or in continually reproducing their Othering. We might consider the position of Indigenous people under settler-colonialism, whose self-determination has been undermined since the outset of the state-driven settler-colonial project to which Othering was foundationally instrumental (Coulthard 2014). Regarding the state as continually reproducing Othering, we might consider the phrase ‘Black Lives Matter’ (and movements associated with it): the point of saying that Black lives ‘matter’ is to counter the Othering inherent in the Black condition within the US due to various forms of

state-sanctioned violence, which violate human rights and dignity, most visibly (but not only) at the hands of police and carceral forces.

This acknowledgement that the state is a cause of or origin point of Othering – and injustice more broadly – while it simultaneously forms an avenue towards rectifying injustice (at least in the views of some) implies that we can expect contradictions between the problem analyses, emancipatory means, and emancipatory horizons movements subscribe to and mobilize. This can certainly be expected with regards to the internal/external contradictions of nation state rights and obligations: citizenship, as a legal precursor to rights, is inherently a non-universal condition, differentially applied (Ngai 2004: 6). Whatever emancipation ‘gained’ with citizenship is tantamount to an exclusion of others: for this reason it could be argued that even social democratic ‘successes’ like Norway or Denmark, which have high levels of citizen happiness and quality of life due to effective internal redistribution (via a state-organized social safety net), are premised on the continued marginalization and exclusion of people outside its citizenship border, whether undocumented migrants living inside the countries (see Brochmann & Hagelund 2011), or outsiders whose work and lands are mobilized (via world trade) in creating the quality of life that insiders enjoy (Rodney 2018 [1972]). This point parallels critical histories of liberal thinkers and liberal-statism as governmental form, which find a contradiction and exclusion at the heart of liberal political rights and philosophies (Losurdo 2014). Recognizing this contradiction means a difficult squaring of practical and immediate demands for change (particularly in redistributive terms, as material conditions underpin life and death for the most resource-poor on the planet), with longer-term political changes that could overcome the contradictions of statist liberal inclusion/exclusions.

Hence, we must acknowledge that there are almost always internal contradictions to movements regarding emancipation. These are rooted in inconsistencies in the way, as mentioned above, the problems and solutions are conceived, but also in the ways that movements seek to move from the former to the latter (collectively taken here as their ‘theories of change’), with all the messiness and compromise contained within this process. This demands researchers pay attention to the way that notions of emancipation are not necessarily internally consistent, nor are movements necessarily internally consistent. In the ERPI context, Scoones

(2018) and others have pointed out the contradictions of ostensibly ‘emancipatory’ food sovereignty movements containing social elements within them that are advancing authoritarian and populist politics.<sup>18</sup> No social force is immune to potentially regressive interpretations of ‘emancipatory’ ideas and ideals, and so ‘In exploring resistance and the promotion of alternatives, we must not *assume* emancipation, but interrogate its construction’ (Scoones et al. 2018: 10, emphasis added).

An important caveat here is that my goal in this research is *not* to create a theoretical certainty, closure, or to generalize from one sector, geography, or experience to all else. I am *not* for example seeking to theorize ‘the state’ transhistorically. Instead, I prefer to seek ‘good enough’ understanding of existing conditions such that better approaches might emerge for understanding agrarian change and purposefully shaping that change; ‘The goal of research is not directed at establishing a definitive “truth” about an external world but at the continual improvement of existing theory’ (Burawoy 1998: 28). Most likely, this analysis is particular to (and thus most applicable to) the US context and similar locations – settler colonies with racial capitalism as a central orienting axis. Still, I expect that the stories and lessons here resonate beyond those contexts, given the widespread relevance of concepts of Othering, strategies to counteract it like assimilation, valorization, and differencing, and the studied dynamics of convergence among difference. The present research lays the conceptual groundwork for future development studies research into the dynamics of solidarity among ecological-social justice movements and its potential to counter Othering and build political power, in situations where other movements are working across differences. This might include, for instance, movements working across sectors of interest (for example, mining and agriculture, seed sovereignty and climate adaptation), longstanding divisions (for example due to ethnicity, religion, or migration history), or international borders (especially pertinent in an era of major transnational agrarian investment; see Oliveira 2016). Thus, the research contributes to critical analyses of the potentials of broader counter-hegemonic success for rural and agrarian social movements. Through the frameworks developed in this study for understanding and analyzing what constitutes emancipatory politics to rural and agrarian social movement actors, the research engages and contributes to scholarly literatures on the politics of food producers (Bernstein 2009), agrarian social movements (Desmarais 2007,

Borras et al. 2008, Edelman 2001), intersectional race, decolonial and gender analysis (Grosfoguel 2007, Agarwal 1994), rural politics including ‘everyday’ and ‘rightful’ forms of resistance (Scott 1985, O’Brien 2013), agrarian development, post-development, and alternatives to capitalism (Escobar 2015, Harcourt 2014, 1994), and global environmental justice (Schlosberg 2013, Martinez-Alier et al. 2016), as well as practical debates about ‘what is to be done’ in the face of multiple, converging social, political and economic crises.

### 1.2.3. Limitations, ethical considerations, and disclaimers

My engaged scholar or scholar-activist position presented some limitations and challenges of its own. My inclination to focus on possibilities, as someone who has focused mainly on ‘solutionary’ type efforts in both research and practice, means the study did not generate the number or quality of deeper insights into aspects of the ‘problem’ as would be desirable. It certainly would be useful to gain insights into, for example, the role of the active white supremacist population in California, the grower power elite in the state and their connections elsewhere, and the particular ways grower power manifests over and through state agencies – but these are lacking in the final analysis, due to the approach this research took. While no doubt useful for movements strategizing their engagement with the state to achieve concessions, I have had to reduce ambitions regarding these questions in order to answer my research questions by focusing on the activities and visions of social movements themselves as my object of analysis. Another issue to keep in mind in assessing such scholar-activist research is my own bias in terms of ‘theories of change’: I have for decades been interested in *radical* social change, in and outside of food systems. This interest in radicality affects who I am interested in, vis-à-vis food movements, what ideas I am likely to engage with, and my analysis. Although this shapes the research, I do not think it invalidates the knowledge generated so much as it allows readers to place the researcher *within* the research itself – avoiding the pretenses of ‘procedural objectivity’ that can obscure positivist social science’s biases (Burawoy 1998: 28).

There are also important ethical considerations to the research, because of my position as an activist scholar, and based on ethics of accountability to those I am researching. Research has an unfortunate history of extracting knowledge from research subjects, especially those of marginalized social positions, on unequal and sometimes exploitative terms. Many people

involved in social justice food movements have complained about mistreatment by even ostensibly ‘allied’ researchers (Reynolds and Cohen 2016), and I did experience some tension relating to this. I anticipated difficulty in guaranteeing access to certain groups, given (a) my positionality as a relatively socially privileged researcher and appearance as a white-skinned male<sup>19</sup>, (b) skepticism of ‘research’ among my expected informant groups, based on reasons including previous mistreatment by researchers/science, and (c) needing time to develop relations of trust. As an activist researcher, I hold a high value for ethics of accountability to movement-based and subaltern, non-elite research subjects, in part so as to maintain working relationships with(in) these communities, but also for ensuring good research outcomes (see details of research-ethical commitments I helped craft in Chapter 3’s Box A). I also value the ideal and practice of co-creating collective forms of knowledge. Though my identity is ethnically mixed, I have learned that perceptions of my relative whiteness affects how certain activist individuals treat and relate to me – and I imagine that some may not want me to work/research with them, based on these perceptions. In this regard I was especially sensitive to how I approached Indigenous people, knowing that this group has faced a lot of challenges with colonial research historically. I sought interviews only with those who I had encountered first elsewhere, through shared work on issues of mutual interest. My approach also involved my maintaining low expectations regarding agreement to participate, so that I did not harbour frustration or ill feelings towards those individuals who did not agree to participate. However, even if such issues likely did affect my access and information I was able to gather, across the board people were generally more open and available to me than expected. Perhaps this was at least in part due to many informants and interviewees knowing me as an ‘activist’ first, not only or mainly as a researcher. To the extent that movement-focused research happens via existing relations of trust, it is easier to conduct, and is more conducive to insights that more circumspect interviewees may avoid exposing or discussing. In addition, the trust allows a ‘hashing out’ of analytical meanings between (trusted) researcher and movement informants, which is less likely to take place (or happen easily) between more detached researchers and informants.

Even insofar as I successfully found research informants/partners, I assumed there remained ‘tensions in the [research] relationship, including activists’ expectation that academic research will be immediately applicable

to their struggles and researchers' expectation that movement participants will accommodate their needs' (Edelman 2009: 245). In regards to the former, I (a) developed a framework for spinning out any movement-identified research needs (discussed in Chapter 3) and (b) was – hearteningly – told by multiple informants that the interview process itself, and my questions in particular, were helpful in their own process of thinking through and improving their activist practice. Regarding my hope that movements would accommodate my needs, I had to rush informants to provide feedback (within about two months from sharing the near-final draft), in order to meet PhD completion timelines. This shows how time works – alongside academia's push for young scholars to 'publish or perish' – to challenge patient, trusting relationships between activist scholars and their non-scholar activist colleagues. I also had an especially difficult time responding post-Covid-19 to the disjuncture between my own need to continue this research, and the reality that for so many people (my research subjects included) research had if anything become *less* important, relatively speaking. I had to step back and rethink the research, reduce the number of in-person encounters organized for this research, and cancel plans to intimately follow particular movement actors in order to get more ethnographically-detailed data. I adjusted to this new reality by (a) spending more time in (virtual) organizing spaces, *without focusing primarily on research outcomes and needs* (that is, responding to the crisis with a wider interest than my own research), (b) taking up the suggestion of a colleague to start a new organizing project that connected many of the same movement sectors included in this research (particularly urban farms, local BIPOC-focused food justice efforts, and rapidly-developing mutual aid efforts in my hometown of San Francisco and nearby Oakland/Berkeley areas), and (c) conducting more video interviews, from June 2020 to the closing of the research in June 2021.

I was consistently transparent in my dealings with informants about my research intent, as well as my activist intent, and I have not shared information shared with me in a fashion that goes against explicit consent. As a form of participatory, activist research, the project optimistically sought to co-develop shared analysis of the contemporary political moment with my informants and collaborators. From previous activist-scholarship processes, however, I know that this is a difficult edge to traverse, mainly because differences in opinion and analysis between individuals and groups are inevitable, and this includes between my own interpretations

of data and those of my informants. Sometimes reconciliation is difficult or impossible; due to my ongoing work in California, my priority has been towards retaining and maintaining good relationships with my informants and collaborators. This could work against the rigors of scholarly criticality, as when shared analysis is not possible and I wish to disagree with the views of one or another collaborator. In these cases, I opted to pursue a strategy I've used in the past: first, dialogue on the issue to seek a synthesis or reconciliation of positions. Second, if no synthesis or agreement is possible, acknowledging the dissenting interpretation/analysis within my own writing. Some portions were anonymized after informant review, in order to minimize potential negative impacts on existing relationships and work among informants. These are various ways to work through difference expectations between researcher and subject, as I and others have explored elsewhere (Roman-Alcalá 2018, Gilmore 2010, Hale 2008, Reynolds & Cohen 2016), but they all require patience, reflexivity, humility, and willingness to be flexible. In the case of this dissertation, my informant's feedback mainly corrected mistakes and oversights in facts at hand, and corroborated my analysis. In a few cases, informants reflected that they held different opinions than my final analysis, but they did not dispute the analysis itself. In sum, this project showed that – thanks to a generosity of spirit among my informants – a relatively collegial process can take place within transparent, dialogical activist-research processes that involve a diversity of movement informants/collaborators.

Last, it is necessary to mention that any themes and pertinent angles are downplayed in this study, though they would be fruitful focuses for future studies of a similar nature. These include greater focus on issues of gender relations (including the influence of patriarchy on both food systems and food movements), the urban-rural interface, and the specific role of age, youth, and generation (for example, in the US elderly farming population's farm succession problem; in efforts to keep Indigenous cultural legacies alive among youth; in farm workers' children and changes in politics through changes in citizenship status; in differences of senses of urgency between youth and adults). While these issues and others may have been mentioned, they were not dealt with centrally in the analysis. Another limitation is that this study did not incorporate fieldwork with food workers in processing, retail, and other links in the larger food chain – even though these workers are often those same Others that the research fo-

cuses on. The first reason for this was because I began the research process focused on particularly *rural* and *agrarian* movement sectors, which do not as much relate to these food workers. A more important methodological reason for this was my own lack of connections in this sector, which (given my interest in activist research contributing to movements in which I already play a role) led me to focus outreach energies (for interviews, organizations, informants) on those sectors where I had some connection, even if minimal. Still, aside from these reasons, I regret this oversight and resulting omission, as I believe it would have offered another valuable vantage point on the issues dealt with.

### 1.3. Chapter organization

The dissertation proceeds as follows. Chapter 2 elaborates on the debates, questions, and research gaps touched upon in this introduction, providing more detail on the relation of this dissertation to previous research. Specifically, it covers the meaning and relevance of ‘populism’, including both Left and rightwing/authoritarian varieties, and the voluminous scholarly literature on US food movements, while introducing the anarchist-informed perspective that distinguishes this research from many of its precedents. It also deepens the elaboration of the study’s analytical components, including Othering and solidarity, and introduces the three aforementioned strategies movements use to counter Othering. Chapter 3 introduces the study’s epistemological and ontological underpinnings, its methodology, its data collection and analysis methods, and some base conceptualization that was developed and leveraged from design to analysis. This methodologically-focused section introduces the ‘general theory’ underlying the research (broadly: eco-Marxism and state-critical, discourse-aware political ecology) and the participatory, activist scholarship methods of data collection and analysis. Data was mainly of two forms – historical and archival sources (mainly in the form of secondary literatures) and contemporary fieldwork data – and was gathered through reviews of social movement, government, and secondary research documents, news media analysis, along with interviews and participant observation with farm-worker-focused community organizations, environmental justice and urban food justice activists, ecofarming initiatives, people of colour farmers, Indigenous organizers, and agroecology researchers.



Chapter 4 applies initial conceptualization of Othering/solidarity to historical agrarian and rural movements (mainly in California) and their contexts. In the process, it provides details on (1) the histories and lineages of various sectors of Others in agrarian and rural California, (2) the solidarity strategies pursued by these groups (that is, *assimilation*, *valorization*, and *differencing*), (3) the (re)actions of political and economic elites in relation to these sectors, (4) greater detail on elite-driven development of techniques of Othering and social control, and (5) how these histories inform today's food movements.

Chapters 5 and 6 both analyze contemporary fieldwork data – sourced mainly from document analysis, semi-structured interviews, personal communications, and participant observation – in light of these precedents. Chapter 5 introduces in greater detail the ‘sectors’ of food and farming movements studied, alongside some key theoretical lineages that help understand these sectors with regards to dynamics of movement convergence. Those theoretical lineages are diverse, divergent and intersecting, paralleling in theory my empirical interest in effective work across differences. US food movements are as diverse as the broader society in which they act to achieve change in the food system. Whether race, gender, national origin, culture, values, or economic position, what separates and stratifies the broader society also inheres in food movement spaces. This chapter explores how movement diversities play out and how convergence is influenced by these differences. The chapter uses interpretations of and intersections between literatures of Marxism, intersectionality, Black radical traditions, Indigenous theory, and anarchism to understand interpersonal, inter-organizational, and philosophical tensions that emerge among and between food movement sectors, and how these are navigated – especially given recent conditions of intensified political and racial conflict. Fusing the theories helps to understand key considerations for convergence in the US context: (a) how economic class among movement participants intersects with co-constitutive social relations, such as race, nationality, migration status, and gender; and (b) how these diversities in class position and identity/group-belonging translate from objective descriptions to subjective movement self-awareness, are (c) refracted through assimilation, valorization, and differencing strategies, and thus begin to force change in existing social structures. The chapter concludes that movement convergence is unavoidably unpredictable, but is likely

benefitted when movements address power imbalances among and between sectors (by acknowledging impacts of Othering and capitalism), and advance projects of intentional dialogue and mutual tangible support (accompanied by humility and acceptance of uncertainty). The findings suggest researchers should attend to the underlying philosophical differences between political positions, the differences in structural-organizational needs that influence positions, and the interpersonal dynamics that shape the particular positions of groups in particular moments. Within this, the chapter provides greater indication that the central role of the state (in practices of Othering and reproduction of marginalization, in attitudes of social movements and Others, and in prospects for emancipatory politics) requires further unpacking.

Thus, Chapter 6 analyzes food and farming movements' 'theories of change', using these as a lens through which to more deeply understand differences among movement sectors in orientations and attitudes towards the state, where these differences come from, and the ways in which these are navigated, in light of insights from the previous chapters. A major theoretical and practical sticking point in efforts to understand and mobilize convergence towards emancipatory change (as unearthed in Chapter 5) is the question of state power: how – if at all – social movements (should) address the state. In this chapter I link previous debates on 'convergence among difference' (as developed in Chapter 5) and debates on 'the state' by looking at the theories of change, both spoken and unspoken, of a diversity of food movements in California. I found movement orientations ranging from reformist to revolutionary, statist to non- and anti-state, with more radical (revolutionary, non-state) influences increasingly relevant. Despite this emergent radicality, movements often act through but not necessarily in favour of the state powers they engage. Recognizing the articulation of various axes of difference with historically-rooted perceptions of state power among food movements troubles the settler-colonial, capitalist state and the prospects for its role in emancipation. It encourages researchers to attend to non-state aspects of social movements and to avoid the tendency to place movement sectors in hard-lined analytical boxes regarding their theories of change, instead seeing their theories and actions as relational, historically-grounded, dynamic, and pragmatic (even if seemingly contradictory). The chapter's analysis of theories of change vis-à-vis the state as another element of movement difference leads to a more robust theory of movement convergence, as well as

practical tools to tackle the combination of this and other differences that movements face in seeking emancipatory change.

The concluding chapter brings together the historical and contemporary analyses, relating Othering and solidarity dynamics and movement strategies to the challenges of rightwing politics and radical change to food systems. The conclusion thus describes what results from this investigation in terms of scholarly and practical impacts and future directions, updating research on food movements, understanding the state as a site of struggle, describing ways that food movements can oppose rightwing power, and suggesting practical tools for engendering convergence.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> From the dubious, 2019 coup-like ouster of Bolivia's Evo Morales, to Belarus's Alexander Lukashenko's refusal to concede to popular sentiment in 2020 that his 26-year reign was not elected to continue, there are many paths by which such leaders achieve or maintain executive positions: not every newly-installed rightwing leader can claim an authentically democratic mandate.

<sup>2</sup> I am aware that in recent years it has become fashionable to use 'BIPOC' rather than POC (for 'people of colour'). The intention – as I understand it – has been to emphasize that Black and Indigenous (BI) people have had different experiences from, and should not be carelessly lumped in with, other People of Colour. And so BIPOC had been intended as a category for Black and Indigenous peoples – and not other POC; now, it is being used widely as a catch-all term, just like POC. Given this, I do not believe that BIPOC clarifies much. *Any* categorization of many diverse peoples is bound to be inadequately nuanced, and many people are unclear of the reasoning for teasing out BI – but not other kinds of non-white groups. Still, because of its wider acceptance, I have elected to use BIPOC. At the very least, both BIPOC and POC do not define a group for what it is not, which is what 'non-white' does.

<sup>3</sup> Of course, such interests are by no means 'new': Marxists have long been interested in 'agrarian questions' (McMichael 2013), and competing frameworks from new institutional economics (Popkin 1979) and moral economies (Scott 1976) to Chayanovian 'peasant studies' (van der Ploeg 2009) have tackled such questions from other angles for decades if not centuries. But the newness of research interest in food and farming is clear, and both food justice and food sovereignty

only emerged as movements under study (and frameworks *for* study) in the 1980s and 1990s (see Desmarais 2007; Gottlieb & Joshi 2010).

<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.marketlohas.com/>.

<sup>5</sup> Everyday politics that are not necessarily overt or organized can shape society as well – but are less often seen (by society, researchers, or political theorists). Scott (1992, 1985) has looked at such politics and their effects in Southeast Asia, while Bayat (2013, 2017) has more recently addressed these politics in the context of the Middle East and its ‘Arab Spring’ of revolutionary upheaval in the 2010s. Although this is a fascinating and generative theoretical tradition, relevant to the topics of this research, I focus in this research on overt rather than covert politics.

<sup>6</sup> Phone interview, July 2020.

<sup>7</sup> The academic theorization of Left populism (discussed further in Chapter 2) has actually led to its implementation by national political actors in Greece and Spain; see McKean (2016) and Oikonomakis (2020) for discussions on these cases and the limits of statist populism as emancipatory strategy.

<sup>8</sup> For instance: Frederick Douglass’ polemics on US legal hypocrisy, W.E.B. Du Bois’ studies of Black politics, Frantz Fanon’s studies of race and coloniality, or Brazil’s Josue de Castro’s midcentury work on the socio-economies of hunger. Although none of these writings form the *specific* basis for my research approach, it is important to acknowledge that such ‘Other’ thinking (outside Euro-Marxist traditions) forms part of the foundation for intersectional thinking, broadly, and influences (to various degrees and specificities) Othered, BIPOC, and counter-hegemonic movements today.

<sup>9</sup> A complexity of this recursiveness is that I began the research *politically* committed to centering Others, based on my involvement since my teenage years in actively anti-racist political formations and childhood in multi-ethnic and migrant communities, yet I began the *theoretical* exploration for this research more solidly from (European-descended and focused) Marxist and anarchist positions (with which I was more familiar). Only by exploring my commitment to BIPOC leadership and ideas did I move towards foregrounding non-European/white theories, as I develop more fully in Chapter 5.

<sup>10</sup> These general overview histories can be explored in greater detail in works such as Akins and Bauer (2021), Almaguer (2008), Arax (2019), McWilliams (1978 [1935]), Walker 2004.

<sup>11</sup> An important and useful approach of combined ‘relational comparison’ and ‘conjunctural analysis’ has been effectively deployed on similar topics by Gillian Hart (2020).

<sup>12</sup> I use the terms ‘elites’ and ‘non-elites’ as descriptions of classes of people. As in Roman-Alcalá (2015: 557) ‘I identify ... “working peoples” as non-elite mem-

bers of society: those who have less influence on politics and economics, as individuals and as classes, due to their positions in existing political and class structures.’ In this classification, though clearly not all ‘non-elites’ are the same, nor are all ‘elites’, differences within each group are minimized. Recognizing that some authors have de-emphasized the economic class relation element in definition of ‘elites’ – that is, the positions of individuals as part of groups with differential ownership relations to the means of production, I wish to reemphasize this aspect here, following Forero (2017) – and in response to criticism of my use of this term from Bernstein (2020). I also would add to this Marxist categorization of elites as those whose wealth stems from their ownership of capital rather than their labour, per se, an acknowledgement that elites can also be linked to these capital ownership classes through cultural and social affinity, or by operating as political actors at high levels of government, forming the political arm of elite power.

<sup>13</sup> We can see this in work like Tarlau’s (2019) on rural agrarian movements in Brazil and their multi-decadal efforts to enter into and alter the Brazilian state and its educational institutions.

<sup>14</sup> To wit, ‘the exercise and effectiveness of state power is a contingent product of a changing balance of political forces located within and beyond the state and this balance is conditioned by the specific institutional structures and procedures of the state apparatus as embedded in the wider political system and enviroing societal relations’ (Jessop 2007: 428).

<sup>15</sup> The ‘New Deal’ was a post-Great Depression set of federal laws that provided government-funded jobs, new social safety net protections like ‘social security’ retirement benefits, and guaranteed the rights of labour to organize into unions.

<sup>16</sup> Note that there are debates on the translation of this passage and its political ramifications; Gabriel Kuhn offers a different view in his 2010 edited collection of Landauer’s work. See: <https://blog.pmpress.org/2019/07/31/gustav-landauer-revolution-and-social-relationships-a-response-to-landauers-fallacy/>

<sup>17</sup> Kurdish militant theorist Abdullah Öcalan (2020), who like Gramsci has composed his major theoretical works while imprisoned, is not an anarchist per se, but his theory (and the Kurdish movement’s practice) of ‘democratic confederalism’ is very related to anarchism, and its combination of social ecology, feminism, and post-Marxist-Leninist militant organization has inspired libertarian-minded socialists around the world (Internationalist Commune 2018).

<sup>18</sup> I explore this further in Chapter 2’s section on food movements.

<sup>19</sup> While my ethnic identity is mixed and complex, I readily admit to benefitting from my proximity to both cis-maleness and whiteness.

## 2

## Societal crises, the rise of the Right, and prospects for emancipatory rural politics in the United States of America

This chapter elaborates upon the themes and concerns discussed in the introduction. It lays out the conceptual groundwork and empirical interests of the research, which leads to the next chapter's discussion of a methodology sufficient to answer the central research questions. The chapter helps to answer the central research question about how movements conceive of emancipation by unpacking various precedents for emancipatory politics, as they are specific to the US context, to food movements, and to the politics of Others. This chapter engages research precedents for the study's tripartite themes of rightwing politics, emancipatory politics, and the rural world in the US. It elaborates these themes by exploring Othering, debates on populism (of both rightwing and Left varieties), and US food movements. Through this discussion, I unpack concepts, review relevant literature, and refine both research concepts and approaches to be mobilized in the rest of the study. It clarifies what kind of data the research requires in order to answer the central research question.

In particular, the chapter solidifies the need for the research to (a) centre Othering and Others, (b) take up and leverage anarchist thought for improved theorization of state-and-society interactions, (c) proceed solidly from an intersectional 'racial formation' lens which allows rightwing and emancipatory politics to be viewed in a historical, relational way. It also suggests that scholarship move beyond the lens of 'neoliberalism' in its analysis of social movements and prospects for emancipation, especially when movements include BIPOC and Others, bringing in a more historicized view of emancipatory politics and the historical specificity of Others' relationships to the colonial-capitalist state. The chapter also discusses

ways in which the research's central concepts relate to other conceptualizations of emancipatory politics; particularly, I discuss how movement frames of food justice and food sovereignty, as well as movement interests in improved political representation, cultural and group recognition, economic-material redistribution, and regeneration of healthy human-nonhuman relations, relate to the study.

In the first half of the chapter, the *Problematic* discusses Othering and Others, three overarching strategies to counter Othering, populism, and the anarchist view on 'authoritarian populism' (and more generally rightwing politics). In the second half, by way of discussion of US agrarian, rural, and food-focused social movements, I discuss forms of marginalization and emancipatory politics. In this discussion, I confirm the need for movement convergence, and propose the need for a *distinctly radical* form of movement convergence. The final section of the chapter discusses four ways to improve on existing food movement research, by (a) adopting more dynamic views of race and racial formation, (b) moving beyond neoliberalism as a frame, (c) deepening theories of the state, and (d) paying greater attention to the relationships of rightwing politics to food movements.

## 2.1. Crises, rurality, and agriculture

Crisis, xenophobia, and populism characterize our new century. But these traits are not new nor were they simply reborn in our present. (Finchelstein 2017: xi)

Over the past decade, crisis is no stranger to rural life. As prices dropped for the United States' central commodity crops in the late 2010s, some farmers barely held on, and farm crisis call lines became increasingly overburdened (Chrisman 2018). On top of this, Black farmers in the United States (US) face additional challenges based on longstanding patterns of discrimination, such as being sold faulty seed (Phillips 2018, Sanders 2013). Farmworkers have similarly been subject to longstanding patterns of exploitation, expanded since the mid-nineteenth century, when capitalist agriculture became dominant and migrants formed the bulk of labour used on California farms. Under Donald Trump's presidency, farmworkers faced additional hardship as the Environmental Protection Agency attempted to circumvent the hard-won ban on chlorpyrifos (a pesticide known to cause severe health problems in farmworkers and their children

and communities), while the president himself continued to provision anti-immigrant invective at speeches and rallies. Indigenous communities have faced impositions from settler economic interests in their land and resources since the US's founding (Dunbar-Ortiz 2015); after Trump's 2016 election, many tribes had to battle new attempts to permit mining and fossil fuel extraction on their lands and sacred sites (some of which are federally recognized national monuments). In addition are generalized crises across US society: opiate addiction and eviction epidemics, climate-change-induced droughts and floods, resource extraction conflicts (particularly regarding fossil fuels), increasing unaffordability of healthcare, racist social structures that subject Black, Indigenous and other POC to premature death (especially at the hands of police), the desiccation of rural communities, and a continued consolidation of wealth into the narrow confines of the wealthiest (see Desmond 2016, Edwards et al. 2019, Pew Research 2020, Pierson et al. 2020, Edelman 2021).

These examples indicate the sense of multiple and intersecting crises – economic, cultural, environmental, and political – that face rural America. Crises perceived as operating at the macro level – particularly the financial crisis of 2008 and its continued fallout, the unfolding global climate crisis, and then more recently the Covid-19 pandemic – are felt by individuals and communities as specific conflicts and challenging conditions. Such crises and conflicts interact at various spatial and political scales, are unavoidably imbricated, and are 'new' yet also stem from longstanding patterns of history.

Agriculture, rurality, and food systems play roles in these crises, both contributing to and being influenced by their dynamics and effects. In the most general sense, climate changes and extreme weather events cause hardship to land-based production and livelihoods in many parts of the country, but with differential impacts on workers, farmers, capitalist owners, investors, consumers, and others. Agriculture and rural processes of resource extraction also *contribute* to climate change (UNCTAD 2013). Food and agriculture are inescapably political – linked to battles over control of rural resources, and to identities and discourses that shape modern politics. For instance, rural people are often associated with the rise of rightwing politics, illustrated by the fact that over 60 per cent of rural voters supported Trump in 2016, a percentage that increased slightly in 2020.<sup>1</sup> The same rural component of rightwing power and its rise is found elsewhere, as in Hungary, India, Turkey, and Russia (Gonda 2018, Gürel,



Küçük, & Taş 2018, Kaul 2017, Mamonova 2018). Arguably, previous decades of neoliberalization and increases in working class precariousness and political disempowerment (Brown 2006) have engendered a level of resentment that contributed to Trump's win, paralleling similar developments elsewhere (Chacko 2018). Today's economic hardships are experienced by much of the US population, but are particularly acute in rural places, where multiple statistics paint a grim picture for rural people (Duncan 2015, Edelman 2018, 2021). Trump promised to help farmers and relied on their political support (symbolically and financially), but in office he presided over budget cuts to agencies and programmes that serve food producers and rural communities (Hamilton 2017). Trump's popularity among (some) rural people and (certain) farmers was seen as a response to the federal government's long neglect of those sectors under both Republicans and Democrats (Chrisman 2016), and (so far), the Democratic administration of Joe Biden has not majorly sought to rectify that historical neglect. It is apparent that agriculture remains tied to rural crises, even if crises are not *only* a matter of agriculture.

While the brief examples above of rural conflicts involve different people and places, they might be considered as differential manifestations of systemic issues that are global in scope and converging in contemporary crises. Some scholars – particularly, eco-Marxists – have convincingly posited capitalism as a common driving force behind various macro-scale crises, by generating cycles of economic crisis, social discord via class conflicts, and expansion-driven environmental destruction (e.g Foster, 2000; Magdoff & Foster, 2011). Jason Moore's (2017) 'world-ecology' subfield builds upon critical scholarship on race, gender, science, and geography (see for example Merchant, 1980; Federici 2004) to show how capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy, white supremacist racism, and the dominant political form of the nation state have historically coevolved, collectively engendering systemic (world-historical) tendencies towards accumulation-driven expansion, labour/work exploitation and appropriation, uneven geographical development, and social inequality. Moore's synthesis brings together many strands of existing historical analysis, providing new explanatory resources for apprehending existing processes of social and ecological degradation and injustice. Agriculture is certainly not the only process where these dynamics of capitalist social life and nonhuman nature interact, but it forms a central human activity, upon which economies are built, in which class dynamics are embedded and shaped, and whereby

relations between human and nonhumans are reproduced and contested. In addition, because of the aforementioned link between the US rural populace and the rise in rightwing politics, rural and agrarian people and processes are key considerations for understanding modern politics and conflicts. This precisely is the charge of the ERPI – to understand rural relations to the rise of rightwing politics and the potential of emancipatory alternatives (Scoones et al. 2018).

### *Rise of rightwing power*

We are witnessing a global phenomenon of the rise of rightwing leaders who combine nationalist rhetoric with a claim to challenge the pernicious effects of neoliberalism. But, upon achieving power, they do not oppose the business elite, instead, while paying lip service to the victims of economic processes, they direct the blame for those structural problems upon the minorities and ‘Others’ within the rightwing nationalist imagination.” (Kaul 2017: 523)

This recent rise in rightwing power, crystalized in the election of Trump, presents the risk of laying crisis upon crisis, as rightwing policies tend to bolster capital accumulation while undermining progress towards ends of social justice and environmental sustainability (Arsel et al. 2021). Trump’s version of rightwing politics (via populism), like previous forms, has enrolled non-elites into a political project to vilify out-groups as threats to the social order – in Trump’s case: immigrants, Muslims, Black people, and feminists – in the name of ‘the people’ (Bonilla-Silva 2019). It is crucial to foreground this process of ‘Othering’ in order to grapple with the relation of rightwing politics to rural America, especially since Trump achieved power by successfully enrolling rural people – particularly whites – in this Othering.

Popular media treatments about Trump’s election have mostly been framed by attempting to understand the Trump voter him- or herself, including the poorly and loosely defined ‘white working class’ and rural people and farmers who are ostensibly part of this class (Illing 2018; McElwee 2015; Orejel 2017; Williams 2017; Kurtzleben 2016). In short, debates continue about whether Trump voters are racist xenophobes at heart, or are reacting to their increasingly precarious economic positions (e.g. Zeitz, 2017). Such media treatments find their corollaries in scholarship. Douglas

Kellner focuses on Trump's ability to 'tap into and articulate the resentments of his followers' (2017, 135) paralleling Jeff Maskovsky's (2017: 433) assertions that Trump excelled at mobilizing a 'white nationalist post-racialism'. Others have offered geographic, 'long-term, regional structural economic' explanations for 'higher populist vote shares' (Essletzbichler et al. 2017, 2). Building on these are more synthetic framings like Gidron and Hall's contention (2017, 57) that 'effective analysis must rest on understanding how economic and cultural developments interact to generate support for populism' like Trump's, and Manuel's (2017, p. 212) similar takeaway of needing to see 'the Trump phenomena' in terms of both 'the economic insecurity perspective and the cultural backlash thesis'. For each populist surge, there are economic and cultural triggers to trace back (Bello [2018] does this ably for the cases of Italy, Indonesia, Chile, Thailand, and the Philippines); in the US case, race and whiteness must be placed at the centre of this tracing.

Yet, any particular reckoning of Trump's electoral base has the effect, even if inadvertent, of solidifying the discursive position of Trumpian politics by focusing on the near-mythological 'white working class'. Holland and Fermor's (2021: 71) discursive analysis

reveals that even critical media voices (e.g. framing [Trump] as divisive, racist, incompetent, and even un-American) rarely challenged the notion of a 'real', White, working America; instead, the influence of this group was presented across the mainstream media as a key lesson for political elites in both parties. Indeed, Trump's outmanoeuvring of his opponents on the discursive battlefield was so effective that paying lip service to this newly remembered backbone of American society was rendered a compulsory political shibboleth, for Republicans, Democrats, and the media alike.

Though the initial waves of post-Trump studies are helpful in beginning to unpack the historical, cultural, economic, political, and psychological factors behind the Trump vote, in seeking an understanding of the recent rise of rightwing power in the US in relation to rural people and processes, trying to understand the Trump election in this way is problematic for at least three reasons. First (as just indicated) is that such approaches to the 'problem' of Trump's power can (even if inadvertently) elevate white suffering and feed into white supremacist forms of societal problem solving, that is, that solving US society's ills means attending *first* to the white majority who voted for Trump (Coates 2017; Roman-Alcalá

et al. 2018, 5). Second, the approach underappreciates how (economic and cultural) conditions for rural whites have been created *through relations with (non-white) Others* who have co-produced the particular contours of rural and national political economy, culture, and popular narratives (e.g. Almaguer, 2008; Mann, 2007; Omi & Winant, 1986; Saxton, 1971). Third, the approach falters from its short-term focus: by asking why *now* the white voter base was voting for a candidate so tied to regressive ideologies, such analyses can underappreciate the longer-term trajectories of white supremacy, imbricated as it has been with the development of colonialism and capitalism, and of the country itself. These historical trajectories must be included in any making sense of modern US (rural) politics.

### *Emancipatory histories of Others*

Because of these problems with this approach, it is crucial to shift research towards understanding contemporary rural politics in light of longer trajectories of rightwing political forces, *in dynamic interaction with the emancipatory politics of marginalized social actors*, who have often been Othered. Emancipatory politics have animated rural politics in the US since the first days of colonization; since then, Indigenous people, settler workers, and settler owners of means of production clashed regularly over conditions of labour and control of land. A variety of social groups who found themselves subjugated within a society stratified by class, ethnicity, race and gender waged struggles for dignity, economic justice, and political and cultural rights. This is not a condition unique to the US context, but the US has its particular groups, such as ‘Indians’, workers, indentured servants, Chinese and other immigrants, enslaved Blacks and sharecroppers. I refer to these groups as ‘Others’, as their lives were heavily shaped by their ‘Othering’, defined by powell and Menendian (2016, p. 17, emphasis in original) as ‘a set of dynamics, processes, and structures that engender marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identities’. Such Others have long sought to counter their own Othering. In doing so they have fought against settlers, corrupt local elites, corporate power, and their own governments and at times achieved concessions (Churchill, 2003; Foner, 2015; Goodwyn, 1978; Simpson, 2017). Today’s rural landscape continues to have its Others: Indigenous people, immigrant farmworkers, the rural poor, and people of colour farmers among them. These histories

and their protagonist groups must be made a focus in contemporary research on rural US politics, and indeed these are the groups I engage with in the research.

This research thus connects a focus on contemporary Others with attention to what continuities follow from rural subaltern, Left, and Other-based movements of the past, and what ruptures are evident, in the long cyclical march of US agrarian history. A similar approach could be applied in other countries facing a similar rightwing rise. To do so means, first, looking at the creation of rightwing power and its conditions via the creation of Others, and the forms and politics of struggles against Othering. Second, this means elevating the suffering of (non-white) Others as cause and outcome of rightwing political power, not to dismiss or invalidate white suffering, but to begin unravelling how such sufferings are interrelated, mutually created or antagonistically arrayed. This includes taking into account the very difficult to parse – conceptually and pragmatically – reality that whites have historically been at times Othered themselves, but also have played essential roles in the marginalization of other social groups.<sup>2</sup> Third, it means taking a longer view of historic processes, acknowledging the crucibles of capitalism, colonialism, and race as impactful on every step of US rural development since (Robinson 2000 [1983]), and within this, agricultural politics/policy (Graddy-Lovelace 2016).

Additionally, it is pivotal to develop a better understanding of what emancipation might *mean*, since it is clear that in addressing the aforementioned crises, something like emancipation is needed and urgent. To do so requires acknowledging that emancipatory politics are bound to vary among actors, within groups of Others, between them, and between them and more privileged political actors. First research must take stock of this diverse complexity, before positing how it figures into more long-term and ambitious ‘north star’ visions of total emancipation. This means taking on insights from existing literatures focused on the white working class, but building on them with insights from agrarian Others throughout history, their ideas about emancipation, and their interactions with rightwing political forces (including at times that very white working class).

Explained and elaborated further on, ‘emancipatory politics’ are closely related to the conceptual and practical of what has been called the ‘4Rs’: improved (democratic) political *representation*, cultural and group *recognition*, economic-material *redistribution*, and *regeneration* of healthy human-nonhu-

man relations.<sup>3</sup> This pursuit is conducted by ‘social movements’, understood here as groups, organizations, and networks that act for society-changing goals. I also understand ‘solidarity’ as a term encompassing various acts by which movement groups have sought to build towards the 4Rs, sometimes working across differences and countering processes of Othering. With the expectation that this framework for understanding the content and process of emancipatory rural politics would be iteratively co-produced through the research process, emancipation is not something I took as a given at the outset, but rather developed as the heart of the central interest of the research: *what is emancipatory rural politics*, and how is it reached for?

The question of solidarity is all the more imperative when one considers a suggestion found regularly in both scholarly literature on social movements and in the rhetoric of movements themselves: that it is imperative to unite or unify across difference, including rallying behind key and overlapping concepts and proposals, in order to make major progressive social change (for example, the call for ‘Food Movements [to] Unite!’ in Holt-Giménez, 2011). As Reverend William Barber (2014, p. 8), a leader in the US South who has brought together various progressive sectors in the region, said to assembled family farm activists:

The same people that often pass the policies that support big agribusiness over family farmers are the same people that are voting against public education and health care and living wages and environmental protection and voting suppression and LGBT rights. And what we simply learned here in North Carolina is that if they are foolish enough to vote together, we ought to be smart enough to come together.

This is a central point to radical democratic theory that promotes the development of a ‘Left populism’ that can build power upon a ‘chain of equivalence’ that effectively links various sectoral demands, against a hegemonic power structure defined as the enemy (Laclau, 2005, pp. 37-38; Mouffe, 2018). Obviously, such a counter-hegemonic project cannot be fought or won solely on agrarian/rural grounds. Still, patterns of unification-in-difference at the social movement level may hold insight vis-à-vis this larger level politics, or even for politics beyond national borders. Indeed, an entire literature has begun to focus on a similar question of ‘convergence’ among agrarian and food movements (Constance et al., 2014; Tramel, 2018). The idea of subjective convergence entails that social

movements have a *strategy* that achieves unifying goals, and therefore research must call attention to how (sub)movements conceive of their own strategies for change, and if and how they achieve unification. Considering the essential diversity of rural peoples and their social organization and movements, and especially in the context of intensified periods of social divisions exacerbated by Othering, can solidarity play a useful role in building unification, and thus political power? If so, how?

### *The call and prospect for research into Othering and solidarity*

Hence, this study analyzes the rise in rightwing politics in the US, wider political-economic changes in rural realities, and the contours of emancipation for rural people – especially, but not only, those who have been Othered historically. To understand contemporary US rural politics we must attend to all three sides, historically and today, and in dialectical interaction. Because Othering happens not just from the top down, but requires non-elites to take part in enforcing social borders along various lines of difference, focusing on the Othering/solidarity dialectic serves an intersectional approach to research that acknowledges these various lines, by paying attention to ways non-elite people can both counter and reinforce Othering.

In a previous study, my co-authors and I showed that through US agrarian history, forces for emancipation and *un*emancipation have been co-produced in a continuing dialectic of from-below struggles and authoritarian responses (Roman-Alcalá et al., 2018). Emancipatory politics are not linear or straightforward, as diverse interests, and a diversity of views among the oppressed of what emancipation entails, clash. This can be seen well in historian Kathryn Olmsted's (2015) book *Right out of California*, which provides a description of how agricultural industry elites in California united with conservative government officials, media, and the emerging industry of public relations to counter increased worker insurgencies in California's agricultural fields. The surge of Communist-organized agitation by workers was emboldened by progressive pro-labour New Deal legislation and the cultural milieu surrounding it. As a force for emancipation, this surge ended up contributing – contradictorily – to the development of elite tactics for a 'divide and conquer' strategy, as elites discovered the power of framing demands for gender and racial equality as cultural threats to working class and middle-class interests (Olmsted 2015). That

is, they developed tactics of Othering. History shows this pattern of dialectical interaction can go the opposite direction as well, as when overreaching and often violent actions by the state or economic elites cause a moral outrage among the public, precipitating greater emancipatory agitation. The central historical interest of this investigation lies in understanding these dialectics, through specific instances where opposing tendencies collide, where we might observe forces of Othering emerge, expand, morph, and retreat, in relation to efforts to counter Othering. Additionally key is grasping how these dialectics affect the prospects of emancipatory movement convergence. Investigating historical patterns in rural marginalization and non-elite responses through the lenses of Othering and solidarity, along with clearer conceptualization of emancipation, can tease apart the mechanisms structuring the continuation and/or disruption of hegemonic power dynamics.

Through three phases, the research links the past to the present, Others and Othering to visions and processes of emancipation, and the contemporary possibilities for emancipation to the particular challenges of the rightwing populist political moment. A first phase grounds the analysis and conceptualization in historical context through an assessment of dialectical agrarian and rural struggles from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to today focusing on California (but in relation to developments elsewhere in the country, and internationally), using the central analytic concepts of Othering/solidarity. Initial fieldwork in California simultaneously began ‘grounding’ these theoretical and conceptual tools and practical/analytical focuses, by sharing emergent aspects of the historical research in dialogues with informants to test and refine these tools (Ashwood et al. 2014). I then filtered these refined ideas through my methodological attention to relations and interactions (within and between movement groups, urban and rural processes, state actors and societal actors, and between Othering and solidarity). The third phase took these refined lessons, theories, and concepts, and applied them to the remaining fieldwork, wherein I engaged in multiple forms of participatory observation and interviews with actors involved in active struggles, mainly in California. California is home to diverse agrarian and rural movements, representing a number of identity-based, economic, and cultural interests, and inclusive of various BIPOC ‘Others’, but also whites. The refined concepts and new data then converge in an analytical process that unpacks the two central research questions: how movements conceive of emancipation (through analysis of



their discourses *and* their actual activities), and in what ways might their work counter rightwing politics.

In sum, the research offers an empirically-driven conceptual approach that – while based in the US context and its historical-geographical-political particularities – can advance research on global problems of a similar nature: the rise of regressive rightwing politics, the (continued) marginalization of rural people and places, and the processes (and prospects) of convergence among emancipatory social movements and formations.

## 2.2. Problematique

In this section, I address previous literature on my topics of interest and introduce conceptual components of this investigation, unpacking how my approach to this study can advance scientific understanding of the issues of concern. There are four literatures, roughly, I will discuss. The first is that which surrounds the concept of ‘Othering’; I focus on the term’s use in thinking through its particularly political and processual manifestations, elaborating how groups of Others use three main strategies to counter Othering. The second literature is that on ‘authoritarian populism’, a term that appeared and prompted debates in critical Marxist literature in the 1970s and 1980s – largely addressing the rise to power of UK prime minister Margaret Thatcher – and has surged again in attention due the ascent of Trump and his international ilk (e.g. Bello 2018; Chacko & Jayasuriya, 2017; Gusterson 2017, Kellner 2017). From this literature, I gather ideas about and approaches to authoritarian populism as a concept and political force that help address the politics of contemporary US rightwing power. Particularly, I address ‘populism’ itself, Left versions of populism, and – with the aid of anarchist theory – critiques of populism as an emancipatory concept or strategy. Then, through the lens of literatures on food system problems (that is, how environmental and social crises are linked to agrarian and rural processes) and social movements seeking to address them, I clarify the importance to this research of three points: focusing on Others in such movements; paying greater and more nuanced attention to the state and the attitudes of movement participants towards it; and the need for convergence among movements, considering its challenges. Briefly covering the third literature further articulates the importance of the agrarian lens to the research focus and objectives, while a more extensive coverage of the fourth – research on how agrarian and rural social

movements in the US have and have not achieved emancipatory goals, and why – helps to establish how this research can tie together all four literatures. Taken together, the review shows how the Othering/solidarity dialectic offers a consciously intersectional approach (with race and class considerations up front) that can address the interaction of the political forces that construct rural life, and help address the key question of whether emancipatory movements can cohere enough to counter rightwing hegemony and affect greater change.

### 2.2.1. Others and Othering

Othering has a lineage conceptually in many critical literatures, notably post-colonial and feminist cultural critique. Much of the formative work on Othering has focused on the concept as the creation of categories of identities and subjects (or ‘subjectification’), ideologies and practices stemming from these, and their combined implications on power relations. Such formative work includes most notably Edward Said’s work on *Orientalism* (1978) and its founding of the field of post-colonial critique (Khalil, 2004), and Simone de Beauvoir’s early feminist analyses (2011 [1949]) of the relation of women as ‘the Other’ to men’s position as the unmarked, neutral and natural ‘the One’. For Said, the geopolitical relations between Europe (‘the West’) and its colonial subjects – the East as the West’s ‘Other’ – was generated and reproduced through representations, which were used to justify the belligerent ‘Us’ versus ‘Them’ behaviour inherent to colonialism. In his seminal text, Said did not overtly define ‘the Other’ or ‘Othering’ as such. However, in his discussions of Orientalism as a (Western) academic approach which reinforced differential power between ‘the East’ and ‘the West’, Said described its approach as necessarily ‘disregarding, essentialising, denuding the humanity of another culture, people or geographical region’ (1978, p. 108). One can see how Said’s definition here maps onto the earlier definition of Othering offered by Powell and Menéndez (2016).

Some subsequent scholarly work on Othering based on Said and de Beauvoir’s initial formulations has focused on deeper conceptualizations of the ‘Self’ and ‘Non-Self’, and how these interact in individual psychology, losing somewhat the power of the initial conceptual focus on Othering as a collective (‘Us’ and ‘Them’) rather than individual phenomenon, and as a political process rather than a psychological state. Clearly one

cannot completely divorce the two moments, as Othering is a social process mediated through persons and their psychologies. Unlike, for example, Brons (2015, p. 70) who seeks to find analytical tools for ‘analytic philosophers interested in interpretation, to empirical social psychologists, and to theorists of rhetoric and argumentation’, my interest is less the psychological than the practical matters of how Othering (and counter-Othering) functions to advance particular political goals.

I am interested in the *praxis* of Othering: how the powerful develop an understanding of the need for Othering and the means to mobilize it, and how non-elites variously play into or disrupt such mobilizations. How is Othering thought about, or not, in relation to political processes and social movements for emancipation? What strategies do the politics of Othering indicate, either to those seeking to counter Othering or those seeking to contribute to it? In Roman-Alcalá et al. (2018: 31), we described this ‘process of social learning and praxis’ based on the findings that authoritarian populism was built through elites learning the tactics and strategies of Othering to undermine non-elite contention, while movements who learned through practice to build understanding and alignment across difference were able in some ways to push back (and sometimes overcome) this elite strategy. This makes it important to see if, how, to what extent, and why groups exhibit such a praxis (from whichever social location within Othering processes). Californian politics specifically have been shown as important in the development of rightwing praxis and the construction of strategies of Othering, as I will discuss further in Chapter 4. Olmsted (2015, summarized by Roman-Alcalá et al. 2018: 13) describes how in the 1930s,

[Californian] growers and other business allies formed the ‘Associated Farmers’ front group, and through it developed key practical and ideological tools that led to a reframing of politics, linking conservatism to populism and de-legitimizing the emancipatory Left. ...The central advance of California’s grower class, however, was not based on class-driven narratives or economic appeals. Instead, it relied on forging political alliances around socially conservative values. Tying communism to racial upheaval and to nefarious social forces undermining Christianity and women’s role in the household, ‘The growers designed their propaganda to exploit anxieties about challenges to racial, gender, and sexual norms’ (Olmsted 2015: 128). This tactic succeeded in getting white workers – especially the middle class – to oppose [farm] worker struggles, on premises that these were leading

inevitably to the destruction of the white social fabric. Protecting family, community, and nation became tantamount to supporting growers' interests.

Othering in its most generic, conceptual form, as political process, can occur at multiple levels of social interaction, in its origins and impacts. That is, Othering as '*a set of dynamics, processes, and structures that engender marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identities*' (powell and Menendian, 2016, p. 17) can play out interpersonally (between individuals), within groups of (similarly categorized) people, between such groups, in organizational and political alliances, at the level of national politics, and across national borders. Additionally, Othering is a process found in various forms of oppression, marginalization, and inequality, but it is neither about one particular axis of these (for example, race, gender, class), nor is it a concept which gives preference to one or the other forms; Othering is not tantamount to the forms themselves. I acknowledge that there are debates on the relative weights of, or hierarchies among, various kinds of oppression and marginalization, between (among others) economic class, gender, anti-Blackness, or anti-indigeneity as the *sine qua non* of modern (Global North) oppression and marginalization. However, my contention is that one can use a general conception of Othering within a frame of intersectional Marxism as analytical tools and philosophical commitments, such that there is no a priori preference given to one or another form, not requiring that we arbitrate such claims. Rather, the approach takes up and accepts different accounts, 'sitting with' their possible contributions and contradictions. This deliberate approach of openness is, I contend, better for understanding the world and for building cross-difference solidarity and understanding. Hence, 'to speak of othering is then not an alternative to speaking of racism(s)/sexism or class, but a way of addressing an aspect hereof' (Jensen, 2011, p. 65). In fact, Othering takes place comfortably within a consciously created hierarchy of oppressions. The classic example is Du Bois' (1935, pp. 700-701) 'wages of whiteness', wherein Southern US whites were marginalized as workers, yet received some limited privileges as whites, which place them above Blacks in the social hierarchy. An individual, or group, can be Othered while also participating in another group's Othering – or even their own.<sup>4</sup>

The definition offered by powell and Menendian is useful, but operates at a general conceptual level. I elaborate their general definition in order

to specify what Othering looks like in practice, as a more concrete understanding of Othering will provide this research with more analytical tools to understand what movements are confronting, and how they are overcoming, in their articulations of emancipation. The ‘dynamics, processes, and structures’ of Othering can be found in, among others, media representations, political discourses, policy outcomes, economic processes of exploitation and marginalization, and in everyday behaviours, interactions, and practices.

Taking Othering as a process, and therefore a praxis of social learning, the study emphasizes a learning process orientation, with attention to directionality rather than completeness. This leads me to ask questions like: where do we find points of learning and new strategies, tactics, or worldviews that Other? Also, what points of learning and new strategies, tactics, or worldviews are opening up emancipatory options? It is important to recall that while elites can sew divisions that are picked up by non-elites, so can non-elites generate relatively autonomous reasons to Other, and methods to do so. Recognizing that Othering can be both ‘organic’ (endogenous) and ‘imposed’ (or learned) – and that untangling these may be an impossible task – is a starting point for this research. Because Othering is a process, people are not simply ‘Others’ in a constant, categorical sense – though for writing purposes I may refer to a group as existing within the category of ‘Others’. This category should be taken as a heuristic, like similar concepts, such as: ‘marginalized’, ‘subaltern’, and ‘counter-hegemonic’. Table 1 in the Appendix elaborates my different understanding and mobilization of these terms and their relations.

Generically, we can think of counter-Othering as actions individuals and groups pursue to: (a) counter one’s own Othering (and resulting marginalization) by outside forces or social sectors; (b) reduce Othering mentalities in one’s self or one’s own social groups; and/or (c) act in solidarity with Others, either outside or within one’s own ‘group’, in order to achieve emancipatory ends. Since ‘counter-Othering’ is not a widely used or understood term, I use the term ‘solidarity’ for these related forms of action that seek to counter Othering. These forms do not always overlap, as there are differences and antagonisms between such tactics in action. For instance, an attempt to reduce one’s group’s Othering through an articulation of one’s group’s inherent value *may* combine with efforts to counter a different group’s simultaneous Othering, but it may not. Instead, such

an effort to counter Othering might undermine the counter-Othering efforts of this second group: Others may attempt to incorporate into dominant systems *precisely by* oppressing other groups. An empirical example which shows the difficult complexities of emancipatory struggles vis-à-vis (counter-) Othering is the period when the California-based United Farm Workers (UFW) union opposed (and even fist fought with) ‘illegal’ immigrant farm workers from Mexico, and might have contributed to the undocumented group’s Othering, as the UFW sought their own emancipation as farm workers (Guthman, 2017, p. 28). We should also remember that through ‘internalized oppression’, Others may reproduce their own Othering. As we will see, counter-Othering tactics are not panaceas.

### *Assimilation, valorization, and differencing*

For an example of how Othering may be a useful lens for unpacking processual and strategic questions (regarding emancipation), we can look to how feminist theorists have considered strategy between various strands of feminism, based on thinking of unequal gender relations as a representation of Othering in action. What we find are three essential strategies that Others take to counter Othering: *assimilation*, *valorization*, and *differencing*. Susan Hekman, in her book *The Future of Differences* (1999) describes how first and second wave feminisms tended to deal with women as a unified category, all instances of ‘woman’ held within the group’s categorization as the Other of men. The difference in strategy between these two waves can be simplified. The first’s emphasis is on women being given the rights and privileges *of men*, or ‘the erasure of difference and the pursuit of equality’ (Hekman, 1999, p. 7). The second strategy articulated women’s unique value to humanity and to society as *different* than men, *as women*, or ‘that the realm of the feminine can provide the basis for the attainment of subjectivity’ (ibid, p. 10). (‘Subjectivity’ in this case meaning the achievement of subjective self-determination by women.) For the second strategy, a more liberatory politics could be built from the unique reality of motherhood and birthing, based on a ‘different form of reasoning’ (ibid, p. 15) that women alone can utilize, or from other feminine aspects or qualities. Instead of countering Othering by erasing difference between the ‘One’ and ‘Other’ (as in the first strategy), the second strategy seeks to valorize the Othered qualities themselves, what Hekman terms a ‘politics of difference’.

Though these are different approaches, the first seeking to de-Other women by making them more like men, the latter by elevating women's value and limiting the marginalizing function of their Othering, Heckman reminds us that both share common assumptions and ontological underpinnings, in that neither necessarily 'question[s] the absolutism of the dichotomous concept of difference' (ibid, p. 16) between the two genders. That is, the fundamental, assumed ontological categories of Other and its opposite go unquestioned. Heckman says:

Both [strategies] presuppose essential or culturally imposed differences between men and women; both presuppose a hierarchy of those differences; and both ignore differences within the two categories. The two strategies differ only in their valuations of the two sides of the dichotomy. The first strategy values the masculine side and wants to turn women into men; the second values the feminine side and argues for the superiority of feminine values. Another way of putting this is that in the first strategy the feminine is seen as a deficiency, and thus something to be erased and subsumed under the masculine. In the second strategy the feminine is seen as an asset, and thus must be emphasized and valorized. (ibid)

Both strategies assume that the differences between men and women are monolithic and hierarchical, that qualities are either masculine *or* feminine, either superior *or* inferior. (ibid, p. 17)

Movement participants might, it can be imagined, akin the first strategy, see emancipation as entry into the world of the category in which they've been forced out (via Othering); for example, as migrant workers seeking citizenship rights to vote. I will call this strategy *assimilation*. They may, alternately, seek to valorize their particular contributions as a group or collective identity, arguing that for example, as Indigenous peoples, they bring a unique understanding of land management due to their unique and long-term spiritual connections to a particular place. I will call this strategy *valorization*.

Yet Heckman points to a third strategy, which is key to finding new openings for counter-hegemonic power and addressing prospects for movement convergence. Heckman's third strategy moves us from an ontology, epistemology, methodology, and strategy based on 'difference', considered binary or dichotomous, to 'differences', which are conceived in a more plural and dynamic manner. In terms of Heckman's discussion

of women's issues, this third strategy is 'centered around the deconstruction of the concept of "woman"' (ibid, p. 24). Generically, the strategy relies on the deconstruction of the very dichotomous categories that are required for a process of Othering. Though this idea could be taken in a navel-gazing direction, Hekman points to the operationalization of such an approach in 'pragmatism', 'in the sense of an attempt to justify a methodology and a politics by the criterion of *usefulness*. In the absence of a universal metanarrative that can adjudicate questions of truth, pragmatism, usefulness, has come to the fore...' (ibid, p. 25, emphasis added). What is pragmatic about the deconstruction of categories? The following extended quotes from Hekman help get at this question, by first unpacking what is unsatisfying about the politics of difference (second strategy) alone.

In the politics of difference, marginalized agents enter the political world retaining rather than shedding their identity. There are significant advantages to this approach. The myth of the universal political actor is exploded; differences among political actors are recognized as a constitutive part of political action. But the problems created by the politics of difference are just as significant. *How can these different political identities come together in a political movement? What will be the basis for political unity if we question the basis of commonality?* (Hekman, 1999, p. 20, emphasis added).

Hence if movements composed of the Othered each articulate and valorize their separate 'difference', what sort of coalitional politics are possible? For example, how might undocumented workers and citizen workers unify against their mutual exploitation by employers?

Therefore, the deconstruction of dichotomous categories by which Othering is not just created and maintained, but also at times defended against, requires a political project of 'justifying the concepts we employ in the truth claims we advance' (ibid, p. 26). Instead of taking for granted the categories of opposition in which movements find themselves operating, an emphasis must be made on unsettling the categories and seeking new categories, identities, and unities-in-difference that can be constructed in particular times and in particular places, based on particular histories. Avoiding the problem of reification, this strategy – which borrowing from Hekman I will term *differencing* – is a much more obscure one, but possibly one with more transformative potential to social movements of Others. Indeed, theories of populism centre unsettling and reformulating the very



category of ‘the people’ as a transformative political project (Grattan, 2016; Laclau, 2005).

The need for a concept and strategy like *differencing* is found in Jensen (2011, p. 67)’s study of the Othering of ethnic minority (non-white) men in Denmark, who are often marginalized from ‘real’ Danish life, and ‘subject to intersectional othering, which is explicitly related to race, ethnicity and gender’. The term ‘intersectional’ is an important one, as it defines the reality that multiple forms of oppression and injustice ‘intersect’, depending on the multiple social statuses of an individual. Originally, the concept of ‘intersectionality’ was developed by Crenshaw (1989) as a legal strategy to challenge the unique combinations of racial and gender discrimination that many Black women in the US face. Laura Pulido (2015, p. 810), among other scholars of environmental racism and environmental justice movements, has promoted ‘[i]ntersectional theory, which requires that we consider multiple axes of difference when analyzing social phenomena’. The term has now come to be mobilized beyond academic and legal contexts, as a general acknowledgement of the need to think through and deal with oppression in complex and multivalent ways, along multiple axes of difference. *How* to do this, however, remains less clear. I will return to the role of intersectionality, and intersectionality theory, in later discussion of contemporary food movements in Chapter 3.

Jensen (2011), like Brons above, thus tackles more the individual and psychological aspect of Othering (albeit with clearly political consequences), specifically the ‘processes of identity formation in everyday life’ (ibid, p. 63) among these ethnic minority men. Based on empirical research, Jensen finds that these men use both ‘strategies which capitalize on [their own] othering ... [and] strategies which can be interpreted as refusal of the category of the other’ (ibid, p. 64), similarly to the above analysis of Hekman (1999).

[O]thering discourses can, in a paradoxical way, be part of the symbolic raw material of agency. Elements of othering discourses may be appropriated, because such elements can be given local value as part of a subcultural style ... Othering discourses, even if they are experienced as painful, also open a space for agency. In a paradoxical way, agency as capitalization illustrates the continued relevance of the concept of othering: Thinking in terms of othering allows us to grasp how power structures condition agency and to reflect on how historical symbolic meanings frame the possibilities at hand for negotiating identity. Capitalization has dimensions of both resistance

and reproduction, because it can be interpreted as an attempt to challenge the devaluation of the other, although it does not disrupt the category. (Jensen, 2011, p. 73)

Thus while ‘capitalization’ (that is, valorization) can function, non-straightforwardly, as a form of agency, so can ‘refusal’ (ibid, p. 66) to accept the terms of Othering. But in some cases, neither of these strategies describes well enough what Jensen (2011, p. 74, emphasis original) observed:

The fact that [some] young men do not aspire to ‘Danishness’, but do claim normality, can therefore be interpreted as an attempt to carve out a space in-between, a *thirdspace*, which is not defined by firstness [“the One”] and otherness, but transcends the dichotomy: simply as a normal human being - *not Danish, but also not different from the Danish*. ... This attempt to carve out a third space which transcends majority and minority problematizes the binary thinking inherent in the concept of othering. That, however, does not mean that the concept of othering should be discarded. On the contrary, the concept seems well suited for grasping a specific type of space for agency. Its merits furthermore lies in its potential for understanding contemporary discourses in the light of history, its openness towards intersectionality, and its understanding of identity formation as a process.

This results in Jensen finding (ibid, p. 63) that ‘the concept of othering is well suited for understanding the power structures as well as the historic symbolic meanings conditioning such identity formation, but problematic in terms of agency’. It is within this problematization of agency that I find Othering – through its dialectical relation with various ways to counter Othering – a potentially generative concept. If there are not simply two ways to go about countering one’s Othering (*assimilation* or *valorization*), and the variation indicates the contingency and openness of agency, there exist more potential strategies out there by which Others undermine their own Othering. Rather than approach the agency in these efforts with the dichotomous categories implied by the concept of Othering, we must hold space for these other strategies, *differencing*, which likely involve various acts of solidarity. If ‘differencing’ involves unsettling existing categories, building new affinities, identities, and political projects across differences, then it holds promise as a lynchpin for movement convergence. It also could

act as a key element in the deconstruction and reconstruction of ‘the people’ in the kinds of politics suggested by advocates of Left populism (discussed further below).

### 2.2.3. Populism: authoritarian (rightwing) and Left (emancipatory?) varieties <sup>5</sup>

The second literature I engage here is that on populism, and in particular ‘authoritarian populism’ as a particular form of rightwing politics. This engagement reminds of the essential ideological basis for building and maintaining hegemony, and the role of ideologies towards the state (and contradictions thereof) within this. Using an anarchist lens on the subject additionally emphasizes the need to unpack the actual and discursive roles of the state in obstructing and constructing emancipatory politics, by foregrounding the ways that state powers and logics underpin authoritarian populist political projects, even as these powers are created or reproduced under so-called ‘liberal’, leftwing, and even self-described ‘socialist’ administrations. In emphasizing the complex political identities of non-elite people, and the ways these can be directed towards either emancipatory or authoritarian directions based on resentments towards state power and identifications with grassroots, lived moral economies, the anarchist lens on authoritarian populism leads to the research’s focus on movements’ theories of change regarding the state.

According to the authors of the ERPI framing paper (Scoones et al. 2018: 1), the broad outlines of the political moment that marked the outset of this research (around 2017) can be described as:

the rise of protectionist politics and the embrace of nationalism over regional or global integration, whether in trade blocs or international agreements; highly contested national elections, resonant with broad-brush appeals to ‘the people’, in which candidates are rewarded for ‘strong man’ talk that pits insiders against outsiders of different colours, religions and origins; growing concern over the ‘mobile poor’, including refugees and migrants whose presence seems to threaten a shrinking resource base; appeals for security at the expense of civil liberties; a concerted push to increase extractive capitalism at all costs; and, finally, a radical undermining of the state’s ability to support the full range of citizens, while utilising state powers to increase surplus for a minority.

How is this authoritarian populism ‘shaped by prior transformations in rural society and economy’ (ibid, p. 2), ask these authors? This is not necessarily an obvious question, as conceptually – based in the diversity of instances of its appearance – authoritarian populism is not inherently linked to rural aspects of society. Similarly, it must be noted that authoritarian populism is not inherently a rightwing form of politics, if we are looking from a global and historical perspective (some argue, for example, that Ecuador’s former president Rafael Correa, or Argentina’s mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century Peronism are examples of Left authoritarian populism). Authoritarian ways of wielding power (essentially, the relative importance of coercive force, whether threatened or used, and the authoritarian ideologies that justify such use of force) and populist ways of achieving and maintaining political power (described variously by research as ‘an ideology, strategy, discourse or political logic’, or as a performative political style, see Moffitt, 2016, p. 5) cannot simply be described as politically uniform or regressive.

Populism can be of ‘the Left’, oriented towards expanding justice and rights rather than attenuating them. Grattan (2016) calls up the specific lineages in the US of ‘aspirational democratic populism’ in laying the groundwork for such an emancipatory populism. Three points from the literature on Left populism are worth keeping in mind, even when focusing here on the authoritarian variety. First is Laclau’s (2005) influential contention that populist power builds through active identification *against a common enemy*, which *results* in a new definition of ‘the people’. Second is that building a viable counter-hegemony is a long haul and widespread effort, involving forces both centralizing and destabilizing (the unification/articulation function continually contested from various quarters), thus even newly achieved hegemony would reside in the inevitable tensions inherent to democracy (Grattan 2016). Third is Mouffe’s (2018: 39–57) reminder that a Left populist strategy is inherently a state-focused project rooted in contesting and replacing hegemony (rather than one that requires a fundamental rupture with the existing liberal state). While anarchism and contemporary Left populism overlap at times, they maintain fundamentally different orientations towards states, institutionalization, and hegemony. Anarchism emphasizes distributed, emergent approaches to making change that avoid the compromises and concessions inherent in utilizing state power; anarchist approaches do not necessarily seek hegemony or pursue a ‘politics of demand’ (Day 2005).

In the US context, the recent rise of rightwing figures and institutions like Donald Trump and the Republican Party (along with their supporters) is very much based in an authoritarian (Booth, 2017) and populist (Campbell, 2017) rhetoric, well above and beyond that mobilized by their political counterparts, the Democrats. One could argue that Bernie Sanders was a populist (*ibid*), as was the Occupy Wall Street movement of 2011, which decried elite economic and political power (Gerbaudo, 2017). But neither of these was also authoritarian, and most Left movements in the US since the late 1960s have been clear in their opposition to authoritarian forms of making change or enforcing it. Hence, for the purposes of this study, I am associating authoritarian populism with the rightwing, and will not bring up the nuance that the Left can also be authoritarian populist, unless it is pertinent to the particular context or topic in discussion.

The recent ERPI call itself has a lineage in political science and sociological examinations of conservative or rightwing politics, including previous iterations of debate over authoritarian populism as a key and challenging form of rightwing politics (Hall, 1985; Jessop et al., 1984, 1985). These studies conceptualized authoritarianism and populism (and their combination) in ways that laid the groundwork for later analyses of contemporary neoliberalism and neoconservatism (Brown, 2006; Bruff, 2014). Bruff's and Brown's arguments converge on a claim that the political effect of 'authoritarian neoliberalism' (in Bruff's terms), or the combined effects of neoliberalism and neoconservatism (in Brown's), is to de-democratize, in which 'the two rationalities work symbiotically to produce a subject relatively indifferent to veracity and accountability in government and to political freedom and equality among the citizenry' (Brown, 2006, p. 690). In this we can see how populist support for Trump has transcended the need to distinguish between fact and 'fake news', while political freedoms were repeatedly attenuated for targeted, unpopular citizens, and government agencies became (under Trump) generally less accountable to citizens. Because of this, Bruff, (2014, p. 115) counsels 'one should not view "authoritarianism" as merely the exercise of brute coercive force,' as authoritarianism 'can also be observed in the reconfiguring of state and institutional power in an attempt to insulate certain policies and institutional practices from social and political dissent'. Arsel et al. (2021: 1) describe the general pattern among authoritarian leaders in the US, Turkey,

Egypt, Brazil, Hungary and the Philippines as ‘authoritarian developmentalism’, which utilizes populist pretensions but in fact constitutes a ‘continuation of the prevailing neoliberal global order’. Thus, the features of ‘authoritarian populism’ might be elaborated in many and other terms<sup>6</sup>, but the content remains similar.

Important aspects of Stuart Hall’s original formulation of authoritarian populism extended from Gramscian conjunctural analysis of British politics at the time (Hall, 1985, p. 116). Hall’s original project – emerging from his work on rightwing developments in England in the 1970s – was intended to focus the Left’s attention to the *particularly ideological* components of the rightwing surge. Conservative political leader Margaret Thatcher and her allies successfully built hegemony for authoritarian statism through new ideological resources of populism (Hall, 1985, pp. 116-118). There is, Hall claimed,

one dimension which, above all others, has defeated the left, politically, and Marxist analysis theoretically ... [which is] the ways in which popular consent can be so constructed, by a historical bloc seeking hegemony, as to harness to its support some popular discontents, neutralize the opposing forces, disaggregate the opposition and really incorporate some strategic elements of popular opinion into its own hegemonic project. (ibid, pp. 117-118)

Thatcher, et al, thus took up ‘strategic elements of popular opinion’ concerned about the direction of the existing state, to craft an “anti-statist” strategy, [which] incidentally, is not one which refuses to operate through the state; it is one which conceives a more limited state role, and which advances through the attempt, ideologically, to represent itself as anti-statist, for the purposes of populist mobilization (ibid, p. 117).’ Furthermore, ‘this highly contradictory strategy...[involved] simultaneously, dismantling the welfare state, “anti-statist” in its ideological self-representation and highly state-centralist and dirigiste in many of its strategic operations’ (ibid). We can see obvious reflections of this politics in Trump’s anti-state rhetoric on the campaign trail, and his post-election mobilization of various state powers for the continuity of elite domination and interests (like other authoritarian leaders around the globe; see Arsel et al. 2021). And, against Trump, we see a broadly-considered ‘liberal’<sup>7</sup> consensus (most visible in Democratic Party rhetoric) that insists on an important, proper role for government, ostensibly to act on behalf of the ‘middle

class' (although this rhetoric is rarely matched by Democrats in their actual – neoliberal – legislation).

Jessop et al. (1984, 1985) argued that Hall's analysis brought the Left off track from more fundamental issues of structural and institutional power. In Jessop et al. (1985, p. 88, emphasis added), it is argued

[Hall] has frequently ascribed two interrelated forms of success to Thatcherism—the articulation of *a new common sense*, and the shifting of the balance of forces decisively to the right. ... In stressing the discursive successes of Thatcherism and its capacity to shift the balance of forces on many different fronts, Hall provides the basis for an ideologistic reading of his work. In particular, *it could be invoked to justify a strategy largely restricted to a long, slow campaign to reconstruct popular common-sense at the expense of other strategic initiatives*. It is quite legitimate to counsel against such simplistic responses and to identify the risks entailed in Hall's approach.

Jessop has continued with these concerns, more recently (2015, p. 27) claiming 'the authoritarian populist appeal of Mrs Thatcher and her Thatcherite colleagues and media supporters was less important to the long-run resilience of Thatcherism than its ability to consolidate institutional power through control of a centralized state and to engage in a war of position with a view to modifying the structural underpinnings of class power.' Though focusing on a different conjuncture, geographically and historically, I would posit that Jessop et al's analysis misses the mark if we are thinking through the ascent of Trump and today's US authoritarian populism. This is because this ascent can be traced back to a decades-long ideological project of the rightwing, functioning through think tanks, universities, media (particularly cable television news and conservative talk radio), which has successfully enrolled large numbers of people in the ideological 'common sense' of the contradictory state power relation described above (Diamond, 1995; Berlet & Lyons, 2000; Grattan, 2016). I discuss these developments in greater detail in Chapter 4. The Tea Party movement, a hybrid grassroots and elite-supported formation, which in the 2000s pushed the Republican party even further in the direction of wielding the state against internal enemies (Others), dismantling lingering forms of social protections, neoliberalizing state functions, and continuing global militarism and interventionism, is a perfect example of how these ideological projects yielded fruits (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012; Souder, 2017). These fruits are just all the more mature in the Trump era. While

Jessop et al. may be correct in arguing that this ideological work is ‘less important’ in the long run, compared with elite consolidation of ‘institutional power’ once elected, it is crucial to understanding how authoritarian populism achieves political power in the first place, and for how Left movements might challenge this.<sup>8</sup> At the first ERPI conference in The Hague in March 2018, multiple participants from the US noted, for example, how the Left had abandoned religion and its institutions (churches), leaving them to be important centres for rightwing ideological development; similarly, it was noted that talk radio is so widely listened to by masses of working-class people, yet is overwhelmingly dominated by rightwing politics.

Here I would like to step back a moment and introduce a different way of viewing the components of authoritarian populism, which might help make sense of these strategic questions, not only for the Left as some imagined whole, but in the particular context of striving to change political conditions from agrarian Other perspectives.

#### 2.2.4. The anarchist view of Authoritarian Populism

There are as many ways to approach authoritarian populism as there are meanings of either term: populism is well known as a slippery and capacious concept in scholarship (Panizza, 2005, p. 1), while authoritarianism is arguably – in the context of nation-state modern politics – a matter of degree rather than something easily definable. The anarchist perspective is rarely taken in popular or scholarly analyses of rural change (but there are some examples; e.g. Ashwood 2018, Dunlap & Jakobsen 2020, Wald 2015), but offers particular insights. Such a perspective holds that a variety of hierarchies (between humans and between humans and nonhuman nature) are determining factors engendering unequal and unjust human relations and must be transcended. From this perspective, *all states* are inherently authoritarian and based in hierarchical domination (Bookchin 1971, Clark 1997). Insofar as states create, maintain, and enforce existing hierarchies with violence (as in Weber’s original definition of what states *do*), they are built on authoritarian premises and tactics (Springer 2014). Such hierarchies are manifest both among state citizens, and between them and non-citizens. Even relatively ‘free’ social democracies rely on prisons, coercive taxation, physical borders and territorial control; and on power lorded over citizens by actors within the state (or, some might say, by the state as institution, acting through actors that temporarily compose it).



States are characterized by their mobilization of ‘power over’ (even if, per Gramscian theory, they are also involved in producing hegemony via consent). As some environmental justice scholars have pointed out, the state is almost always at the centre of environmental *injustices*, and it behooves theorists of social change to take a more skeptical view to the prospects of emancipatory politics via the state (Pellow 2016, Pulido 2017). Anarchists have long promoted such skepticism, based on this fundamental critique of state authoritarianism.

Anarchists call themselves ‘anti-authoritarians’ for a reason (Dixon, 2012). Their basic alternative of ‘mutual aid’ among and between human communities as an alternative to coercive political economies remains a vision of emancipatory politics for anti-authoritarians of different stripes (Kropotkin 1902, Scott 2012, Spade 2020). Mutual aid, as terminology, can be traced to both 19th century anarchist theorizing and practice, and as a practice, to its historical necessity for marginalized populations, especially Black and Indigenous and other POC in the US (Roman-Alcalá 2020). A mutual aid focus is one aspect of a broader anarchist commitment to cohering the means and ends of social transformation, through direct (rather than meditated) actions that ‘prefigure’ the emancipatory world sought by participants, or what many scholars call ‘prefigurative politics’ (Maeckelbergh 2011, Teivainen 2016, Wald 2015). The goal of action in the present is constant agitation for ‘social revolution’ — ‘i.e., the idea that revolutionary political change cannot occur without radical changes in society and culture, specifically the elimination of social institutions that are inherently coercive and authoritarian, such as the traditional family’ (Dirlik 2019). This is opposed to expectations of one sudden moment for political revolution; and to expectations that merely *political* (that is, state-focused) revolutions can unravel the many unjust hierarchies that make up social life, such as patriarchal gender inequities, the ideological rule of religious institutions, or unequal power in relations of production. As Kropotkin (2019 [1896]: 85) described the anarchist position, against the positions of his democratic socialist and republican contemporaries:

There are those, on the one hand, who hope to accomplish the social revolution through the State: to preserve most of its powers, to even extend them, to use them for the revolution. And there are those who, like us, see in the State, not only in its present form but its very essence and in all the forms that it may take, an obstacle to the social revolution; the greatest hindrance to the birth of a society based on equality and freedom, the historic

form developed to prevent this blossoming. They work to abolish the State, not to reform it.

While proponents may argue that anarchism, rooted in autonomous community action, is a ‘popular’ form of organizing human relations, anarchism is certainly not ‘populist’. Like Hall (1985) and Ferrari (2018), we can propose that populism can and should be distinguished from movements that pursue ‘popular’ politics. As Hall (1985, p. 118) put it, we might do best to ‘distinguish the genuine mobilization of popular demands and discontents from a “populist” mobilization which, at a certain point in its trajectory, flips over or is recuperated into a statist-led political leadership.’ Populism can be thought of as a political strategy appealing to real or imagined *voting citizen majorities*, in order to achieve political-institutional power. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century this power is most often located in nominally democratic national states and is wielded through state formations, and as such, anarchism cannot be populist, while populism cannot be anarchist. This is not to say that movements cannot achieve popular intents through state means (this is exactly the premise of those like Mouffe [2018] who promote seeking hegemony through Left populism), but that if the political strategy involves taking state power in order to enact reforms on behalf of a people, against an elite, it becomes a strategy inclusive of populism. In contradistinction, anarchists prioritize direct forms of action and decision making, and the primacy of individuals and communities as decision makers, over politics of representation through voting and other means, and against representative institutions and ostensibly democratic nation states as actors (CrimethInc 2017). These institutions are to anarchists instead patently illegitimate because of their essentially hierarchical nature and intent.

Grattan’s (2016) formulation of aspirational democratic populism relies on the energies of anarchist and anarchistic movements, and their focus on grassroots forms of democracy and long-term cultural change, while still pointing towards (non-anarchist) centralization and institutionalization functions as indispensable to social movements that seek hegemony (see also Nunes 2021). Others have made similar claims: that anarchism takes anti-statism too far, undermining the necessary step of institutionalizing change in and through state institutions (Tarlau 2017). Meanwhile, anarchists argue that taking state power is a strategic mistake (not just an ‘impure’ one derided for dogmatic reasons), as it has tended to undermine radical anti-capitalist movements by peeling off leaders, turning them into

reformists, and often it has led upstart movement leaders to repress other sectors of radical movements once in power. This suppressive element was especially the case in early socialist states like China and the USSR (see Dirlik 1991, Avrich 1967). It has also appeared in recent instances from the 'Left turn' in Latin America: Arsel et al. (2016) show how this suppressive aspect of state power is implicated in socio-ecological injustices and struggles in developing world contexts, even after Leftist parties take the reins on that power:

Backed by strong electoral majorities, many of these left turn governments have come to antagonize their early supporters within their countries' indigenous communities and progressive non-governmental organizations. From TIPNIS in Bolivia to the Intag Valley in Ecuador, state forces have taken a hard line against resistance, criminalizing various forms of dissent. This, in turn, has started to change once again the relationship between the state and indigenous communities, putting at risk the tenuously maintained territorial sovereignties of the latter.

From the anarchist view, such developments would come as no surprise, as anarchism sees *political* hierarchies and elitisms as inevitable outcomes of the hierarchical and centralized control inherent to state power – even revolutionary state power. Anarchism questions the separation of decision making and executive power that is necessary to even the most 'democratic' of socialist states' formation and defense (CrimethInc 2017). However, this perennial disagreement about state strategies among the Left is not likely to be resolved (Nunes 2021), and by bringing in the anarchist lens here, I hope simply to complicate Left populist strategies that assume statist positions as unproblematic. Emancipatory politics should be informed by considering populism's inherent alienation of collective power into the state, and the state's inherently authoritarian nature, and thus approach rightwing or authoritarian forms of populism as derivatives of this general pattern.

This is important because conceptual discussions of populism or authoritarianism, and how non-elites relate to these, are limited without addressing social science and activist perspectives on politics of the state. Anarchism provides important and unique critiques in this regard. As indicated, from an anarchist perspective, the degree to which state actors use authoritarian tactics to enact or maintain power may vary, but states are always authoritarian. While a Gramscian notion of politics may push

analysis towards the consent-side aspects of hegemony, anarchism tips attention back to the still-essential function of coercion. State maintenance of hierarchy through coercion continues regardless of political party: for example, under Democratic US President Barack Obama more undocumented immigrants were deported from the country than under any prior president.<sup>9</sup> Under Obama, coercive state functions were exhibited in police violence deployed in 2016 against Indigenous anti-fossil fuel pipeline ‘water protectors’ at Standing Rock. Obama also deepened the government’s commitment to domestic surveillance (utilized against internal threats from eco-anarchists, Indigenous water protectors, and other rural political actors) and avoided accountability by aggressively prosecuting whistleblowers. Just like every other US president, Obama continued military attacks on foreign soils, and promoted ecologically destructive economic growth. From an anarchist perspective, populist politics undermine anti-authoritarian popular politics that (in their view) could more effectively lead to an emancipatory future by leading non-elites toward a fundamentally dysfunctional state politics, which legitimizes an irreformable system that continues to prop up extractive agriculture, demobilizes movements during moments of state concessions, and reduces energy and emphasis towards grassroots alternative forms of organizing and institution building towards autonomy and emancipation. Left populist strategy (à la Mouffe, 2018) would constitute a fool’s errand (especially if considered in internationalist solidarity terms), given the constraints of state/capital capture, which reabsorbs subaltern agency into the existing hegemony. And (populist) legitimization of *any* state power reproduces the foundation upon which more authoritarian future administrations can act. This sort of disagreement between state and anti-state strategies in movements, arguably, is *already* undermining solidarity (see Mouffe, 2018, p. 46) – and is a topic I return to in depth in Chapter 6.

As the authoritarian populism literature shows, the rightwing’s mobilization of populism is based on a fundamentally *contradictory* positioning of ‘popular’ thought vis-à-vis the state and its authoritarian powers. Movements (Right and Left), and the social formations upon which they are built, do not have simple or straightforward ideologies about the state, and thus their relationships to authoritarianism and populism vary. Rightwing political forces globally and in the US have leveraged the failures of liberal-capitalist-statist *politics as usual* (experienced by ‘the people’), to capture the

state and pursue an elite project of dismantling certain aspects of government, while mobilizing and reinforcing other aspects. The 'liberal' Left in the US is, in reaction to this formation, often seen as 'on the side' of the state – defending it – rather than (as in anarchist milieus) positioned against it. This positioning can be quite consequential to politics at various scales, and brings together elements of ideology, political-economic structure, and class projects in the 'integral state' (Gramsci 1971): this positioning vis-à-vis the state is fundamental to strategic questions about the means to emancipatory politics, and whether or not (and how) it involves the building of hegemony.<sup>10</sup>

The anarchist lens also complicates typical and simplified accounts of rural positionalities and their resulting (electoral) politics. Rural sociologist Loka Ashwood (2018) is one of few scholars who have leveraged an anarchist lens on US rural politics. In doing so, she found that 'stateless' and 'anti-state' perspectives were widely held among the rural people she interviewed (who all were facing various kinds of environmental injustices). These people were also rural whites and of the white working class, groups who have been effectively enrolled in national authoritarian populist politics. How to make sense of this contradiction? How would it be possible to intervene in the construction of this alignment, towards rural emancipatory politics rather than a bolstering of authoritarian populist power? Ashwood (2018: 719) posits that there are two forms of the 'anti-state' position, the 'retractors', 'who want to simply reduce the state at any cost', and 'reformers', 'those who eventually want to reduce state power in favor of communities, but in the meantime advocate strong state support of the vulnerable'. These categories roughly correspond to people placed in 'conservative' and 'liberal' camps, but Ashwood (ibid: 719-720) argues that in fact,

the lack of genuine stateless representation on the political stage fosters a divide between reformers and retractors, especially in rural contexts, that in some senses need not exist. In the meantime, the opportunity grows for the exploitation of the stateless position by self-titled populists who have elite, pro-state agendas, but are well versed in stateless rhetoric.

Here, we see how taking an anarchist view can open up vistas to potential sites of political re-alignment. This view may also come in handy when looking at actually existing rural and agrarian movements, to establish their attitudes towards the state as particularly consequential to visions

of emancipation, to the politics and process of their enactment, and in prospects for inter-movement solidarity. This includes a focus on the ‘white working class’, but importantly it is not only rural whites who hold negative perceptions of the state and its support for extractive, unequal social-ecological and economic relations.<sup>11</sup> Many members of society, in particular those from groups who have historically been ‘Othered’, exhibit state skepticism. Indigenous, African American, and Latinx/migrant histories of attempted genocide by the state, enslavement, and chronic exploitation all hold relevance for questions of state orientation and the ‘stateless’ moral economies that many such people are involved in day to day to survive their chronic exclusion from state resources. Especially since 2016, it is possible to see how anarchism influences and relates to various rural movement formations, such as the ‘John Brown Gun Clubs’ and anarchist-initiated mutual aid efforts formed post-Covid-19 throughout the country.

Through the anarchist lens – an acknowledgement of the fundamentally authoritarian nature of statism and a skepticism about achieving emancipatory ends via a strategy that emphasizes taking state power – we might also better parse how authoritarian populism is related to existing forms and structures of power, over a longer history, to understand interplay of the particular (Trump) *as continuity within the history* (of rightwing and hierarchical statist politics more broadly).<sup>12</sup> These existing structures of power are most often based in governments (states), capital (firms and individuals with access to money), and culture and ideology. That is, power in the modern age is closely linked to, respectively, the rules that regulate human behaviour, the ability of one or another segment of society to direct the behaviours of others through control of capital, and the closely-linked determinations of values in decision making based in cultural attributes including political ideology. Gramsci (1971) offered his conceptualization of this field of political power – the ‘integral state’ – as constituted and contested through ‘hegemony’. Gramsci’s view is useful insofar as it attends to the necessity of a combination of coercion and consent to construct and maintain and reproduce systems of power. Authoritarian coercive functions may work to maintain elite social control, but in today’s (inter)state political systems, legitimacy and longevity for political power tends to rely on a minimum of generalized social consent to existing power relations (Davidson, 2012: 33-34, Paterson 2010, Migdal 1994). Authori-

tarian populism can be thought of as an additional layer of political structuring on top of this, overlapping with existing – more longstanding – forms of power, but not reducible to them. Today's authoritarian populism involves more authoritarian forms of state power, more populist means of gaining access to state power (and maintaining it), and a cultural-ideological project that demonizes Others in order to consolidate elite-dominated political-economic structures of power, while promoting a contradictory but compelling vision of the role of the state in society.<sup>13</sup>

Many capitalist nation states describe themselves as democratic. While coercion has perhaps been generally reduced since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, relative to forms and strategies of consent-building to maintain elite hegemony, coercion is still relevant, and maintaining hegemony through coercive means continues to include, *inter alia*, the criminalization and incarceration of politically-threatening populations (especially the chronic attacks on the Black underclass through the mis-named 'mass' incarceration, which is in fact targeted; see Gilmore 2007, Rodriguez 2021), institutional suppression of would-be progressive voters (Grattan 2016: 155), physical suppression of upstart social movements (as in the consistent crackdowns on protest and strike actions throughout US history), and efforts to prevent counter-hegemonic ideas from entering into the mainstream discourse (as in the undermining of upstart democratic socialist candidate Bernie Sanders in the Democratic primary by Democratic officials). We can see some of this coercive function in the police violence deployed against Indigenous anti-fossil fuel pipeline 'water protectors' and against public protests declaring in response to continued police killings of African Americans that '#BlackLivesMatter' (this police violence occurred under Obama's presidency, then Trump, and now under current president Joe Biden). The violence of authoritarian populism cannot be seen as only a state enterprise, however. It also relies on the collaboration of state and societal forces, as seen in histories of collaboration between law enforcement officials and white supremacists of various sorts (e.g. Wilson, 2017). Contemporarily, this has been encountered at Trump rallies and white supremacist gatherings, resulting in violence towards counter-protestors (including at least one killing of a protestor by a white supremacist in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017). Trump's argument that there were 'good people' involved in the violent white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, and his pardoning of Arizona Sheriff Joe Arpaio, who was indicted for multiple incidents of racist corruption – these remind us how both law

and discourse can be wielded for an authoritarian populist political project. In 2018, Vice President Mike Pence declared Arpaio a ‘champion of the rule of law’ (Bort, 2018), though Arpaio was removed from his position by the judicial system precisely for holding the law in contempt. The use of laws to enforce hegemony, including a *lack* of enforcement of laws against those promoting the hegemonic position, is not limited to authoritarian populism (as we might see from an anarchist interpretation of state history; see Scott 1998), but forms a crucial tactic in the wielding of power when an authoritarian populist political project is ascendant or hegemonic.<sup>14</sup>

From the Hall/Jessop et al. bout of scholarly debate on (British) authoritarian populism we can appreciate the continued salience of relative weights to economic, ideological, and political strategies – for the US rightwing that has pioneered this contemporary form of authoritarian populism, and the potential Left responses to this. These questions and debates form crucial reference points for understanding the current political conjuncture in the US and globally. Conditions are not the same, but the Trump era showed many of the same challenges, and same strategic uncertainties for countering the rightwing. If a key feature of authoritarian populism is its building of ideological resources to maintain elite hegemony, how might a Left strategy articulate its ideological projects to more structural components? Drawing attention to the ideological components of US authoritarian populism – in which Othering is of crucial importance – does not make for an overly ‘ideologistic’ analysis as Jessop et al. (1985: 88) claimed. It helps us see how the class and ideological fractions represented within authoritarian populism – at both elite and popular levels – are constructed, and how counter-hegemonic class and ideological fractions might be articulated to disarticulate and disempower these opponents. Combining discussion of populism and anarchism, we might explore the relation of a state-focused Left populism to an alternative, anarchist-inspired focus on popular forms of organizing and power. How would a pluralist understanding of the Left and agrarian/rural justice issues – which takes diverse views towards the state seriously – contest the rightwing’s ‘ability to consolidate institutional power through control of a centralized state and to engage in a war of position with a view to modifying the structural underpinnings of class power’ (Jessop 2015: 27)?

From the anarchist lens, I take some main points that will help our understanding of food movement efforts later in the dissertation, namely,

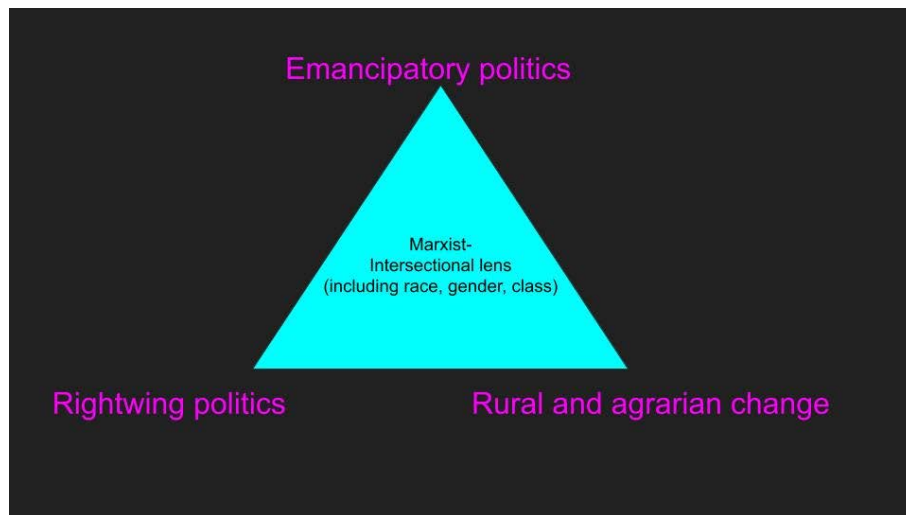


anarchist attention to the problematic of the state, the role of state skepticism among diverse people, including how attitudes towards the state inform populism of both Left and Right varieties, and the historic and present forms of movement action that are based in mutual aid, prefigurative and direct action, and distributed forms of (non-hegemonic) power, considered in relation to state-focused electoral campaigning. In addition, it is important not to take an anarchist lens as entailing only attention to *overt* anarchism. Anarchistic ideas and movements, anarchist influence on non-anarchist movement formations, and the roles of individuals who hold anarchist ideas but are not dogmatic about the state in their actions: these are also elements that appear in taking on an anarchist lens. My own example is one I start from: my scholarly colleagues see me often as an anarchist because of my interests in anarchism and my promotion of state skepticism when talk of using the state to make progressive change inevitably emerges, while multiple activist colleagues have pinned me as a ‘policy’ person because my previous organizing work has at times touched upon it (such as my facilitation of the California Food Policy Council’s formation and deliberations). Some of my research also relates to policy (Roman-Alcalá 2018, 2016). The lesson is: individual anarchists are not necessarily dogmatic ideologues, and anarchist influence on wider social movements is not always overt.

#### 2.2.5. Emancipatory politics - via rural, agrarian and food movements

As mentioned, the framers of the ERPI sought to generate understanding of the specifically *rural* connections to authoritarian populism. Clearly, the rural and urban cannot be easily separated, as places, as processes, or as political elements in a national or global analysis, as Scoones (2018) acknowledges, and others have addressed (Graddy-Lovelace 2021; Roman-Alcalá et al. 2021). The inextricable co-constitution of rural and urban places and politics must be recognized, especially given that often this co-constitution is one that creates environmental *injustice* in rural places, to the relative benefit of urbanites (Ashwood & MacTavish 2016, Kelly-Reif & Wing 2016). My empirical investigation focused both on urban and rural people and movements, linking them via an interest in food movements’ (broadly, social efforts focused on changing relations of food, farming, and power). The focus on food movements broadly, encompassing rural

and urban elements, producers and consumers, allows a view of the dynamism and interrelations of urban and rural in the process of following the ERPI call: to add agrarian and rural nuance to the scholarly literatures emerging on the rise of Trump and the rightwing, and seeing in rural and agrarian movements the empirical foundations to develop effectively intersectional theoretical and conceptual tools to address the three sided dialectic of rightwing politics, emancipatory politics, and political-economic change in the contemporary neoliberal era (described visually in Image 1).



*Image 1: Visualization of the research approach*

Both social and environmental harm have been traced back to the industrial-capitalist model of agriculture and food sales, both in the US and abroad (Brown & Brewster, 2015; Goldschmidt, 1978 [1947]; Holt-Giménez, 2017; Patel, 2008; Pretty et al., 2001; Reeves & Schafer, 2003; Thompson & Wiggins, 2002; Weis, 2010). This model has developed over a longer period but saw an amplification and acceleration in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The US was arguably the largest national contributor to this spread, through technology development, research, investment, aid, and global and national policy (Patel, 2013). These harms, and their strong connection to the US, also drive my interest in approaching this research from an agrar-

ian (as opposed to other rural economic activities) perspective. Critical literature on the food system's failings tends to point, in the last instance, to how its failings are structured and determined by existing unequal social systems, class power, economic concentration, and the mediation of politics and political systems. If these aspects are all central to the problem, then the solution cannot be addressed in a technocratic manner, dealing only with the 'hard science' issues at play (for example, soil loss, eutrophication of rivers, effects of pesticide usage). It is clear that more natural science investigation of the problem cannot itself bring about solutions, and agroecology as a tool for better land use is not itself enough to overtake the conventional model. Politics are needed to bring about agronomic change, as well as change towards greater justice in access to food (Chappell 2018). Just because agroecology works (ecologically) and is better for people (IPES 2016, Valenzuela 2016) does not lead to its automatic adoption into conventional systems. Hence, we must be interested in politics themselves, and their construction, as this is where transitions (within and beyond agricultural systems) take place.

### *Agrarian, rural, and food movements*

This above analysis indicates that if one has an interest in solving food system problems, one will have also to investigate and understand social movements around land, food, and agriculture. Sure enough, there is a large and growing field of scholarship on such movements, which have been described with terms like 'Alternative Food Initiatives', or as movements in 'agri-food', 'food', 'food justice', and 'food sovereignty' varieties (e.g. Allen et al. 2003, Bradley & Herrera 2015, Hassanein 2003, Hinrichs 2003, Holt-Giménez & Shattuck 2011, Levkoe 2006; McIvor & Hale 2015, Moragues-Faus 2017). In this section, I will review some of this scholarship, identifying the foundation it provides for this research project, considering the critiques of food movements it has advanced, and offering some critiques of the literature itself.<sup>15</sup> In the process, I also discuss the contours of politics of 'emancipation': reviewing how emancipation has been theorized as the '4Rs' (recognition, redistribution, representation, and regeneration), and how food-movement frames of food justice and food sovereignty describe and exhibit *their* understanding of emancipation. In the process, I reiterate the need for a *radical* process of convergence, in which a 'north star' horizon of abolishing capitalism and the capitalist state frames these theorized and enacted versions of emancipatory politics.

The exact definition of what constitutes food movements, and the exact units and scales of analysis, vary widely within the literature. Studies range in subject from international labeling initiatives (Friedmann & McNair, 2008; Raynolds, 2012) and the changing agency of farmers (Galt, 2013; Ravenscroft et al., 2013; Wittman, Dennis, & Pritchard, 2017) and farmworkers (Guthman, 2017; Minkoff-Zern, 2014), to more consumer-focused studies on food choices as political acts (Hinrichs & Allen, 2008; Johnston & Cairns, 2012; Schermer, 2015). These literatures are geographically diverse, with food sovereignty being an especially global and dispersed movement concept, and thus a particularly global research subject (for some overviews, see Edelman et al. 2014; Martínez-Torres & Rosset 2010; Shattuck, Schiavoni, & VanGelder 2015, Wittman 2015). In the US, ‘agri-food’ and ‘food justice’ movements are most widely addressed (Constance et al. 2014, Wekerle 2004). For the purposes of this review, I focus mainly on North America-focused food movement literature while acknowledging there is much to learn from literature on other regions.

Scholars have shown that US food movements are diverse in demographics, interests, tactics, and political views. What links the movements is a common interest in opposing and/or supplanting what has become the conventional model of agrarian development, in its various manifestations and impacts. Because they come from different political and social positions, food movements are not coherent or cohesive (Holt-Giménez & Shattuck 2011). They vary in issue areas, from healthy food access to food regulations, scales of action, from individual to global, and political orientation, from reformist to revolutionary (and points in between).

While there is a tendency among both activists and scholars to refer to a ‘US food movement’, what exists in reality is a patchwork of different, contrasting, even competing efforts. Occupying the dominant mainstream are the largely white and middle- to upper-class consumers promoting ‘voting with your fork’ and other forms of conscious consumerism that emphasise both individual choice and change through the marketplace. Some have criticised these efforts as missing critical pieces of analysis, including issues of race and class, and thus serving to deepen the divides in an already divided food system. Moreover, the focus on so-called ‘foodie’ consumers as key protagonists renders invisible a host of other actors – those most marginalised within the food system – who are also on the frontlines of resistance. (Brent et al. 2015: 620)

This research builds on the analysis and project of Brent et al. (2015), in seeking to focus on ‘those most marginalized within the food system – who are also on the frontlines of resistance,’ rather the movement as a whole. It will be necessary to grapple with scholarship on many aspects of food movements, and consider what this scholarship says about interrelations between the various groups and sectors that compose these movements, but empirically, my interests are with efforts emerging more from the margins.<sup>16</sup> Fundamental to this consideration is what those on the frontlines of resistance can tell us about processes wherein diverse members of the working classes move, in Marx’s (1847: 79) words, from a mass existing ‘already a class as against capital, but not yet for itself’ to a ‘mass [that] becomes united, and constitutes itself as a class for itself.’ This classically Marxist formulation of ‘class-in-itself’ versus ‘class-for-itself’ is consequential for questions of convergence, especially given the great diversity of positions within the broad ‘working class’, including the working classes composing the food movements of the (more) marginalized. As David McNally (2015: 142) proposes:

There is no such thing as a vibrant, contestational working-class movement which does not draw together the grievances and oppositional practices of particular oppressed groups into a dynamic totality that expresses (rather than suppresses) its discrete parts. A truly comprehensive working-class movement requires a self-activating ‘unity of the diverse’ in which distinct parts of the dominated class, with their specific experiences of oppression, find avenues of self-expression and self-organisation within the wider class movement. Only in this way can the working class ‘constitute itself’ as a class, i.e. as a concretely universal social power. And only in such ways can socially differentiated groups of workers come to see how their distinct experiences of oppression are in fact internally related, discrete but interconnected parts of a totalising system.

Hence, by looking at diversities of subject positions and movement groups that work on different issue areas, this research will focus on dynamics of movement ‘unity in diversity’, acknowledging this as a valid and necessary starting point to useful analysis of food systems change.

### *Forms of marginalization, emancipatory politics, food justice and food sovereignty*

In this subsection, I describe some ways scholars have previously looked at categories of marginalization and conceptions of emancipation (that is,

the ‘4Rs’ of recognition, redistribution, representation, and regeneration), and how this marginalization/emancipation dynamic relates to the two frames of ‘food justice’ and ‘food sovereignty’ (which show up commonly in US food movements and research on them). I began this research with an openness to focusing analytically on food justice, food sovereignty, and the 4Rs, but as the research progressed, other concepts and frameworks for understanding the differences among and between movement groups became more important, and the final analyses (in Chapters 5, 6, and 7) do not rely on a central analytical unpacking of the 4Rs or food justice and food sovereignty concepts among movements. I do return in Chapter 7, however, to describe how some of the research lessons – regarding Othering and convergence – relate to movement dynamics between the 4Rs, food justice, and food sovereignty.

To be clear, this research, my goal was not to define or ‘find’ food justice or food sovereignty in my cases. As Schiavoni (2017: 25) notes:

If we set out in search of food sovereignty in a given context, we are bound not to find it. Furthermore, we risk overlooking the struggles and initiatives underway that are providing the very fabric out of which food sovereignty is being, or might be, constructed.

Certainly, some of the people I encountered in fieldwork knew of food justice and/or food sovereignty, and may in fact use the terms in their mobilizations. This is not unimportant, but it was not per se the data required in order to answer my research questions. Precisely measuring the amount of the 4Rs mobilized overtly by the movement participants I studied was likewise not the goal. Rather, I simply paid attention in fieldwork to how food justice, food sovereignty, and their component aspects showed up in movements, to see how these dynamics contributed to convergence. Although they ended up not being my central analytical concepts, this thinking through the elements of emancipatory politics in relation to food movements enabled my later unpacking of *what emancipation really means to movement groups*. How specific movements have emphasized one or another element influences the dynamics for food movement convergence. This approach allowed me to better see what movements are for, in action and words, and how these interrelate, compete, cohere, and change over time. By looking at movements in these component terms, I was able to see the ways these components structure or reflect dynamics of Othering and solidarity, within and between the movement groups.

This approach also led me to see movement frames as operating within 'larger' emancipatory political frames advancing 'outside' food movements themselves (although clearly with reciprocal influence, as food movements are part of larger societal movements). This is especially important since it is known that 'environmentalism' within movements may be motivated by other concerns (than 'the environment'), such as 'neoliberal developmentalism, disregard of democratic policy-making and violent suppression of societal dissent by the state' (Arsel et al. 2015: 371).

We might interpret harms and injustices in rural, agrarian, and food politics through three concepts developed by Nancy Fraser in her theories of justice (Fraser, 2000, 2005, 2013). Fraser posits three central axes of injustice: *misrecognition*, *maldistribution*, and *misrepresentation*. Describing these concretely in terms of this study's interests, we might see the example as an example of *misrecognition* in the USDA's denial of calls for recognition of decades of historic discrimination of agency officials towards Black farmers – until the agency years later eventually settled the 'Pigford' lawsuits addressing this discrimination.<sup>17</sup> The massively unequal access to clean drinking water for unincorporated farmworker communities in the industrial agricultural heartland of California's Central Valley – wherein more than 90 per cent of residents must buy bottled water, while agriculture uses 80 per cent of the state's clean freshwater – is a clear example of *maldistribution*. And the hardships rural people, women, immigrants, the Indigenous and other marginalized social classes have faced to achieve effective democratic influence within the US polity may be taken as *misrepresentation*.

Fraser's conceptualization of forms of emancipatory demands is a solid foundation, but underappreciates the emancipatory distinctiveness of ecological demands, which are irreducible to (and sometimes made separately from) other demands and deserve their own category. Humans, as part of the relational existence of the planetary web of life, are demanding ways to exist and persist that do not undermine these relations. As anti-coal activists in Europe described their direct actions against fossil fuel mining in Germany: 'We are not defending the earth, we are the earth defending itself' (Bloch, 2015). Looking as I am at agrarian and rural movements, located at a clear intersection between human and nonhuman natures, we cannot ignore this demand nor its relation to the 3Rs proposed by Fraser. Hence there is a clear need to include struggle against disconnection from

and desecration of land, water, and other resources. This attention to regenerative human/nonhuman relations can be seen as an emancipatory demand of ‘regeneration’, a vision that is opposite of ‘degenerative’ management of land and resources, which is often described as ‘extractivist’ (Dunlap & Jakobsen 2020).

Fraser’s (2005, p. 5) initial formulation of the emancipatory demands included three Rs: (1) *Redistribution*, (2) *Recognition*, (3) *Representation*, to which I have added a fourth: (4) *Regenerative human-nonhuman relations* (or simply, *regeneration*). Borrás (2018, p. 24) offers some helpful synopsis of what the first two of these categories mean:

where wealth and the means of production to create wealth, especially land, in the context of the rural world, are monopolized by a few, veering towards the obscene 1%-versus-99% ratio, wealth and power *redistribution* becomes urgent and fundamental ...where social exclusion, marginalization and discrimination by one dominant social group over other groups constitute an oppressive social complex layered in xenophobia, racism, misogyny, and so on, social struggles for *recognition* can become an important struggle that can expose the fundamentally regressive nature of rightwing populists.

Thus, we can see that the emancipatory efforts might be understood as operating along the axes of mis/recognition, mis/representation, mal/distribution, and (de/re)generation. To put some empirical teeth on these positive ‘4Rs’, let us look at some examples of Rs being pushed for and demanded across agrarian and rural movements, at various geographic scales and political levels. *Redistribution* may be the easiest to find framed in rural and agrarian movements, particularly in historic pushes for land reform and redistribution of land resources to the poorest, away from elite landholding classes (for one US example, see Barnes 1975). *Representation* has been demanded at various points where people have felt excluded from decision-making structures of importance, whether political or economic; much rural environmental justice work places focus on lack of representation in governmental and industry decisions that have caused harm (Martinez-Alier et al. 2016; Pellow 2001). Community organizing currently happening in the Central Valley in largely migrant low-income communities is intent on securing citizenship rights such that these communities might have greater political voice (see CVP 2021). Demands for *recognition* of both group identity and of past harms done based on such group identity could be exemplified by the Pigford lawsuits mentioned earlier, or the



demands of women and queer people largely excluded from the culture and imaginary of land management in the US food system. As we might imagine, demands for recognition are often paired with demands for redistribution – and the 4Rs are certainly not separable in practice. *Regeneration* as a demand is seen in the many forms of ecological production described by and exhibited in food movement organizing, particularly in the realms of *agroecology*, *permaculture*, and *biodynamic* farming (Ferguson & Lovell, 2014 2017; Mier et al. 2018). Each of these frames emphasize the ecological embeddedness of production systems and their human cultural connections, which is also shown in land and water management systems that do not take up these frames explicitly but display similar philosophies and actions of regeneration (e.g. for ruminant grazers see Dagget 2005; for fisherfolk see NAMA 2018).

Hence, we can consider emancipatory politics as broadly intersecting with four elemental demands for redistribution, recognition, representation, and regenerative human-nonhuman relations. These 4Rs also are found in the main principles of *food sovereignty*<sup>18</sup> and *food justice*<sup>19</sup>. Like any movement concept, the exact definition of these two terms is contentious, dynamic, changing over time, and is actively debated in scientific literature (Cadieux & Slocum, 2015; Patel, 2009; Slocum & Cadieux, 2015). For food sovereignty, a general acceptance of its processual and context-specific meaning has taken hold in scholarship (Alonso-Fradejas et al. 2015, Schiavoni 2017). For food justice, the term has been used so widely in scholarship as to have (potentially) lost some meaning, according to some engaged researchers who have long used the term (Cadieux & Slocum, 2015). Its activist users, meanwhile, are not necessarily much more coherent in the term's use. It should be taken as a given when approaching movement-generated concepts – just like ostensibly definite concepts like 'democracy' – that they are contested and unsettled.

Food sovereignty, according to Nyéléni (2007): focuses on food for people; values food providers; localizes food systems; puts control locally; works with nature; builds knowledge and skills. That is, food sovereignty pursues *recognition* of (small-scale, less capitalized) food producers' rights and value, emphasizes rights to food above capitalistic food markets, seeks to *redistribute* power, resources, and *representational* 'control' more locally, and emphasizes *regenerative* forms of production.

While Nyéléni (2007) provides a widely-accepted outline of food sovereignty's main principles, food justice is less well defined – or rather, competing and unclear definitions seem to be more common in the case of food justice. To define food justice's principles, I have started with Slocum and Cadieux's (2015: 13-14) elaboration of four 'characteristics' of food justice work. Slocum and Cadieux argue that food justice addresses four essential issues (a) trauma and inequity, (b) exchange relationships, (c) land, and (d) labour. To this I have added another characteristic/principle that seems essential but often remains implicit in work on food justice: the question of democratic inclusion. 'Democracy' is mentioned only once by Slocum and Cadieux (2015: 14), but it forms a key demand in much of food justice work and scholarship, overlapping with and framing the other characteristics.

Moving through these principles, we can see food justice as (ibid: 13) regarding issues of (a) trauma/inequity, 'acknowledging and confronting historical, collective social trauma and persistent race, gender, and class inequalities'; (b) exchange relations, 'designing exchange mechanisms that build communal reliance and control'; (c) land, 'creating innovative ways to control, use, share, own, manage and conceive of land, and ecologies in general, that place them outside the speculative market and the rationale of extraction (d) labour, 'pursuing labor relations that guarantee a minimum income and are neither alienating nor dependent on (unpaid) social reproduction by women'; and (e) democracy, pursuing greater and better democratic representation in existing non-movement institutions, as well as greater and better democratic function in the internal workings of movement groups and communities themselves.

Agrarian and food movements in the US are more commonly associated with 'food justice' discourses than 'food sovereignty', although the latter is being seen more in recent years (Figueroa, 2015; Nigh & González Cabañas, 2015; Passidomo, 2014), with scholarship also beginning to discuss the relations between the two (Clendenning, Dressler, & Richards, 2016). Certainly, food justice activism has generated a large literature (e.g. Alkon & Guthman, 2017; Barron, 2017; Cohen, Poppendieck, & Freudenberg, 2017; Sbicca, 2015). Food sovereignty research in the US has most prominently focused on challenges to food sovereignty's likelihood of being taken up by movements in such an inhospitable political environment (Alkon & Mares, 2012; Fairbairn, 2012). There has also been an uptake of food sovereignty in research on Indigenous peoples and their use of food

sovereignty discourses (Coté, 2016; Daigle, 2017; Grey & Patel, 2015; Martens et al., 2016; Rudolph & McLachlan, 2013). As described further below, food justice and food sovereignty both are represented in US (and Californian) food movements and research on them.

### *Celebratory and critical scholarship on US food movements*

The literature on US food movements contains both celebratory and critical accounts. On the critical side of this literature, some arguments about the movements' failings have become relatively common. Similar to the previous quotation from Brent et al, scholars have argued that US food movements are ineffective in achieving change, due to factors including their overwhelming whiteness (and various ramifications thereof) (Alkon & McCullen, 2011; Guthman, 2008a, 2011; Slocum, 2007; Van Sant, 2017), the influence of neoliberalism manifesting in their strategies and ideologies (Alkon & Mares, 2012; Allen & Guthman, 2006; Guthman, 2007a, 2008b, 2008c), their relatively reformist rather than transformative intentions (Holt-Giménez & Wang, 2011; Holt-Giménez & Shattuck, 2011), this reformism being enacted almost exclusively on 'local' issues in ways that are 'unreflexive' (Born & Purcell, 2006; DeLind, 2011; DuPuis & Goodman, 2005), their 'coloniality' and failure to contend with deep-seated injustices (Bradley & Herrera, 2015; Kepkiewicz & Dale, 2018), and many specific combinations of these problems. In providing an overview of such critiques in his study of Canadian food movements, Levkoe (2014, p. 387) concludes: 'From these critical perspectives, the work of [agri-food movement initiatives] has been seen, at best, to have made little contribution to significant systemic change and, at worst, to be counterproductive, in that it ignores the interconnected nature of problems and is complicit in the neoliberalization of the food system.'

The newer literature is more so focused on the concerns and movements of the subaltern and marginalized. As such, it presents a more diverse, more radical, and 'less neoliberal' condition among US food movements. This may be due to movements changing, perhaps from reflecting on academic and popular critiques, or from the entry into academia of greater numbers of 'organic intellectuals'<sup>20</sup> (Gramsci, 1971, p. 6 *and passim*) who come from the ranks of the more subaltern movements, and/or because scholars have begun to refocus their attention. This can be seen in the large academic space given to urban farming (Classens, 2014; Dimitri et al, 2016; Galt et al. 2014; Ghose & Pettygrove, 2014; Tornaghi, 2014;

Tornaghi, 2017; Wekerle & Classens, 2015; Wilson, 2013). Urban farming is in a way a microcosm of the larger food movement dynamics, as it encompasses a diversity of interests, politics, and identities (McClintock & Simpson, 2017; McClintock, 2014, 2017). But because in many cases urban farming has been pioneered and developed in the last half century by poorer and working-class communities, with urban farm projects often composed of or driven by people of colour, and because relatively fewer people of colour live in rural areas, urban farming (compared with rural farming) is more so seen as a progressive element of the food movement with relatively greater ‘justice’ credentials. Still, reflecting media and popular biases, urban farming in its recent popularization has been associated with white people and middle class consumer interests, and critiques from scholar-activists have shown how urban farming is not immune to the problems and challenges of white supremacy that are seen throughout the larger movements (Reynolds, 2015). Healthy food access is another area where marginalized voices are sometimes heard and seen as movement leadership. Even if some healthy-eating focused movement projects (and some of the scholarly literature focused on food choices among low-income people) are problematically paternalistic in encouraging scholars to see low-income communities as victims primarily requiring education (Minkoff-Zern 2012), scholars have also been able to show that low-income community members are also agents, and are pursuing interventions in both urban and rural spaces to achieve greater community food security (Herrera, Khanna, & Davis, 2009; Howerton & Trauger, 2017). This has been especially the case post-Covid-19, as poor communities look to ‘mutual aid’ strategies in order to have basic needs met (Roman-Alcalá 2020; PReP 2020). Another realm of focus on the marginalized includes movements and scholarship increasingly taking up issues of labour. Farmworker issues have long been a concern for agrarian scholarship, and there has been analysis showing both the horrible conditions facing farmworkers, and their protagonism in struggles against these conditions (Blackwell, 2010; Minkoff-Zern, 2014).

But food-related labour moves well beyond farms, and this is now receiving greater attention, with the organization of restaurant workers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century offering new energy for emancipatory-focused movements composed of and led by the most marginalized in the food labour system: low wage workers who are overwhelmingly people of colour, women, and immigrants (Friesner, 2016; Lo & Jacobson, 2011; Myers &

Sbicca, 2015; Sbicca, 2016). We can also find an increased attention in recent scholarship to Indigenous people and their struggles and visions around food and relations to the land and waters relied on for food provisioning: most of this literature uses the ‘food sovereignty’ lens, in part due to the fact that Indigenous people have had over 500 years of struggles relating to their sovereignty vis-à-vis colonial governments, and so the ‘food sovereignty’ term resonates. This literature often focuses on how food-related practices from growing to wild harvesting, cooking, and sharing are (re)articulating meaning for Indigenous ‘sovereignty’, as well as changing how wider movements might consider a justice-focused, transformed food system in settler-colonial contexts (Coté, 2016; Daigle, 2017; Grey & Patel, 2015; Kepkiewicz & Dale, 2018; Martens et al., 2016; Morrison, 2008; Rudolph & McLachlan, 2013). Newer scholarship following this new trajectory includes the volume edited by Alkon and Guthman (2017) on ‘The New Food Activism’, where various authors find new food movements characterized by prioritizing the voice of (and *emerging directly from the agency of*) some of the most marginalized sectors in the food system, and mobilizing through attention to intersectionality among issues and positions of race, class, gender, and ethnicity. One can also find evidence in a new edited volume on the contentious overlaps of food and urban gentrification (Alkon et al. 2020). New journals like the *Journal for Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development* (JAFSCD), founded in 2009, are expressly dedicated to producing work of scholar-activism (see Food Dignity 2021), to embracing and speaking to practitioner perspectives, and to emphasizing racial justice as a critical issue to food movement work (see Hilchey 2015 for an introduction to 24 commentaries on issues of race and ethnicity in food movement organizing). As a result, JAFSCD provides many examples of papers showing how food movements can in fact look very diverse, and which directly confront issues of Othering and oppression inside the movement and outside it (Calo & De Master, 2016; Passidomo, 2013; Sweeney et al., 2015).

California is well represented in the literature on food systems and movements, some of which pays attention to Others. Important historical research has established California’s agrarian system as solidly capitalist, especially in labour dynamics (Mitchell, 1996; Walker, 2004), and as built on a foundation of anti-Indigenous violence (Lindsay, 2015). This focus on labour is seen in Olmsted’s (2015) look at the 1930s upheaval in the state’s farm labour, notably the cotton strikes of 1933, which were the

largest agricultural industry strikes in US history. The United Farm Workers union has been subject to many analyses, due to its relative success in gaining ground for farm workers through the 1960s and 1970s (Ganz, 2009; Jenkins, 1985; Pulido & Peña, 1998; Shaw, 2008). Not always so well known for its food-related activism, the revolutionary socialist and Black liberation-focused organization the Black Panther Party (founded in Oakland, California) has become a subject of food studies scholarship, mainly because of its pioneering free breakfast programmes (Araiza, 2009, 2014; Galt et al. 2014; Heynen, 2009) but also because its wide-ranging and revolutionary political vision relates to the theorized interests of transformation-minded scholars of social change. Much of the aforementioned coverage of urban agriculture has focused on California-based projects, as has much of Julie Guthman's pioneering work on the organic agriculture sector in the state (Guthman 2004a). Guthman (2008c, p. 1180) explains the organic sector (among other influential food movements) as one reason why California is an important site for studies on food systems and food systems change: 'the organic food movement has been the major social movement contesting food and agriculture in the post-war period, and California has been an important center for this movement, imparting it with particular sensibilities.'

All of the above sectors can be seen in Khanna's (2012) assessment of US food movements and their capacities to affect greater change. This assessment led into the formation of the Health, Environment, Agriculture, and Labor Food Alliance (HEAL), a national network of food movement organizations rooted in BIPOC leadership and an anti-corporate analysis, and one organization I studied in this research.<sup>21</sup> The HEAL Alliance gives credence to the notion that the food movements of today are not the same as those of the past – they are increasingly organized around racial and economic justice rather than mostly environmental or consumer concerns, and are being more so driven by those long marginalized. HEAL can also be seen as attempting to weave a 'chain of equivalences' between various racial and sectoral groups – indicating movement desire for convergence.

### *The need for distinctly radical convergence*

The balance of forces cannot be changed unless these fragmented movements – such as for food sovereignty, food justice, or food democracy –

forge a common platform based on some common goals. I call this “convergence in diversity”: that is, recognizing the diversity, not only of movements, which are fragmented, but of the political forces that are operating with them, of the ideologies and even visions of the future of those political forces. This has to be accepted and respected. We are not in a situation in which a leading party alone can create a common front. It’s very difficult to build convergence in diversity, but unless this is achieved, I don’t think the balance of forces will shift in favor of the popular classes. – Samir Amin (2011: xvii)

Movements need to work across differences, undermine the meaningfulness of those differences in terms of their engendering of injustice, and construct diversity-based counter-power. What are the conditions, possibilities, and challenges for such convergence?

We can distinguish a few heuristic levels at which studies point their analysis of convergence. These can be between people, acting within groups or organizations; between organizations or groups; and between larger constellations of organizations described as ‘movements’. We should recognize at the outset that, of course, the actions studies describe at these levels do not operate only or ‘stay’ at those levels, as relations move between them. While a much larger part of food movement research is about individual projects, studies on convergence generally discuss such convergence on a general or movement level. For example, Holt-Giménez and Shattuck’s (2011) influential analytic of addressing the prospects of global food movements overcoming the ‘corporate food regime’ is pitched at broad categories and practices of movements in Global North and South. Many such studies indicate both the challenges and potentials of convergence, offering much to learn about collectivity, collaboration, and the practical nature of struggles, even if they do not have the expressed purpose to address this topic head-on.

In relation to how change comes about in and between people (though with theorized larger social effects), Sbicca & Myers (2017) argue that urban food justice projects are actually capable of challenging existing projects of ‘racial neoliberalism’, and that scholars should theorize the detailed ways in which on-the-ground food justice work acts as ‘anti-racist racial projects’. Good examples of inter-group analysis include Gray and Hertel’s (2009) discussion of the tensions between farmworker organizations and their non-farmworker based allied organizations, which illustrates that structural tensions need to be considered alongside cultural ones. Minkoff-

Zern's (2014) discussion of farmworker movements and how they've enrolled diverse consumer groups in their movements' activities, shows how such encounters can challenge the typical 'agrarian imagination' of non-farmworker participants in the movement. Fernandez et al. (2013; 2016) survey the potential intersections between 'agroecology' (more specifically, the research and scientific functions thereof) and 'alternative agri-food movements', finding fertile potential for greater alignment and collaboration towards both scientific and social change ends. An edited volume has addressed multiple frames and issues of convergence through cases in many parts of the world (Constance et al., 2014; see also Dunford 2020 for a more recent exploration of global convergence around 'food sovereignty'). This collection alongside a limited number of US-focused studies have developed our understanding of convergence processes already taking place, and potentially to emerge, based on analysis of key marginalized food movement sectors (Ashe & Sonnino 2013, Brent et al. 2015, Mount et al. 2013).

Insights from such research reminds how movements may need to build collective power, but that they may lack the ideological unity to do so; aspects of movements may compose classes to an outside observer, but they are not necessarily 'classes for themselves'. Holt-Giménez and Shattuck's heavily-cited (2011) paper promotes the idea of constructing greater ideological/action unity between what they typologize as food movements' 'Radical' and 'Progressive' trends, against 'Reformist' and 'Neoliberal' trends that sustain the corporate food regime, sparking much more scholarly interest and attention to the potential of such convergence. Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (ibid: 136) emphasize convergence in the first two trends around radical critiques of racial inequality and capitalism's detrimental role in structuring injustice, as necessary to any credible counter-movement to the continued neoliberalization of the food system: 'substantive changes to the food regime depends largely on whether or not the pivotal groups within the Progressive trend ally themselves with reformists or with radicals'. The question of whether a leaning of progressives towards radicals is actually taking place in recent years within US food movements, and if so to what degree, is one that became more relevant and answerable as this research proceeded from its early stages.

Radical refers to 'the root' of something. Hence if we are to gauge 'radical' challenges to food systems harms, we must recognize the weight of scholarly work arguing that capitalism stands at the root of contemporary



social-ecological crises. More controversial is recognizing the evidence that the state has historically offered a pivotal mechanism to sustain the capitalist order (Pellow 2016, Pulido 2016, Moore & Patel 2017). In looking at specific cases of agrarian injustice, it is hard not to find capitalist accumulation and state intervention playing major roles (although not always in direct ways; see Li 2010). As a radical movement, food sovereignty ‘implicates both the state and capital for having complicity in bringing death and disease to the food system’ (Trauger 2014: 1150). Therefore, we must include state power in any description of the ‘roots’ of the issues I am addressing in this research. If many instances of statist reformism undermine movement towards addressing the root of social-ecological harm, and if we as researchers and activists see ourselves as for radical change, to reach for that change we must understand what prevents more radical claims, organizations, and political subjects from forming and growing in current conditions. So, for this research I normatively posit that ‘radical’ is a ‘north star’ orientation for movements that undermines capitalist accumulation and the state power enabling it, and that moves towards the abolition of the state/capitalism nexus. This suggests (as I elaborate in Chapter 6) not a dogmatic preference only for revolutionary and non-state actors/action, but a vigilance regarding statist/reformist tendencies and their effects, in reaching towards truly transformative change. Having outlined elements of my normative approach to food movement convergence, in the final subsection to follow, I describe some of the limitations of existing scholarship and point forward to how an approach of centring Othering and a more state-critical approach may move scholars past these limitations.

### 2.3.1. Four ways towards building on existing food movement research

Though useful and growing rapidly, the literature on food movements in the US could benefit from more consciously intersectional and dynamic treatments of identity, especially racial identity; from moving beyond theoretical framings of ‘neoliberalism’ (which relate to a sometimes-inadequate theorization of the state and problematic treatments of movement agency); and from greater discussion on the relationship of ostensibly progressive food movements to Othering, authoritarian populism, and similarly regressive political formations. Addressing these issues through greater historicization, taking up a ‘racial projects’ framing, and viewing

food movements via a more state-critical anarchist lens and critique, I contend, can help better address the question of movement convergence.

### *1: Dynamic, non-reductionist views of race and racial formation*

Critiques of whiteness in food movement efforts are helpful in pointing out how whiteness reproduces oppression, prevents movement success and innovation, and undermines possibilities for convergence and solidarity (Guthman 2008a, Slocum 2007). Unfortunately, such critiques can lend themselves to a reification of identity categories, even by those ostensibly opposed to white supremacist racism (Hughey 2010, 2012). Such reification can also lead to deterministic assumptions about the relationship between political strategy, identity, and group categories. Cultural Marxist Stuart Hall (2002: 306), contemporary feminists (Yuval-Davis 2006) and social movement scholars (Haiven & Khasnabish 2014) have all argued against reification. Whiteness itself must be seen as something actively constructed and (re)constructed in structures beyond skin colour itself (Omi & Winant 1986; Haider 2018; Roediger 2017), having various valences and underpinning social histories and forces, and therefore existing as a site of contestation that can have contingent outcomes and futures (Bonds & Inwood, 2016; Hughey, 2012; Milazzo, 2017; Polletta, 2005). Practically, reification can limit our thinking about problematic racial positions (for example, seeing whiteness within white supremacy as immovable) and may posit only one (or a few) ‘true’ subjects for emancipation, which is a strategic dead end for movements seeking convergence.

Arguing that certain voices are not heard and thus must be prioritized in certain political projects, akin to feminist standpoint theory (Rolin 2009, discussed in Chapter 3 in relation to methodological choices), is different from claiming *a priori* that the more marginalized categories are the *only* potential actors for emancipation. If whiteness is a construct, it must be *deconstructed* and this would require the committed activity of those currently categorized as white, and those who are not. Indeed, in the wake of the 2020 George Floyd uprisings against racial injustice, a number of books became bestsellers seeking to help white-identified people address their own complicity in racist behavioural patterns (Di Angelo 2020). While not all critical scholarship on food systems takes such an approach to racial issues, it is important to conduct analysis with conscious attention to seeing and describing race as constituted by multi-sited racial projects’

that are by nature open-ended, multivalent, and contested (Sbicca & Myers, 2017). That is, scholarship dealing with racial formation processes must attend to their multi-level nature (not limited to only individual/interpersonal or structural registers). Omi and Winant (1986) were the scholars to bring this 'racial formation' lens to the forefront of critical analyses of political change in the United States (see also the edited volume HoSang et al. 2012, and Bonilla-Silva 2019). Critical scholarship must be open to more than one axis of difference, such as race, since intersectional theory has established that multiple axes of difference are at play in racial formation processes, such as gender, age, economic class, and national origin. When considering people and positions within existing food movements, combining an 'anti-essentialist' view with attention to intersecting modes of oppression that manifest differentially between *and within* groups can improve our ability to see the ways that intersectional oppression shapes the direction, content, and success of struggles, and thus supports a more precise analysis of interactions among movement groups (Grillo 1995).

## 2: Moving beyond 'neoliberalism' as frame

Another limitation with the critical literature on US food movements is its emphasis, to the point of confusion and overconfidence, on 'neoliberalism' as both a problem statement – the thing that movements *should* be set against – and as an explanation for the biggest failings of food movements. While extremely well crafted and offering great insights into how food systems and movements function, Julie Guthman's work is exemplar in this regard (Guthman 2004, 2007, 2007a, 2008b, 2008c). Guthman's work on food movements and food politics in and around California's organic industry, along with that of others who have taken similar approaches to similar subjects (Allen & Guthman, 2006; Allen & Kovach, 2000; Alkon & Mares, 2012; Hinrichs & Allen, 2008; Pudup, 2008; Rosol, 2012; Slocum, 2007), have helpfully pointed out some of the limitations of US food movement strategy, ideology, and practice. Critical food movement literature in human geography and sociology has likewise critiqued food movements, treating entrepreneurialism and volunteer-driven community garden projects as problematically neoliberal, and linked to regressive or at least non-transformative politics (Guthman 2008c, Alkon & Mares 2012, Rosol 2012, Sbicca 2018).<sup>22</sup> As Guthman argues,

advocates and activists working in various realms of food politics seem to accept, and even embrace these new modes of [neoliberal] governance, to

the extent that in some spheres they have given up on the state as provider of services, regulator of externalities, or provider of subsidies – or at least harbor the conceit that change can be accomplished outside of the state. (Guthman, 2008c, p. 1175)

Guthman (2008c, p. 1171) claims such movements have ‘contributed to neoliberal subject formation, as demonstrated by four recurring themes in contemporary food activism as they intersect with neoliberal rationalities’: ‘consumer choice, localism, entrepreneurialism, and self-improvement.’ Food movement actors thus reinforce ‘neoliberalism’ through individual subjectivity creation but also through marketization, consumerism, and structural effects (such as the ‘replacement’ of social provisioning that such theorists assume should be the purview of the state).

I do not dispute overall Guthman’s claims that the problems of neoliberalism appear within the social movements she analyzes in her studies of Californian food politics. However, Guthman’s ‘strong claim’ (2008c, p. 1175) ‘that agro-food scholarship and politics have made a significant contribution to neoliberal governmentalities’ is in my view *too* strong. This generalized view of food movement activity can engender confusion. It ascribes neoliberal rationalities to general forms of action, action which may exhibit diverse forms of empirical expression and political meaning. For instance, if movements are ‘neoliberal’ for being entrepreneurial, where does this put analyses of people of colour-led projects that use entrepreneurialism as part of a combined survival and radically anti-capitalist and anti-racist political strategy? I will return to these matters in Chapter 6’s analysis of contemporary movements’ theories of change, and will argue that the complex existence of ‘neoliberal’ and non-neoliberal forces and ideologies in food movements renders some of this ‘neoliberalization’ critique unhelpful in apprehending the positive potential of movements (especially the more subaltern aspects thereof), or in developing strategies for greater organizing success.<sup>23</sup> Guthman often denies that she intends to undermine movements through her critiques (e.g. Guthman 2004: 313, 2008c, Allen and Guthman 2006). Yet the neoliberalism lens can lead to an analytical dead end for scholar-activism: a victory of ‘pessimism of the intellect’ over any ‘optimism of the will’. In my experience of teaching her material to students (who are also at times activists), their most common reaction is to find her critiques so effective that to them options for movement success are reduced to near zero.

Like Featherstone (2015), I find that critical scholarship on US food movements sometimes deals with neoliberalism in a way that overstates neoliberalism's cohesion and force as a political power, and in so doing tends to undermine the nuanced and diverse imaginations, tactics, and strategies of the movements themselves. As Sbicca and Myers (2017, p. 30) state, 'much of the scholarship on the food movement in the United States overemphasizes the economic dimensions of neoliberalization, which turns neoliberalism into a monolithic entity as opposed to a contingent, uneven and contested social process.' The neoliberalism lens lends itself to prefiguring neoliberalism and seeing it in everything, from the class project imposed to the subject in reaction. Even Guthman (2008c, p. 1181) admits as much in the conclusion to her influential article on 'Neoliberalism and the making of food politics in California'. This overemphasis on neoliberalism is not necessarily helpful for studies on emancipation. Discussing Noel Castree's (2008) work on the 'neoliberalization of nature'. Featherstone says,

Castree's analysis here is representative of some key tropes that structure the theorization of the relations between neo-liberalism and contestation. He constructs neoliberalism as a coherent set of projects which "calls forth resistance", rather than such resistance being already intertwined with and constitutive of diverse social and political relations. Furthermore, he argues that resistance can reconfigure the [neoliberal] project in its "specific geographical manifestations" rather than thinking about the broader potential impact of such contestation. (Featherstone, 2015, p. 14)

Featherstone further argues 'By configuring resisting others as primarily governed subjects, such an approach can paradoxically reassert the centrality of neoliberal actors and projects' (ibid). I find Guthman's analysis occasionally hampered by this approach, even while I find myself agreeing with much of her argumentation and conclusions. For instance, in claiming that 'the character of agro-food politics in California reflects an articulation of California's economic and political history, agrarian development, enduring and evolving food culture, and the neoliberal project,' Guthman (2008c, p. 1171), she leaves out the role of non-elite agency in this history, and elevates the role of 'the neoliberal project', such that most non-academic readings of her work end up with the pessimistic conclusion that not much can be done (from a non-elite, non-hegemonic position) about the current state of things.

Other literatures have nuanced and I think improved upon Guthman's original critiques, showing how movements can simultaneously act as a 'protective countermovement' against neoliberalism 'while at the same time entrenching the neoliberal organisation of contemporary urban political economies' (McClintock 2014, p. 147); that is, movements can be internally and inherently contradictory. Such an analysis is corroborated by Ghose and Pettygrove (2014: 1108), who 'find that community gardening ... simultaneously resists and reinforces hegemonic relations'. The gardens they studied 'provide numerous benefits to participants' and 'represent prospects for democratic citizenship practice', yet 'because of the material and political constraints on community garden development, citizen control of these spaces remains narrowly conscribed' and their 'volunteerism may inadvertently support the interests of the local [neoliberal] state' (ibid: 1108-1109). Furthermore, movement projects can (even while reinforcing some aspects of, or without directly challenging, neoliberalism) lay the groundwork for future, more substantial and radical political changes (Moragues-Faus, 2017; Wilson, 2013). Instead of seeing neoliberalism as the determining factor in our observations, we might start from recognition of and attentiveness to the legacies of 'resistance' movements – or perhaps put more simply peoples' interests in self-determination (which may precede a force needing to be resisted). Scholars need not fear pointing out where and how movements rearticulate neoliberal subjectivities and behavioural structures, but this is better done within a framework that first traces the meanings and patterns of these subjects and practices back beyond the periodization of, and at a wider scope than, neoliberalism and the modern era.<sup>24</sup> This approach includes (though is not limited to) greater attention to the state's role vis-à-vis movement members and efforts, which I turn to next.

### *3: The limited state of State theory in food movement literature*

[D]espite the fact that California has been home to some relatively progressive interventions – generally health and safety regulations are stronger in this state than elsewhere – the food movement there has been remarkably anti-statist. (Guthman, 2008c, p. 1180)

In the food movement and neoliberalization literature, the backdrop image is of a retrenching or capital-serving state, which has agency, but at an abstract level, often as a handmaiden to 'neoliberalism'. At the same time,

the state often reappears at the end of academic analyses as an admonition to movements to get it under control. States are ‘progressive’, but ‘anti-statism’ cannot be. This strikes me as somewhat contradictory, in that the state is admitted as problematic (for pursuits of emancipation), yet movements are decried when they attempt to make change outside or away from it. Scholar activists are limited, not benefitted, by explanations of food movement failings (and possibilities) that solely look through the lens of ‘neoliberalism’.

Has the role of the state – in regards to the movements and their long-term origins, rather than only contextual conditions of neoliberalism – been sufficiently unpacked? Theorizing what the state *is*, what it is *capable of*, and why and how movements engage it, is at times an issue for this literature. Who have been and are the people who compose the state’s agencies and institutions: who are ‘state actors’, and what do they actually do and think? How do their peculiarities shape how and if movements address them? What does interaction between them and societal actors look like, and what are the dynamics and results? The ‘state and society’ view of social change must attend to the state side as well as social movements: some studies are one-sided (either emphasizing the state’s role or the social movement’s), and some do take on both, but generally there is under-theorization of roles of and ideologies about the state (Schiavoni 2017). As Schiavoni (2017: 22), building on others like Fox (1993) and Migdal (1994), has argued, analysis must first ‘disaggregate the state’, in order to see the details of state actors and their interactions, if we are to understand the ways social movements engage state institutions towards emancipatory ends. Much of the US food movement literature tends to address states as relatively monolithic entities, constituting a structure that constrains activist agency, but not as a multifaceted site of dynamic interaction engendering change over time. An important US food movement study by Cadieux and Slocum (2015) delves into the differences between the more international ‘food sovereignty’ and the more US-centred ‘food justice’ frames, but besides a short paragraph (on page 7) the study does not substantially address if or how these frames differentiate in relation to their approach to the state. Nor does the study explain how these frames may be conditioned by dynamics involving the state, as either a unified or disaggregated entity.

This weak theorization of the state compares with much deeper theorization in the literature on food sovereignty movements at the national

level outside the US (Godek, 2015; McKay, Nehring, & Walsh-Dilley, 2014; Peña, 2016; Schiavoni 2015; Trauger, 2014), and much of the political science literature on environmental politics (Davidson 2009, 2012; Eckersley, 2005). Some internationally focused analysis *does* explicitly take up questions of the state and movements as fractions rather than unities (in the case of Jakobsen 2018, on India's farmers movements). This kind of conscious state theorizing is important because if we are to understand emancipatory struggle, and its meanings and varying enactments, we need to understand the state as a still-very-relevant centre for political claims-making. As Schiavoni (2017: 20) reminds us, if what we are interested in is 'a wholesale transformation of the food system, benefitting social classes and groups beyond the organized ranks of social movements, then the role of the state becomes key.' Moreover, an elaborated theory of states and their relation to emancipation is essential to then understanding varying forms of state power and how they relate. In particular, it helps make sense of the recent rise of the rightwing, which has managed to assert power within the national state and through civil society. Specifically, it is key given the state role contradictions inherent in authoritarian populist political projects described earlier, and the dialectical manifestation of this contradiction in food movements. State theorizing thus also helps identify where and how the interaction of varying movement theories of change and political opportunity structures influences the adoption of solidarity strategies among the movements. I return to these matters most directly in Chapter 6, although they form a background consideration throughout the study.

#### *4: Undertheorizing the relation of rightwing politics to food movements*

Overreliance on neoliberalism and its confusions can also obscure lines of questioning that might better find affinities across not-obvious political boundaries, or forewarn possibilities where food movements may bolster or compose the rightwing. Such overreliance can obscure the power of ideas and influences that precede and transcend politics narrowly ascribed to neoliberalism, and the neoliberal era. A focus on neoliberalism, for example, can confuse grasping the origins of contradictory views towards the state (as a strategic site for struggle). For examples, to some Indigenous and African-American people, and those of multiple ethnicities who trace their political beliefs back through radical Left movements, histories of



state and state-sanctioned violence – racialized, classed, and targeted against counter-hegemonic sectors – shape their (generally negative) attitudes to state action. Thus, a hesitance to engage the state for emancipation-seeking reforms is not reducible to or explainable only via the lens of neoliberal structures or subjectivities. These same histories – say the role of racialized violence in the South – shape not just the worldviews and actions of Others, but also that of the upholders of such violence, and their descendants. Views towards the state in this way are also complex and multilayered: for instance, white supremacist nationalism in the South (as exhibited in recent controversy over public monuments of the pro-slavery Southern Confederacy) is often against the *national* state (a source at times of interference in the continuation of the white supremacist order), but is more ambivalent about state and local governments when the latter have reflected and politically represented their white supremacist values. Once again taking up the anarchist lens, like Ashwood (2018) does in the rural South, we can see how ‘anti-state’ and ‘non-state’ ideas show up in the food movement’s ostensible political antithesis (conservative rural whites). Combined with greater attention to food movements’ views of the state, including the movement’s internal diversity and the challenges this diversity brings, such a view might help identify potential value overlaps between unlikely groups, and the dangerous grounds where food movement actors may play into problematic ideological proclivities. In the case of the US, the latter can refer to the individualist libertarianism and romantic agrarianism of white, male landownership, which overlap with current authoritarian populist politics, and show up in some parts of the food movement (Carlisle, 2013; Pilgeram & Meeuf, 2014; Gumpert 2013). Freedom from government regulation can be called for under the banner of ‘food sovereignty’. Defense of the white farmer way of life – identified with the patriarchal household, ownership of land, and small-town identity – can be combined with either a ‘food movement’ or a Trumpian orientation. These issues are not well addressed via the neoliberal lens, and are generally not discussed much in US food movement literatures.

This literature *has* begun to address the relation of conditions and movements around food systems to the recent rise of rightwing politics (see, among others, Cadieux et al. 2019, and special issues in the *Journal of Culture and Agriculture* (Vol 42, n.2) on ‘Immigration, Labor, & Agriculture in the United States in the Trump Era’, *Journal of Rural Studies* (Vol 82) on ‘Authoritarian Populism and Emancipatory Politics in the Rural United

States', and *Journal of Food Law & Policy* (Vol 13, n.1) on 'Food Policy in the Trump Era'. Contemporary scholarly work on rightwing politics (as on 'Trumpism') could build on this beginning, and further integrate combined attention to food and political systems, and transformations thereof. Likewise, food movement research can analyze movements in relation to historical trajectories of rightwing politics and contemporary manifestations of authoritarian populism. Few scholars have sought to find the conceptual and periodization ties between authoritarian populism's rise and recent agrarian changes. Some notable efforts include efforts to imagine progressive rural politics within the limitations expected from Trump's administration (Carpenter & Cadieux, 2017), a critique of the emerging myth that Trump was elected by farmers and the idea that Trump's politics will necessarily serve the white rural farm owner elite (Hamilton, 2017), and attempts to clarify the US's agricultural policy history, which when manifested as 'a folk history, written by figures associated with contemporary food movements' (Rosenberg & Stucki, 2017, p. 13) threatens potentially detrimental effects. While the authoritarian populism literature does not (or does not sufficiently) centre the histories of agrarian BIPOC and Others in both the histories leading to, and the actuality of and contemporary responses to, the rise of Trump and his particular brand of authoritarian and populist rightwing politics, the food movement literatures increasingly *do* feature these Others, but have not related them sufficiently to the theoretical and conceptual inflection points for authoritarian populism (or, an alternative Left populism). These are some of the gaps this research helps to fill.

### *The use of the lens of Othering as a way through these gaps*

To accomplish these various goals, the study necessitates a conceptual thread to tie them together. It is my proposal that 'Othering', and its dialectical mirror in 'solidarity', can serve this function – as a window into movement convergence and emancipation. Othering is foundational to rightwing politics and its current form in authoritarian populism. It plays a role in creating the conditions of marginalization, which differentially engenders resistance and new emancipatory horizons. The historical nature and evolution of subjectivity of Others appears in contemporary (emancipatory) politics – if we pay attention to this history and its continual manifestation(s). These politics, in turn, can be viewed through contemporary rural and agrarian movements. The intersections between the

various movement groups, sectors, and identity-based configurations elevate the need for an intersectional analysis, and point to the potentials of solidarity strategies which undermine different groups' Othering, without undermining potentially greater unification. And all of these dynamics are tied to a world-historical movement of interlocked factors of (nation-) state power, processes of accumulation and dispossession, environment making, and human agency – in complex, non-linear, and potentially contradictory ways. 'Contradictions', in this case, means here not just *different than one another*, instead I indicate here that it is possible to find that the interplay of ostensibly progressive social movements with macro-level forces of injustice (like capitalist expansion) are not simple, and do not ideally match the 'strategic essentialism' (Mollinga, 2010) that many would desire of movements (that is, viewing them as 'essentially' coherent, representing a cohesive force marching uniformly towards justice). Othering and solidarity form concepts with which to investigate these processes in detail and specificity, and to see where, why, and how they take place, and how they relate to issues of movement convergence and trajectories of rightwing politics. In the next chapter, I will explain how the study will leverage these concepts and use them to answer the two central research questions: how movements conceive of emancipation, and in what ways might their work counter rightwing politics.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The 2016 election had a turnout roughly similar than previous presidential elections, with 61.4 per cent of eligible voters reporting having voted. In 2020, turnout jumped to 67 per cent, the 'largest increase in voting between presidential elections on record'; see <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/04/record-high-turnout-in-2020-general-election.html>.

<sup>2</sup> As some have pointed out, since Trump's election contemporary rural whites have been Othered by liberal, urban, and media discourses as irredeemable racist 'deplorables' (Shelton 2018, Jadhav 2018, 2021) – likely undermining any possibility of rectifying the urban-rural divide that helped engender Trump's success in the first place (Cramer 2016).

<sup>3</sup> This understanding is based largely on the work of Nancy Fraser (2000, 2005, 2013) and is elaborated later in this chapter.

<sup>4</sup> It is important to emphasize that Othering does not encompass all forms of oppression. For instance, there could be structural oppression of certain groups without a member of that group being subject regularly or heavily to Othering practices.

<sup>5</sup> This section includes material that I reworked for a publication in *Journal of Peasant Studies* on ‘Agrarian Anarchism and Authoritarian Populism’ (Roman-Alcalá 2021).

<sup>6</sup> Bello (2018) for instance prefers the term ‘counterrevolution’.

<sup>7</sup> In the US, ‘liberal’ is mostly taken to mean ‘progressive’, or left-leaning, unlike the meaning of liberal in most of the rest of the world. When I put the word in quotes I am using the term in the conventional US manner.

<sup>8</sup> Mirowski (2013), among others, would likely argue that the ideological work is in actuality *more* important, based on his reading that neoliberalism’s ascent and resilience in the face of crisis has relied on concerted historical efforts to craft a cohesive ideological project – a project without parallel on the Left.

<sup>9</sup> As Brown and Getz (2008, 1186) note: ‘Historically, immigration policy has served as a mechanism, not only for managing labour flow, but for actively producing an “other”, in this case a labour force that can be viewed as undeserving of the rights and benefits afforded citizen workers and that can be scapegoated during periods of economic downturn.’

<sup>10</sup> To some, the idea of pursuing social change without pursuing hegemony may be unimaginable, or appear as obviously self-defeating. Indeed, this is a charge leveled against anarchism as a philosophy (and vigorously defended against by Day [2005]). However, as I show in Chapter 6, how anarchism actually shows up in contemporary social movements is not so dogmatic as to avoid hegemonic entanglements on the level of the state *apparatus*, while still focusing on its more typical efforts of building new practices and ideological commitments in civil society.

<sup>11</sup> In addition, it is important not to overly emphasize the political task of ‘converting’ rural whites to leftist or emancipatory values and movements, against many other avenues which do not necessarily focus on (rural) whites.

<sup>12</sup> This is not to proclaim some ‘ahistorical’ dogmatic view of all states being the same (Bernstein 2020: 7). Rather, it is to take seriously anarchist critiques of patterns of states, such that there are no illusions that a state can operate without *some* level of authoritarian and exclusionary power; that this power is relational and dynamic between administrations, rather than something that can be turned on or off. Lastly, it means contending with these regressive aspects of statism when considering emancipatory political possibilities.

<sup>13</sup> Note that this project and vision is compelling only to *some*, particularly the relatively privileged and empowered sectors of the population that vote. Considering

that 100,000,000 of 250,000,000 eligible voters do not vote in most elections, and that Trump won with a total of 63 million votes (from a total US population of 331 million), it might be worthwhile to keep in mind how US governance is based already on minorities deciding for majorities.

<sup>14</sup> Selective enforcement of the law also remains in play when that project is (in some ways) on its way out of power: see the attempted insurrection at the US Capitol building of thousands of white nationalists on January 6<sup>th</sup> 2021, which contained at least dozens of participants from law enforcement and military, and which was treated with a much lighter hand by both law enforcement on hand, as well as prosecuting agencies afterwards, compared with the treatment of Black Lives Matter and disability rights activists at earlier Capitol protests. Clearly, the law is an invaluable tool of coercion, of engendering consent (by reinforcing self-policing amongst would-be counter-hegemonic forces), *and* building authoritarian populism-supporting hegemonic narratives. Admittedly, these are not necessarily a *cobesive* set of narratives, as evidenced by the January 6<sup>th</sup> participants' flying of both 'don't tread on me' flags that represent US-born anti-state, 'small-government' ideologies and 'Blue Lives Matter' flags, which supposedly represent support and respect for police (the government's agents) – while insurrectionists attacked and in one case killed police defending the Capitol. The Blue Lives Matter flag in this context is better understood as primarily an *anti-Black* symbol than one that represents a clear ideology vis-à-vis the state.

<sup>15</sup> Here I switch to 'food movements' rather than 'rural and agrarian movements', for readability's sake.

<sup>16</sup> Details about the social movement groups I engaged with during the research period are found in Chapter 3.

<sup>17</sup> See <https://www.blackfarmercase.com/>.

<sup>18</sup> Described here as outlined by the Nyéléni social movement gathering in 2007; see Nyéléni (2007).

<sup>19</sup> Described here based on Slocum and Cadieux (2015), with additions based on a larger reading of the food justice literature and personal experience in food justice movements over the past fifteen years.

<sup>20</sup> There are many ways to interpret the meaning of Gramsci's term 'organic intellectuals'. In a generic sense, following from Gramsci (1971), the term has been used to denote people with social functions as intellectuals whose allegiance to communities sharing their class background remains, even as they may move up in social status (e.g. a working-class person who becomes a professor); or to intellectuals who serve anti-hegemonic interests.

<sup>21</sup> See <http://healfoodalliance.org>.

<sup>22</sup> In this, they often start ‘from the assumption that community participation in public service provision is not necessarily an emancipatory claiming of rights by citizens (anymore), but can instead be understood as part of a distinct political rationality which aims at passing on state responsibilities to civil society’ (Rosol 2012: 240).

<sup>23</sup> This is a view and critique prefigured by Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011: 132) in their analysis of global food movements across four ‘trends’; the authors insist on a less static and singular view of movement activity: ‘Food movement organizations are fluid and have different and changing positions on key food system issues like GMOs, food aid, agrofuels, subsidies, supply management, land reform and trade. Depending on their ideology, political awareness, support base and funding, food movement organizations will adopt a range of stances, and will consciously or unconsciously form alliances across regime and movement trends. While some organizations are solidly neoliberal, reformist, progressive or radical, others are much harder to categorize because they adopt politically distinct positions on different issues – or adopt one position while practicing another. A group’s positioning vis-à-vis neoliberal or reformist projects and institutions can be tactical or strategic. Rather than ascribing fixity to organizations in the food movement, an appreciation of their heterogeneous and fluid political nature, coupled with an analysis of potential alliances within the movement, can help us identify challenges and opportunities for food systems change.’

<sup>24</sup> Indeed, one of the greatest confusions in social science is what exactly neoliberalism means. I see its best use as describing a periodization of capitalist modernity, since the 1970s. This involves a combination of global political-economy conditions with the reactions to these of elites (especially those in the industrial ‘core’ regions); these policy shifts and investment shifts, and cultural changes, post-facto appear as a more-so cohesive class project than they necessarily were during the period of its initial development. Still, compared with the idea of a cohesive ‘Left’ project, ideology, or set of policies, neoliberalism appears remarkably cohesive. It certainly has benefited from concerted efforts to legitimize itself intellectually (Mirowski 2013).

## 3

## Methodology

In this chapter I introduce and justify the methodology used in this research. I address how the central research question, building on interactions among dynamics of Othering/solidarity, rightwing politics, emancipatory politics, and food movements, can be answered. I also describe how data on these subjects and dynamics were collected in ways that met the needs raised in the last chapter for greater historicizing, for dynamic and relational ways of seeing racial formation and change in racial politics within food movements and in the integral state, and to move beyond the neoliberalism lens. These needs are well suited by historical methods, which thus formed the backbone for the contemporary-focused fieldwork. Because of my concern for multiple axes of Othering and marginalization, the methodology also speaks to the need for data on a diversified base of movements and social positions contained within them (both historically and today).

I begin the chapter by placing my work in its ontological and epistemological bases. The overall research approach is qualitative and based on a relational ontology and epistemology, using critical realism as its framework for social scientific understanding of complex human-ecological systems, and developing its theoretical apparatuses through a modified ‘grounded’ theory (or ‘adaptive’ theory) process, approximating Burawoy’s (1998) model of the ‘extended case method’. In this section I discuss how this approach is best suited towards answering my particular research questions, given their normative valence. I also introduce here, coming out of the study’s relational focus, some of the ethical commitments that guide my research process and are an essential component of the activist-scholarship nature of this work. After describing the ‘historical-relational-interactive’ (HRI) approach I took as a methodological guide, I then further elaborate specifics of the study’s historical, iterative, grounded, and adap-

tive approach, through discussion of the specific methods used: case histories, historicizing and analysis of these histories, semi-structured interviews, a form of focus groups called ‘agroecology encuentros’ (encounters), participant observation, and iterative dialogue with informants. I conclude with a description of the research process as a whole (which is also described in the Timeline appendix).

The section on participant observation introduces many of the organizations and spaces that composed my fieldwork subjects of interest, and who informed my theory development and analysis. In my discussion of the agroecology encounters, I also introduce three approaches to activist scholarship that are embedded within the process that this research took, to varying degrees. These are strategies of ‘invocation’, ‘avocation’, and ‘convocation’, conceptually developed in the work of Haiven and Khasnabish (2014). Together, the materials in this chapter describe how this research advanced, why it was designed and implemented in this way, and how this approach answers the central research questions.

### 3.1. Ontological framework and theoretical approach

It is important to ground this study and my approach generally in a relational ontology (Burkitt, 2016; Dépelteau, 2015; Emirbayer, 1997). This relates to my interest in critical realism as a metatheory informing my ontology, epistemology, and methodology, which I elaborate later on (see Sayer, 2000 and Danermark et al., 2002 for the particular critical realist approaches I mostly lean on; Bhaskar, 1978 for its original formulation). As will become clear through remaining sections, critical realism also informs my selection of appropriate theories at other scales (that is, the more ‘general descriptive’ theory of how societies function and change; ‘specific descriptive’ theories about food systems and social movement topics; and ‘normative theories’ that inform my positions on ‘what ought to be’ – see Danermark et al., 2002, Chap. 5 and *passim*). Critical realism is linked to this relational ontology because many critical realists conduct research based on such ontology. A relational ontology suggests that rather than see existence as predicated on independent units that interact, I see these units as constituted *through relations*. For most social scientists, this may be a given, or taken for granted. Clearly, all studies of the social world are inherently about relations. But a relational ontology moves beyond the



obvious point that society *is composed of relations*. Such an ontological starting point leads to a number of related but separately important conclusions, which shape the approach to scientific investigation.<sup>1</sup>

For one, there is no dispassionate observer, no ‘god eye trick’ (Hara-way, 1988, p. 581) worth playing, when the researcher themselves is inherently and unavoidably imbricated in embodied relations with the world. Hence, the research does not expect to be neutral or uninfluenced by the researcher’s positionality (e.g. Grbich, 2007: 10-13, Burawoy 1998). Data generated in the study are inherently linked to the relationality between myself as ‘researcher’ (or, simply, observer) and what I am choosing to research/observe. For two, rather than focus on debates between (individual) agency and (social) structure – that is, ‘which is more important’ – a relational ontology as found in critical realism offers ‘a challenge to both individualism and holism. Social life can neither be reduced downwards to the individual, for the relationalist, nor reduced upwards to a whole. Social life consists in networks of interaction between actors, both human and corporate; networks which, qua networks of interaction, are always in process’ (Crossley, 2016, p. 155). Hence, a relational ontology leads research to look at processes and actions, not static representations of individual units and their inherent qualities, and to the interplay of structure and agency rather than one or the other as having explanatory privilege.

To be clear, the suggestion here is a view of structure and agency as analytically separate but linked phenomena, which cannot be collapsed into each other, but also cannot be understood independently from one another. As Danermark et al. (2002, pp. 178-182) describe, the critical realist ‘transformational model’ of structure and agency foregrounds an understanding of each phenomenon’s different ‘powers and properties’; namely, that ‘social structures are always the context in which action and social interaction take place, at the same time as social interaction constitutes the environment in which the structures are reproduced or transformed’ (ibid, p 181). Social structures ‘already exist for every agent – they are simply there’ (ibid, p. 180). Yet these structures can be modified by human action – through agency. Hence, structure is the existing platform that either enables or constrains certain kinds of action, while action/agency can either reproduce or transform structures, and this is happening constantly, iteratively. Ultimately, structures cannot act, while human beings can. Our human capacity to decide and change behaviour is what makes agency an indispensable concept for social science – especially

a social science that seeks normative changes of one sort or another: without agency, no such change would be possible! It is my contention that this relational view of structure and agency offers greater insight into how social realities change than a focus on either structure or agency as discreet, standalone explanations.

As the basis for the whole study, a relational ontology provides guidance for my analytic lens, which looks at relations between social agents, rather than simply the agents themselves as ‘units’ of analysis. In brief, my unit of analysis is (collectively) the California-based agrarian and rural movements I focus on, in their relations internally and externally, whereas my object of analysis is the Othering/solidarity dynamic appearing in those relations. Schiavoni (2017: 16), quoting Emirbayer (1997: 287), notes how ‘from a relational perspective, “the very terms or units involved in a transaction derive their meaning, significance, and identity from the (changing) functional roles they play within that transaction. The latter, seen as a dynamic, unfolding process, becomes the primary unit of analysis...”’. This perspective also frames my understanding of how social change occurs – relationally (between actors, between actors and contexts, between agency and structure). Conveniently enough for this study, recent research has begun to use much more relational lenses to describe food systems change and the dynamics of multi-actor and multi-level social change, described by some as through a process of ‘relational sovereignty’ (Iles & Montenegro, 2015). Similarly, scalar understandings should take categories of scale as *themselves* relational – only existing insofar as they can be related or compared with other scales (Brown & Purcell, 2005; Massey, 1994; Neumann, 2009), because multiple scales are inherently at play in any phenomenon (whether macro, meso, or micro-scale). A relational ontology also thus demands attention – at the earliest moment even if not in detail – to all these levels in simultaneous or interactive analysis (Roman-Alcalá, 2016). In the case of this research, I focus investigation on mechanisms and explanation of social phenomena primarily at the level of interpersonal interaction within groups and inter-group interaction (‘groups’ within agrarian and rural social movements), and the constitution thereof of identities, politics, and discourses with larger societal relevance. At the same time, I will attempt to situate this two-level focus in the context of a ‘general theory’ that is world-historical in scope (broadly, eco-Marxist interpretations of state action, capitalist accumulation, and human/nonhuman ecological relations), and attend to the interaction of these general-

theoretical implications with specifically situated regional-national historical conditions.

A relational ontology links (but is not necessarily consonant) with a relational epistemology: that knowledge itself is generated only via relations. Importantly, what we know and believe as ‘individuals’ is hard pressed to be separated from processes we live through, involving the rest of the web of life, including human beings and their belief systems. In this vein, two ideas pivotal for this study, ‘justice’ and ‘emancipation’, are also inherently relational concepts, with no existence of their own in terms of independent objects. These concepts only come alive – become real, meaningful, and consequential – through and as a result of relations between social beings. The same thing is true of the knowledge claims of this research: they come alive only insofar as multiple people (informants, readers) accept them through a process of *relating*.

With regards to this relational epistemology, I take as foundational a non-extractive, mutually-beneficial relation of researcher and researched. In order to conduct research that is built on reciprocal relationships, engaged thought, and participatory, accountable data collection, I have endeavored to actualize to the extent possible the research principles and protocols of the Agroecology Research-Action Collective (ARC). ARC is a community of practice for scholars working on issues of food justice, food sovereignty, and agroecology, which I helped to found in 2016 (and currently co-coordinate). The ‘principles and protocols’ (see Box A) are an attempt to clarify the basic ‘floor’ of values and practices that underpin ethical research conducted on these issues alongside and with social movements working on these issues.<sup>2</sup> Most pertinently to this project, I have been transparent with all my informants about my intentions and process as a researcher, and have offered to share whatever write-up implicates them or their stories, in order to receive feedback. This is an attempt to enact especially these principles: ‘Interpretation should be dialogical, with the goal of reaching shared analysis. ... Write-ups must be done with time/space for feedback from partners; no sharing of stories without permission’. Although I have adjusted my expected process from an earlier design which more overtly programmed in feedback from movements on my research questions, I have continually throughout the research process altered lines of questioning and theoretical interests based on recurring conversations (both casual and as part of this ‘formal’ research), in order to keep the project directed towards co-created knowledge alongside my

informants. I describe further how I dealt with ‘principles of collaborative research development’ in forthcoming explorations of ‘avocation’, ‘invocation’, and ‘convocation’ strategies in research, in the subsection on ‘agroecology encuentros’.

*Box A: ‘Principles and Protocols’ from*

<https://agroecologyresearchaction.org/principles-and-protocols/>

The guidelines below outline the principles, protocols, and pathways towards building that shared analysis ethically. These guidelines are intended to define the ‘floor’ for participation as researchers in ARC in two dimensions: 1) We expect individuals participating to abide by these guidelines in their individual research work that includes or incorporates data that emerges directly from community or organizational partners; 2) We will follow these guidelines in pursuing our collective work in partnership-based research.

An important caveat is that we recognize that some protocols (for example, co-creating research questions) are aspirational, and may only be appropriate in certain circumstances, whereas the principles underlying them (for example, accountability, transparency, sharing of resources, non-extractive relationship building) are non-negotiable. We expect good faith efforts to stay true to the principles and develop research processes in dialogue, with these guidelines shaping but not limiting what is possible and appropriate in every circumstance.

- **Principles of collaborative research development**

1. Research questions should, from the earliest stage, emerge from **a process of dialogue** between researcher(s) and community/movement partners.
2. The process of research after definition of research questions must involve **ongoing collaboration** in all steps, such as research design, implementation, data collection, and so on.
3. These guidelines themselves are subject to **continual development** in dialogue with community and movement partners — at this stage, they exist as a baseline to work from and will evolve as the group evolves.
4. This also goes for individual projects: ARC members will review and revise this list with community/movement partners in new

research efforts.

- **Principles of ethical processes**

1. **Transparency** — Researchers must be open with their goals, needs, constraints, and in particular the resources involved in a project (that is, budgets, sources of funding) to all collaborators.
2. **Accountability** — Researchers must justify their decision and actions to community partners, not making decisions unilaterally without consultation and keeping to agreements that have been made. Once a collaboration is established, accountability goes both ways, as researchers need also to feel that their input and agreements are respected and valued by partners.
3. **Do No Harm** — We know that while trying to actually ‘do good’ by pursuing impactful engaged research, we can inadvertently harm those we are seeking to support. We must think through the impacts of our work at every stage and avoid harmful impacts (reputational, financial, political) to the best of our ability.
4. **Respecting alliances** — When working with collaborative groups (like networks, alliances, coalitions), researchers must be careful to not pick off and work with individuals in a way that sidelines or subverts the group’s decisions and values.
5. **Respecting other knowledges/analyses** — Since our goal is to build *shared analysis* we must be open to and accepting of knowledges and analysis that are not our own, and commit to taking these seriously even when our analysis differs.
6. **A commitment to long-term and relationship building** — As much as possible, being ‘in it for the long haul’, building projects, authentic relationships, and power over time.

- **Principles of ‘resourcing’**

1. **Remuneration** of partners for time and expertise (honorariums), and providing for travel and other costs associated with the research process.
2. **Providing valuable work** to partners (for example, grant writing, research on requested topics, digging fence post holes on the farm, etc.); build capacity in all areas of expertise — in both research and partner communities — such that interdependence cultivates equity.

3. Strive to **avoid competition** with community partners in fund-raising: seek funding from sources not available to community groups, leverage existing resources; include everyone in budgeting issues (beyond honorariums).
- **Principles involving data**
    1. **Interpretation should be dialogical**, with the goal of reaching shared analysis
    2. **Write-ups** must be done **with time/space for feedback** from partners; no sharing of stories without permission; how data will be written up (by what process/timeline) should be discussed early on in research design. Wherever possible, co-authorship including community partners should be prioritized.
    3. **Dissemination** should be planned to be **broad** (that is, beyond academic circles), include (on at least equal footing) public audiences, and attentive to potential (negative) impacts (see ‘do no harm’ principle). When the research is presented, partners will be fully credited for their integral role, and not merely as subjects or supporters, as appropriate.
  - **Work on institutions**
    1. We know that this approach to research is still not widely accepted within academic and other institutions, and can be more difficult to pursue. Therefore, we commit to **using our positions within those institutions to move their internal values and support structures (for example, funding, tenure decisions) towards this form of research.**
    2. Our ambitious and ultimate goal is to move from simply lowering disincentives to engaged research, to **engendering systemic change in ‘research’ as a whole!**
    3. We also want to acknowledge that academia and other research institutions are not homogeneous, and individuals within them vary in power and privilege, according to (among other factors) race, gender, class, and positional status. Because some of us have more precarious positions in our respective institutions, we thus **invite the less precarious to leverage their privilege for their colleagues** as well as community partners.

### 3.1.1. Historical-Relational-Interactive (HRI) approach

This study's interest in relationality is well captured in Schiavoni's (2017) proposal for a 'historical-relational-interactive' (HRI) approach to the study of food sovereignty. While the HRI approach can function as a specific descriptive theory about food systems, movements, and political change, I take it up here largely as a *methodological* theory, offering guidance in research design and how I have seen the world of my data in relation to my research questions. Schiavoni sums up the approach:

A historical lens allows us to understand the social structures and institutions that condition the politics of food over time and the ways in which the agency of relevant state and societal actors has been, and continues to be, enhanced and exercised, or not, in the political contestation over the food system. A relational lens allows us to capture the process-oriented nature of food sovereignty – the ways in which the very meanings and attempted practices of food sovereignty are being dynamically and contentiously shaped and reshaped over time. An interactive lens allows us to analyze how actors within the state and in society are dialectically linked, molding the construction of food sovereignty through their interactions. (2017: 1)

I must clarify from the outset that Schiavoni's framework was specifically developed to look at the construction of 'food sovereignty', and in this, the particular interplay of societal forces (like social movements, and the actors who compose them) and the state (its agencies and actors). This study does look at food sovereignty in relation to processes of countering Othering and achieving emancipatory goals, but it is not a study of food sovereignty per se. Still, Schiavoni's HRI framework and approach seems appropriate for the study of social movements in general, regardless of their use of the term or not, and it is applicable to the agrarian and rural movements I focus on. As it is mobilized in Schiavoni's research, food sovereignty can be seen as one of multiple frameworks for emancipatory politics used by the societal actors to pursue their emancipatory goals. Hence the three elements to the HRI approach are useful guides to understand many forms, processes, and common patterns of social movements and the broader field of politics, beyond only food sovereignty. Here, I will introduce in greater detail the historical, relational, and interactive lenses.

### *Historical*

Schiavoni offers that ‘a historical lens can help us understand and appreciate the much longer trajectory of which current [emancipatory] efforts are a part, and the critical role of social movements in having shaped, and in continuing to shape, this trajectory in an interactive relationship with the state (2017, p. 9)’. But what does looking through the lens of history mean? As Marxist historian Hobsbawm (1972, p. 3) offers,

To be a member of any human community to situate oneself with regard to one’s (its) past ... The past is therefore a permanent dimension of the human consciousness, an inevitable component of the institutions, values and other patterns of human society. The problem for historians is to analyze the nature of this “sense of the past” in society and to trace its changes and transformations.

This tracing also includes looking to the future; as ‘the shape of the future is discerned by searching the process of past development for clues’ and ‘the value of historical inquiry into “what actually happened” for the solution of this for that specific problem of present and future, is undoubted’ (Hobsbawm, 1972, p. 12, 13).

*Historicizing* the US agrarian-political context would then mean seeing history as occurring in the present, based on the resources from histories of the past, and building towards histories of the future. ‘Events can – and should – be considered part of history from the moment they happen’, argues Schiavoni (2017: 10). And ‘when an event has occurred in the past, how it is understood, recalled, and analyzed is a continual process extending into the present (ibid)’, meaning that we should not take certain interpretations of history as static, done deals; historical knowledge is ‘highly imperfect and contested (ibid)’. Like the concepts that mobilize and define social movements, history is itself contested – with results that can have real effects on social change – and so as researchers we must treat history as living, dynamic, and consequential.

Of course, there may be endless forms and points of history relevant to subject matter in the present; are we looking at the entire history of the US, and all its diverse ecologies, cultures, political changes, and agrarian transformations? While these all may be *relevant*, they all might not be *imperative* to effectively conceptualize, theorize, and gather empirical data that can answer the central research questions. Hence, in practice, ‘a historical



lens will by necessity need to be selective, focusing in on certain key questions' (ibid). How I specifically will tackle this selection process is discussed later in this chapter. No matter the subject, a central component to any historical lens is to grasp what Schiavoni (ibid, p. 9), quoting Abrams (1982) describes as the "problematic of structuring" – that is, attempts to understand the multifaceted relationship between structure and agency, which is "something that is continuously constructed in time. It makes the continuous process of construction the focal concern of social analysis". Burawoy (1998: 15) similarly calls for attention to 'structuration': 'studying the everyday world from the standpoint of its structuration, that is by regarding it as simultaneously shaped by and shaping an external field of forces'. The critical realist perspective offers much to start with to address this relationship between structure and agency (see above) – but such a perspective must be continually considered against the empirical details of the specific histories in question for my case data.

### *Relational*

Within the histories of importance to this study, processes of Othering, movements and their goals, and politics writ large 'are dynamically being shaped – and mutually shaping each other – in the process' of reaching towards emancipation (Schiavoni 2017: 13). The ideas and conditions that frame action are changing over time, through the relations that develop and change between various social actors and forces. Actors, institutions, and ideas are implicated here. Hence, the study must also be *relational* in viewing each actor or group of actors as not representing static positions (in either ideology or aspirations), but representing positions that interact and change over time. This, of course, is foundational to any social science that sees itself as relational, whether relational sociology (Burkitt 2016, Emirbayer 1997), relational political ecology (Rocheleau & Roth 2007), relational understanding of scale (Iles & Montenegro 2015), or an intersectional Marxism that sees economic class as a relation rather than a status, as McNally (2015: 141) does when he argues for

class as a complex and dynamic social process whose highest form is self-constitution – the only understanding of class congruent with the mission of the historian (or the serious political activist) to understand its lived reality in historical time.

The meanings of core ideas themselves are also contingent:

The second prong of the HRI framework, relational, thus builds upon the first, historical, in that it also starts from an understanding of food sovereignty construction as unfolding in time. This particular lens looks at the ways in which *the very meanings of food sovereignty and approaches toward it are dynamically being shaped – and mutually shaping each other – in the process of its construction.* (ibid, p. 13, emphasis added)

To illustrate the relational nature of concepts and forces relevant to food systems change, Schiavoni explores the relationship between the concepts *food sovereignty* and *food security*, which have been at times dichotomized by movements and scholars as existing in relative opposition: ‘food security’ as a relatively apolitical term representing simply the social goal of lack of hunger (and often used by more powerful institutions and actors), while ‘food sovereignty’ in representing a more transformative vision and praxis for change (as put forward by radical social movements) (e.g. Alkon & Mares, 2012, p. 349; Schanbacher, 2010). Schiavoni shows, instead, how each of these concepts have in fact themselves shifted in meaning over time, in relation to their mobilization by various sectors of society, and in the dynamic relationship they have as concepts with each other:

Both concepts are in motion ... and their respective trajectories are largely influenced by the dynamic tension that exists between them. A binary approach to food security and food sovereignty, then, does not do justice to either concept or to the multifaceted relationship between them. A relational approach, on the other hand, helps us to appreciate the ways in which the two concepts are historically linked and not only coexist but coproduce each other. (Schiavoni 2017, p. 17)

In so discussing the ‘open-ended and iterative nature of food sovereignty efforts; that is, that the very meanings of food sovereignty and pursuits toward it are dynamically shaped by competing paradigms and approaches (ibid, p. 4),’ Schiavoni’s HRI framework can be used to place attention to the different positions regarding opposition to Othering, use of solidarity strategies, and engendering of emancipatory change. The unavoidable reality that different theories of change exist among diverse agrarian and rural movements in California (particularly around debates about state, market, and autonomous forms of change) is, in general, a vexing issue to those who want to see movements converge. The relational view, rather than attempt to pinpoint and idealize one of these theories (for example, arguing for only a market-facing approach) and analyze actors and efforts

around it, would focus on the very relations between and among these theories and their proponents. This study does this, focusing in Chapter 6 on the tensions and relations between the underlying theories of change Californian emancipatory movements exhibit and describe.

### *Interactive*

Besides the importance placed on relational dynamics between key actors defining emancipatory goals, Schiavoni's framework also foregrounds the importance of investigating the interactions between key political actors – specifically state actors and societal actors outside the state – over time. This means firstly 'disaggregating the actors involved' – not looking at either the state, or social movements (even when they appear as ostensibly unified) as monolithic – and then 'examining the interactions among them' (ibid, p. 20). As my previous research into land access claims against a public university in California shows (Roman-Alcalá, 2015, 2018), in any political process there are various relevant levels of government, agencies/institutions, differently positioned actors within these, and shifting politics and interests within and between all the above. This invariably makes it imperative to disaggregate the state, to understand its internal interactive complexity, if one is to effectively analyze social movement discourses and efforts towards emancipation (which tend to intersect with the state).

Schiavoni, in promoting the 'interactive' approach, is referring centrally to interactions between state and societal actors. This comes from her finding that previous studies (of food sovereignty, but the same insight applies to many other studies as well) have either been too 'state-centred', or too 'society-centred', and have failed to attend to the dynamic interaction of these two very important arenas of action (Schiavoni, 2017, pp. 20-25). She argues, convincingly, that such a dual and interactive focus is key to a general understanding of modern political processes:

an interactive lens becomes an important framework of analysis for gaining an understanding of how state and societal forces are mutually shaping each other. ... Indeed, analyzing food sovereignty construction through such a lens is important for understanding how political power is distributed, contested and transformed in and in relation to the food system, and how the food system in turn shapes broader societal processes, such as capital accumulation, as well as state formation, and vice versa. (ibid, p 22)

Since the state is likely to act as a key player in almost every instance of the dialectic between emancipatory efforts and processes of Othering – for instance, through the state being responsible for generating negative conditions for Others, or by it being a site for emancipatory claims-making – we cannot understand these intra- or inter-movement interactions without placing them in the context of a complex, disaggregated state and its actions. Therefore, I required relevant data on this context. In this research, however, I empirically focus on the interactions among movements, and as the state is not itself my central object of analysis, I did not conduct extensive fieldwork gathering information from state actors. I did have interactions with California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) officials during fieldwork, and some informal conversations with a handful of people involved in state government. I also held a job in 2020–2021 involving the state agency ‘Strategic Growth Council’, which intersects with climate justice and food access organizing and allowed me to observe state actors dealing with movement leaders on these issues. Another source of information about state actors came from reports, media materials, and other written sources indicating the state’s (self)positioning regarding issues of justice, farming, environment, undocumented immigrants, and other relevant topics. Unfortunately, formal interviews with state actors became difficult to schedule due the pandemic. Hence, my focus on the state side of state-society interactions is admittedly limited.

The disaggregated state is an especially vital consideration since dynamics of contention by social movements are often shaped by, and shape, the condition of actors within the (relevant) state (governments). Different actors within the state may be more or less likely to respond to certain movement demands, or to repress, or seek to divide and undermine, the movement; these internal differences can help greatly to explain the strategies of movements, and vice versa. Schiavoni (2017, p. 21) reminds us of the stakes here – and another reason to unpack rather than assume the state:

In situations where there are competing currents within the state, either between or within ideological camps ... relatively autonomous social movements can be a radicalizing force from below that can directly frustrate conservative political swings.

In sum, while Schiavoni’s analysis focuses on interactions between state and society, this study concentrates on interactions within and between

agrarian movements, while still paying indispensable attention to relations between movement actors and state actors (and institutions), as well as between movement actors and actors in the broader realm of civil society. The study takes up the interactive approach to ensure a contextualization of civil societal actions within the existing (disaggregated) state, the dynamic interactions between state and non-state actors, and the historical trajectories that have shaped each.

### 3.1. Methodology and Methods

#### 3.1.1. Approach: Historical, iterative, grounded, adaptive

In this section, I introduce how this study approaches answering the research questions. I begin with an overview of the ways the research addresses the central research questions, via a qualitative approach, based on its epistemological and ontological foundations. I then describe the study's historical and grounded approach, before describing in greater detail the methods used for data collection and analysis, and providing an overview of the research process. Timeline details are provided in the Appendix.

The central questions are descriptive in nature (*How do agrarian and rural movements in California describe and manifest emancipatory politics?*) and about directionality or change in social processes (*In what ways and to what extent might these politics counter historical trajectories and current manifestations of rightwing politics?*). The research is overall qualitative in nature, relying on qualitative data sources about the how, why, and 'so what' about phenomena. The first question, though largely descriptive, requires not just raw data but also interpretation, for which I have developed a framework through an iterative process of 'grounded' (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) or 'adaptive' (Layder 1998) theory. Since I am interested in dialogical and participatory forms of knowledge production, this framework emerged and changed over time and in response to who and what I encountered during data collection. It is important to not perceive the latter question as predictive in nature, as that is not what I am reaching for, nor what social science excels at (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Danermark et al., 2002). As Hobsbawm (1972, p. 12) reminds us, 'the capacity to discern general tendencies does not imply the capacity to forecast their precise outcome in complex and in many respects unknown circumstances of the future'. What social sciences can do, and which the natural sciences rarely can speak to, is provide better theories of non-deterministic causal mechanisms in social phenomena

(Danermark et al., 2002), and thus ideas that are useful for practical action. Noted sociologist Michael Burawoy argues (1998: 28) '[t]he goal of research is not directed at establishing a definitive "truth" about an external world but at the continual improvement of existing theory'. In this way, good social science provides some degree of normative guidance in value-based deliberations on matters of societal importance. To ask this second question, then, is to first posit something about the way that society *should* go, and then to gauge in a non-deterministic but informed fashion ways that 'should' might be reached.

The second question, in seeking more of a causal explanation of social phenomena, rather than simply describe what is or happens, relies on methodological tools developed in the school of 'critical realist' social science (Sayer, 2000, 2010). Critical realism does not define a specific method or methods, but does provide a useful framework for thinking about the research process, its goals and underlying epistemological and ontological assumptions, and thus methodologies which logically extend from these through one's specific research subject. In critical realism, Sayer argues for the development of normative theory about 'what is' and interest in 'what should be'. Sayer (2012) argues, in fact, that such is the most important role for social science, because without normativity it is not possible to understand complex social phenomena. This normative theory cannot just be pulled out of the air, however, as it must be based in a critical realist ontology and epistemology. I come back to the details of this approach below.

Reality, in a critical realist ontology, does exist independently outside of researchers and our intentions and social contexts; this is the 'intransitive' nature of reality that we seek to better understand through research (Danermark et al., 2002, pp. 22-23). However, we can never claim to fully grasp the essential nature of that reality, only construct better models, or 'transitive' theories, that allow greater or better practical understanding of it. To develop these theories, we need concepts to describe empirics and take meaning from them, and we need to look at some aspect of our social world – that is, find 'data' – that can help us test or reflect on these theories. I take data as 'generated' rather than simply 'found', acknowledging the influence of the positionality of the researcher, and the irreducibility of occurrences to simple one-sided points of data (Mason, 2002, p. 52). Such qualitative data emerges inherently from interaction, as I have acted as a participant in many of the contexts where I am collecting data, not

just an objective outside observer of occurrences. Quantitative data do enter the research as useful to corroborate and refine understanding developed mainly through qualitative data, or to contextualize. For example, demographic, voter, and economic data appear when relevant, especially in establishing context. However, it is qualitative data that is most central to this investigation, needed to understand relations within elements and processes within the study, and the intended and achieved effects of interactions between elements via these processes. Quantitative data cannot describe what makes some thing or phenomena what it is, and even less so can it produce causal explanations. The former is what critical realism calls ‘internal’ relations, or what makes something what ‘it’ is (Danermark et al. 2002, pp. 46, 96-98). The latter are mechanisms – relations at the level of the ‘real,’ which are seen reflected in relations taking place at the ‘empirical’ level. Qualitative data is needed to posit either of these.

### *Historical*

History is central to this analysis, as it should be to all research facing issues of political ecology (Mann, 2009). Such an approach to ‘historical-geographical’ materialism<sup>3</sup> must take history to be something that has meaning as being lived into the present; history never stops, and is not just a static picture upon which the present is painted: it is a fluid and connected process that is constantly unfolding. History is not teleological, invariably heading towards certain directions. Nor is it endlessly contingent, lacking any patterns to be observed or lessons to be learned.

There are diverse cultural understandings of time, such as those focused on the cyclical nature of experience, which may challenge Western assumptions of linearity in time processes and provide an alternative lens through which to analyse history (Cusicanqui, 2012, p. 96). For this study, however, my historical approach takes as an assumption that time generally moves from past to future, but within this does not assume linearity, progress, or continuity. That is, throughout history we find moments of disjuncture, dynamic equilibrium, jumps between relatively stable states of social-ecological relations, for example as seen in political and technological revolutions (Moore, 2017, p. 302). Many of the difficulties with making sense of causality through history, with regards to human social life, stem from the emergent properties of social life, which are very hard to predict in the wide and diverse complexity of socio-ecologies. A proposition of critical realism is that emergent properties (which take place at

multiple ‘stratified’ levels; for example biochemical, biological, psychological, social, societal) in ecological and/or social systems cannot be predicted by the examination of these systems’ individual parts (Danermark et al., 2002, pp. 59-66).

In a similar vein, the effects of human action and agency on systems may be non-linear and unpredictable, and occur over timescales we cannot anticipate as (or decide a priori is) the ‘proper’ scale for analysis. For example, a writer’s articulation of ideas in one time and place may, decades or hundreds of years later, become pivotal in circumstances that then change the course of history. This is the ‘butterfly effect’ but for social life, and is a key guardian of hope for most activists interested in social change: change is not foreclosed simply because recent conditions ‘objectively’ give one such an impression (Solnit, 2004, 2016). For this research, taking an appropriately ‘people’s history’ perspective (Zinn, 2005) encourages seeing history particularly through the ideas and actions of non-elites that have rippled in effect through space and time – and taking contemporary actions of non-elites as potential centres of new and similarly impactful, but as-yet-undefined, ripples. Cultural outputs of music, poetry, visual art, film, literature, fiction and nonfiction, analysis, propaganda: all these can be forms of ‘organic intellectualism’ which both feeds from and feeds into collective action, some of which we know (from history) to be meaningful to historical change. Therefore, these are worth paying attention to. These historical threads have potentially deep relevance, even if this relevance is not obvious or predictable. Thus, my application of a historical method means taking ‘small’ instances of culture, and events composed of these, as potentially meaningful, even if they do not appear presently in society as representing dominant or hegemonic forces.

### 3.1.2. Case histories as method

Focusing as this research does on dynamics of Othering and solidarity additionally requires a historical view. There is no way to understand how oppression works in the moment, or how countering current forms of power might work, without tracing a long arc of struggle. As such, I focus in Chapter 4’s section on Othering/solidarity on a handful of sectors – Indigenous people, farmworkers, Black agrarians, and agrarian environmentalists – whose struggles are emblematic, yet also often under-examined. I utilize historical cases to develop theorizing about Othering and solidarity.



My selection of cases is directed by ‘strategic sampling’ and ‘illustrative/evocative sampling’ considerations (Mason, 2002, pp. 123-125, 126-127). As a subset of strategic sampling, ‘theoretical’ sampling ‘means selecting groups or categories to study on the basis of their relevance to your research questions, your theoretical position and analytical framework, your analytical practice, and most importantly the argument or explanation that you are developing. Theoretical sampling is concerned with constructing a sample ... which is meaningful theoretically and empirically, because it builds in certain characteristics or criteria which help to develop and test your theory or your argument (ibid, p. 124)’. Hence, whether and how historical agrarian and rural movements exhibit ‘certain contexts or phenomena [that] have a special or pivotal significance in relation to [my] research question’ (ibid) has driven my case selection. These contexts encompass the diverse social positions and histories of multiple kinds of Others. These factors ‘will enable [me] to make key comparisons and to develop and test [my] argument (ibid, p. 125).’ Meanwhile, cases are selected based on their evoking or illustrating key themes or relationships or processes in a particularly compelling way: to ‘provide a flavour – sometimes a very vivid or illuminating one’ without necessarily making claims of representativeness of the larger sample (ibid, p. 126). The cases thus offer a sense of the deep diversity in people, processes, and outcomes. Instead of endeavoring a trans-historical and over-deterministic reading of one or the other group’s histories, this approach can appreciate the contingencies and nuances attending to the processes of countering Othering and acting in solidarity.

In Chapter 4, I provide historical data at both US and California levels. Then, through twentieth-century cases involving the aforementioned sectors, I show how the sectors have responded to Othering through three overall strategies: assimilation, valorization, and differencing. Finally, I conclude with lessons about these strategies, and their relations to dynamics of Othering and solidarity. This historical treatment of Othering contributes to my understanding of contemporary struggles, which is taken up in Chapters 5 and 6 (these chapters also include more historical details when relevant).

### 3.1.3. Iterative, grounded, adaptive

Linked to my activist-scholarship approach and commitment to develop social scientific concepts of relevance and potential use both in and outside of the academic world, I believe in grounding both data generation *and analysis* in the lived experience of those being ‘studied’, rather than only abstractly from the preexisting perspective of the researcher. Of course, researchers must have inclinations, and ways to initially characterize a research ‘problem’ and conceptualize the realities surrounding it so as to develop a research methodology; this includes a need to begin with relative clarity about our objects, units, and purposes of analysis. Yet these elements of research are most effective insofar as they are allowed to change in response to the experiences, data, and relationships that emerge and develop throughout the research process. Hence the iterative, recursive nature to this research.

Indeed, even my initial dissertation research design was not ‘the true beginning’ of this research project. My process of collaborating to investigate authoritarian (rural) populism in Californian and Midwestern history, resulting in the ERPI conference paper Roman-Alcalá et al. (2018) and subsequently an article for the *Journal of Rural Studies* (Montenegro et al. 2021), was foundationally important for the theorization and approach I pursued, from research design to implementation and analysis. The effort began out of a discussion with Siena Chrisman (who then worked for a national family farmer Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)); we wondered if the bankruptcy of the Midwest family farm sector and the seeming retreat of family farm organizations in the 1980s and 1990s related to the rise of the Right. Also crucial was the California-focused historical research and conceptualization of Othering and solidarity I pursued in 2018 contemporaneously with finalizing my dissertation research design, which resulted in a paper and book chapter for UNRISD (Roman-Alcalá 2018a). These investigations lent key lessons that informed how I thought of some of the objects of analysis, the research methodology, and the conceptual tools of use in the final dissertation project; these include the focus on agrarian and rural movements composed of ‘Others’; the need for grounding contemporary analysis in historicizing context; and the importance of diverse theories of change and approaches to the state, including how they dynamically interact with Othering and solidarity.

As such, this research has been built from a modified process of ‘grounded theory’ (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Grounded theory involves

‘the practice of leaving space for themes to emerge during the data collection process that might lead the research in unexpected directions’ (Carolan 2018: 828). I do not take a strict approach to grounded theory (as described in detail in Corbin & Strauss, 2015), which would entail entering into the data collection process without any preconceived theory. As Burawoy (1998: 11) describes his ‘extended case method’, it ‘is not to deny that we come to the field with presuppositions, questions, and frameworks but [to recognize] that they are more like prisms than templates and they are emergent rather than fixed’. I recognize that while developing some initial concepts, theories, and hunches regarding the research question, I still ‘leave space’ for unexpected new ideas or challenges to my current ideas, in the process of the research. Perhaps a more appropriate term is Layder (1998, p. 5)’s proposal for ‘adaptive’ theory, with adaptive ‘meant to convey that the theory both adapts to, or is shaped by, incoming evidence while the data itself is simultaneously filtered through, and is thus adapted by, the prior theoretical materials (frameworks, concepts, ideas) that are relevant to their analysis.’ Similarly, Danermark et al. (2002, p. 135–150) describe how a critical realist take on the grounded theory approach would utilize ‘general theory’ as a starting point. Still, I prefer the term ‘grounded’ for its emphasis on theory’s purpose being adaptive *to the particular conditions in considerations* and for its assumption of an iterative process between data and theorization.

From the beginning general and specific descriptive theories I selected as guides, specific manifestations of categorical and relational concepts became theoretically relevant and required greater exploration and better explanation; thus I developed theories and concepts out of the data collection process. This is similar to the ‘extended case method’ described by Burawoy (1998: 28), in that it is

a craft mode of knowledge production in which the product governs the process. The goal of research is not directed at establishing a definitive “truth” about an external world but at the continual improvement of existing theory. Theory and research are inextricable. The extended case method is thus a form of craft production of knowledge wherein the conceiver of research is simultaneously the executor. The individual participant observer carries out all the tasks of the research process in collaboration with her subjects.

So although I entered into the research process with a theory for why and how things happen, I co-constructed the theory over time, in conversation with informants. Qualitative data from informants occasionally began the theorization process (a kind of ‘folk theory’), but more generally what occurred is that I generated initial suggestions that were reflected back and adjusted through on-the-ground experience of my informants. For example, I picked up on gendered readings of divergent activist practices, and reflected this back to interviewees to deepen my understanding of these dynamics (which are discussed further in Chapter 5). Realistically, the division between ‘researcher’ or ‘theorist’ and ‘activist’ is a misleading one, and this study involved many ‘organic intellectuals’ – some of whom may also be educated in formal academic theory – and as such it is not surprising that I encountered theoretical insights via my informants very directly. As Gramsci and other revolutionary theorists insisted, all people are intellectuals, and their collective work contributes to our ‘scientific’ – well grounded – theoretical understanding of the subject.

#### 3.1.4. Historicizing and analysis of histories

The use of the word ‘case’ often implies discrete instances of some social phenomena or formation, analyzed for the purposes of comparison or generalization (Danermark et al. 2002). Researchers sometimes use a hard definition of ‘case study’ as one where a positivist epistemology is predominant. In this research, based on critical realist ontology and terminology (see Danermark et al. 2002: 43), I take cases to be examples of ‘the actual’ which reflect underlying patterns of ‘the real’, and are experienced by informants/actors as ‘the empirical’. I assume there is usefulness in analysis of cases towards developing knowledge that is potentially applicable beyond the case itself, and hence I do not take a strong constructivist or postmodern stance. As outlined by Bell & Bellon (2018) in relation to agroecological studies, cases may be used for *generalization* without ‘universalization’. This is similar to critical realism’s contention that there are not ‘laws’ in social life, only ‘tendencies’ (Danermark et al. 2002: 55-59). It links as well to Flyvberg’s (2006: 228, emphasis added) argument regarding the use of case studies that ‘*formal* generalization is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas “the force of example” is underestimated’: “That knowledge cannot be formally generalized does not mean that it cannot enter into the collective process of knowledge accumulation in a given field or in a society’ (ibid: 227).

The goal here is to link the processes involved in specific cases to the whole; as cases are not independent, nor are local matters separable necessarily from other scalar or rhizomial (for example, national, international, translocal) forces. A reminder that world-systems theory provides is that systems structure instances (macro-structures influence cases taking place within that structure), even if no instance is simply or purely a representation of the system as a whole – since cases always contain specificities, variables, contingencies and stochasticity (Grubacic & O’Hearn 2018). Multiple mechanisms and determinations are always at play. Indigenous critiques of research conventions (e.g. Smith 1999) likewise propose that little is abstractly generalizable; instead, learning is about embedded knowledge and pattern recognition. Patterns hold across societies that are diverse, but these patterns must be observed and engaged with to understand them (not simply abstractly quantified or divided up into parts that abstractly interact). Hence, cases to me describe that these ‘looking back’ aspects of the research are using moments in time (instances of ‘the actual’) which in the development of historical pattern help to make sense of the mechanisms that shape the pattern itself (‘the real’). And the outcome of this research can be simply to describe some important ‘tendencies’ (that is, patterns) that may be of interest to others to test and play with in their own areas of interest.

Danermark et al. (2002) describe the ‘qualitative case study’ as one of the most effective methods of social science research for advancing knowledge about mechanisms. To conduct such a method would of course vary based on the initial object or subject of interest. But in moving from that start, various forms of inferences can be used to analyze data from the (historic) cases; *induction*, *deduction*, *abduction* and *retroduction* (ibid, p. 73-114) all can be forms of ‘thought operations, i.e. different ways of reasoning and thinking in order to proceed from something to something else (73)’. Subjecting case information – which tells us something about the qualities of different conceptual categories and their internal and external relations – to such thought operations can improve theoretical explanations for social realities, including (to some degree) *tendencies* of causation. *Retroduction*, in particular, is a thought operation that asks questions about the necessary conditions for something to be so: in this research, I have asked what conditions are necessary for counter-Othering to take place. Although causality is a big claim for social science research (and I elaborate more why in specifics, in chapter 5), at the least such forms of

thought operations can help us reason through *possible* explanations for specific macro occurrences and patterns, and their relations to the micro instances we encounter in fieldwork.

The selection of historic cases was an iterative process, starting with canvassing of both academic and movement colleagues and reviews of literature on agrarian struggles in California, in order to generate possible cases/moments in history with particular relevance for Othering/solidarity dynamics. The specific elements of the case/moments I looked for include: (a) there exists in the case one or more relevant groups of ‘Others’, (b) observable aspects of (counter-)Othering, in writing or text, in oral accounts, in historical analysis of the case, and ideally (c) information sufficient to (even if roughly) gauge outcomes over time. As I read and explored leads, those cases that fit the evocative and theoretical sampling needs were selected to form the historical basis for analyzing dynamics of Othering, as presented in Chapter 4. As far as the timeframe for these cases, I limited my focus to the period when California’s agrarian capitalism began in earnest, which is roughly the mid-1800s (although some historic evidence, such as the Marronage communities covered in Black radical scholarship, dates back further). This period includes important moments and changes in US history with relevance to the subject matter, such as the end of slavery, the founding of the land grant university system and development of railroad infrastructure, the development of agricultural technologies, and so on. The historic cases used spanned up until today, since instances of Othering/solidarity connected across time, and history is invariably a continuous process.

I focus on California for my contemporary empirical data and analysis for practical, methodological, and theoretical reasons. Respectively: I am rooted in California and its agrarian social movements and so I have access to and existing rapport with informants and organizations (and hence cases/examples) that fit my research interests; I seek to produce activist scholarship useful to both practitioners and academics, and so exploring California becomes the most sensible focus to advance activist-scholarship practice grounded in relational ethics (or ethical relationality); and California offers social and empirical diversity that I expect will be generative with regards to my theoretical/conceptual concerns, helping to develop a conceptual framework that can be applied elsewhere. Certainly, there are diverse agrarian and food movements that include BIPOC in other parts of the US. However, the first two more practical considerations combine

with a wealth of previous scholarship on California's history to provide a wide yet closely applicable set of both historical and contemporary data with which to answer my central research questions regarding emancipatory politics. In addition, as mentioned earlier, Guthman (2008c: 1180) explains one reason why California is an important site for studies on food systems and food systems change: 'the organic food movement has been the major social movement contesting food and agriculture in the post-war period, and California has been an important center for this movement, imparting it with particular sensibilities.' Because of California's central role in various developments of food movements, both those composed of Others and those more associated with the white mainstream (like organic food), and because of the state's importance in the wider development of US rightwing politics (as we will see in Chapter 4), it offers an apt set of cases and moments for this study.

It is important to mention that the choice to emphasize California's marginalized social sectors in food and farming movements is not for the purpose of 'romanticizing autonomous subaltern space or authentic voice' (Chari 2012: 503), or to promote a competition among actors and analysts about 'who is the most marginalized' and thus who does or does not deserve attention. I do not assume the populations I am studying to be perfect or more authentic subjects. Rather, I assume particular identities, social positions, or placement within a group do *not* in themselves lead to an automatic or uniform politics, under 'the founding assumption that there is no automatic identity or correspondence between economic, political, and ideological practice' (Hall 2002: 306). Hence, I am not looking to the people composing marginalized sectors of the food movement to *represent* the groups they are grouped with, as groups. There is bound to be diversity *within* such groups, in my realm of informants/research partners, and *between* these groups and other people who could be grouped similarly, who I don't know about empirically. This choice of research participants is more so based on feminist 'standpoint theory' (Rolin 2009), taken with the expectation that such subjects, given their (more generally) marginalized 'standpoint', have epistemological privilege – and thus potentially valuable data and perspective – regarding the issues of interest. Even if one's politics are not *directly determined* by identity/group, these factors do *condition* one's politics; standpoint theory's epistemic privilege is not in this case about identity 'essentialism' or 'the assumption of *automatic* epistemic priv-

ilege' (Rolin 2009: 218, emphasis original), but about a contingent expectation of added value for research outcomes, based on the particular people so positioned. Notably, some sectors in the US's agricultural heritage seem so small as to be insignificant – particularly farmers of colour and queer rural people. Yet, recognizing the construction of US rightwing political power upon exclusionary discourses that combine misogynistic patriarchy and white supremacist racism, it is imperative that studies of agriculture/rural change at least think about, if not centre, these subject and subject positions.

In aspiring for an iterative and interactive analysis process, I developed the dissertation across recursive conversations and writing. I wrote up the paper for UNRISD (incorporated here in Chapter 4) in 2018, and then shared it with some of my contacts in the US Food Sovereignty Alliance and other local organizing efforts; I discussed the paper's framing and historicizing of Othering with my informants; discussed histories of assimilation, valorization, and differencing as relevant to those interviews. In this way I got early responses to influence my conceptualization. Later on, I shared my writing on contemporary movement dynamics with interviewees to get feedback, and as part of my ethical research commitment. This feedback was incorporated in the last phase of drafting.

### 3.1.5. Semi-structured interviews

Throughout the research I relied on interviews to reflect upon findings with informants, to gain details about context, and to see how relationships, thinking, and action change over time amongst and between movement participants (Brown & Danaher 2019). Though in-person interaction is always the most preferable form for data collection, virtual interaction was a necessary form to reach many of my informants located outside of California, and especially post-Covid-19. I ended up using video conferencing calls and telephone calls to interview people who I could not meet in person. Videoconferencing offered more flexibility and diversity in who I could reach, and offered to some degree an improvement in quality of understanding over email, as spoken language, the ability for iterative and immediate interaction inherent in conversation, and body language and facial expressions all contribute to greater and higher quality qualitative information from interviews. I selected interviews through convenience and snowball sampling techniques: starting with people I knew from various previous food movement organizing spaces (including the organizing



of ‘encuentros’, described next), I developed larger lists of people to interview, and reached out directly. Occasionally, I would interview someone based on the recommendation of another participant in a movement space, or interviewee.

Most of these interviews were conducted in person, organized in a semi-structured format (Carruthers 1990). Because the interview subjects were diverse in backgrounds, interests, experience, and intention, I tailored my questioning (in terms of language use, level of formality, thematic coverage and depth) to each person. A semi-structured approach allowed me to address common themes across many interviews, but be flexible enough to see new themes emerge from conversation. Conducting interviews repeatedly with some subjects also allowed an iterative deepening of my conceptual and empirical understanding of each subject’s cases, knowledge, and perspectives. As mentioned, I brought up previous conversations and analysis (for example, regarding Othering, experiences shared regarding working across differences) into repeated and later interview conversations. In total I conducted semi-structured interviews with 55 individuals. I also took advantage of related conferences and events within the food systems space as centres for participant observation, and as opportunities to conduct interviews with various movement actors. All interviews were conducted in English, but some events I attended and conversations I took part in for the research were held in Spanish.

### 3.1.6. Agroecology encounters: invocation, avocation, and convocation

The ‘agroecology encuentro’ is a methodological innovation in this project, for the pursuit of activist scholarship on agrarian and rural issues in the US, and with possible uses and ramifications for other focuses of activist scholarship.<sup>4</sup> The encuentro (in English, ‘encounter’) process combines the three kinds of activist scholarship described and discussed by Haiven and Khasnabish (2014; and Khasnabish & Haiven 2012). These are ‘invocation’, ‘avocation’, and ‘convocation’, discussed further below.

In practical terms, the encuentro is a kind of ‘focus group discussion’: a gathering of relatively small groups (less than 30 people at a time) to discuss issues pertinent to the study’s topics and questions. However, unlike most focus group discussions, the encuentros are designed to be active, interactive and participatory. Each event is shaped – in its agenda,

content, and in the curation of attendees – in partnership with other organizations and leaders in the geographic region where it takes place. In this way, the gatherings serve multiple needs at once, and not just the needs of the researcher alone. My use of the *encuentro* as a method for data collection came on top of existing (already in process) efforts of collaboration (between myself, members of the US Food Sovereignty Alliance, and the Community Alliance for Agroecology) to organize a series of such *encuentros*. It was after the first of these (July 2017) that I began thinking through how to incorporate their organization into this research project/process. What became apparent after that first *encuentro* was that these events offer data generation and collection opportunities that would not be possible with either only one-on-one interviews, or traditional focus group discussions. That is because, in bringing together diverse members of various social movement sectors, the *encuentros* become a space to observe and interrogate (through questions, interaction by the researcher, priming through exercises) relational understandings between groups. Beyond simply seeing groups act, in (separate) participant observation in their own ‘home’ spaces, and beyond direct questions through interviews, the *encuentros* allow a dialogic form of data generation that links specific issues and topics to the questions of interaction, (counter-) Othering, emancipation, and the mechanics of solidarity.

This approach is well reflected in Khasnabish and Haiven (2012, 2014)’s approach of activist research based in ‘convocation’. These authors describe this approach, set against the two more widely used approaches, which they name ‘invocation’ and ‘avocation’. Invocation, to these authors, is when a researcher expects to support social movements by ‘invoking’ their work and existence, usually to an outside world, whether of the scholarly community or policy makers, or otherwise. The expectation is that such research will aid the movements by exposing them to others, the impact of this approach ostensibly stemming from the ‘power of the academic and her invoking of social movements as legitimate and important sites of social intercourse and creativity’ (Khasnabish & Haiven 2012, p. 409). Avocation, in contrast, is when a researcher drops the pretense that they can be of service to movements by following their own research goals; instead, the researcher sees themselves purely in the service of movements, following research questions the movements seek answers to, and no more (*ibid*). Though these authors agree, ‘these broad strategies have, at times, been extremely successful’ (410), they also point

to some problems and limitations. Invocation, Khasnabish and Haiven (ibid) argue, is limitedly effective because ‘merely reporting on and affirming social movement activity do not answer the spiraling crisis complex we now face, and the ways this strategy contributes to social movement struggle is not direct enough’. Invocation-type research can also end up continuing the marginalization of the marginalized communities who often compose the research subjects, as pointed out by Graddy-Lovelace (2016: 96): ‘there is already a precedent and risk of academics appropriating and simplifying a disenfranchised community’s story – even as they try to uplift it.’ Avocation can also be problematic, as it ‘can cede too much of the unjust autonomy of the academic’ (Khasnabish and Haiven 2012, p. 410). ‘By folding ourselves within social movements, we risk ceding this problematic yet productive space in which it might be possible to create something different’ (ibid). From these concerns with invocation and avocation, Haiven and Khasnabish explain their preference for a third, prefigurative approach to activist scholarship. They do this by first asking (2014, p. 254),

how can we build, in the here and now, a useful model of this sort of social science of the future? Key is the development of theoretical and discursive tools through which movements can *work on themselves* rather than being worked on by credentialed ‘experts’. That is, prefigurative research should seek to work with movements to develop frameworks of reflexivity, self-creation and self-management. Rather than developing knowledge ‘on’ social movements (invocation) or knowledge ‘for’ social movements (avocation), a prefigurative research would ... attempt to help movements develop knowledge of *themselves*. That is, it would work with movements and communities to develop ways of understanding, interpreting, identifying and working through the tensions, resonances, solidarities and failures they experience amidst their own reproduction.

This last line describes, then, the authors’ proposed alternative of research methodologies seeking ‘convocation’.

While I am under no illusions that I am doing the subject movements of this research a favour automatically by studying them, I am not so dismissive of the invocation strategy as Haiven and Khasnabish seem to be. Invocation is still a helpful goal for this research, insofar as scholarly and movement attention to the questions of ‘Othering’ and movements’ methods for countering Othering can form potential resources for future thinking and doing, in and out of the academy. Likewise, I am not foreclosing

avocation strategies to play a possible role in this research – but I have taken the counsel of academic and activist (and activist scholar) peers who have suggested letting such ‘movement-generated research needs and ideas’ come about *through* the research process I am proposing, and specifically coming out of the *encuentros*, rather than starting with this as the centre of the research. That is, I (and/or other scholar colleagues) may take up *future* research projects defined and developed as needed by social movement actors who participate in the *encuentros*; this research may or may not directly contribute to the research questions of this study, but regardless it will be of service to the movements without subsuming the entire study merely to following the (potentially narrow) needs and whims of the movements I am engaging here. Indeed, some research needs came up through the encounters and interviews, such as farmer interest in ‘how to talk to customers about complex and controversial radical politics’, urban gardener interest in basic pest control experimentation, and cross-regional activist interests in exploring connections between regions (specifically, the Bay Area and Central Valley) with regards to issues of soil contamination. In setting up the research in this way, I did not take up an avocation-type approach in a dogmatic way so as to disclaim my own positionality and interests, or my capacity for criticality.

At the same time, I am not as sanguine about the ease or premise of the convocation method advocated by Haiven and Khasnabish. I know from activist experience the limitations of group discussions and the challenges of group function, which challenge assumptions of positive (movement) outcomes. If the purpose of activist scholarship includes action, for example, many activists would complain about the *lack of action* inherent in most gatherings that are ‘all talk’. (In fact, there were complaints of this sort from some of the activists involved in Haiven and Khasnabish’s ‘radical imagination’ research-action project; see 2014, p. 77-79; I also heard such complaints from some *encuentro* participants.) Then again, one innovation in encounters that emerged out of feedback from the first (2017) encounter was to incorporate activities (for example, farming, letter stamping, banner painting) into these *encuentros* so that they serve more functions at once, and allow all those involved a bodily form of learning, beyond mere mental cognition. Methodologically, even knowing that tensions within movement spaces – such as this one around talk and action or other expected ones, for example those emerging from unequal class dynamics – are challenging for *activist* outcomes from the *encuentros*, does

not at all undermine their value for research: tensions tend to show a social science researcher where greater attention is needed, and where and how the social nature of processes matters.

My involvement in *encuentros* began in 2017, when I co-organized such a gathering in Visalia (located in the southern Central Valley), supported by the US Food Sovereignty Alliance (USFSA) and co-organized with the Community Alliance for Agroecology (CAFA). Alongside developing this dissertation's research proposal, I also organized a two-day *encuentro* in February 2018 in the Bay Area. Then, through the Western Region of the USFSA, two more occurred, a two-day event in April 2018 (in Richmond) and a one-day one in July 2019 (in the state capital of Sacramento).<sup>5</sup> While other *encuentros* were expected, various factors, including the Covid-19 crisis of 2020, intervened to limit the possibilities of further gatherings. There was a total of four encounters organized just before and during this research period, involving approximately 150 participants from throughout California (particularly, the Bay Area and Central Valley). In sum, the *encuentros* offered a space for seeing (counter-) Othering in action. It also generated intersecting themes for the analysis. For instance, Indigenous land stewards and Black farmers discussed differing values in managing the human/nonhuman interface and how goals of regeneration relate to the other goals of movement participants; urban farmers and unaffiliated activists brought up the interacting roles in movement spaces of gender, race, and social position; tensions repeatedly emerged about urgency and notions of whether reformist efforts were 'enough' to change the food system sufficiently. The adoption (and to some, newness) of frames of 'agroecology', 'food justice' and 'food sovereignty' also came up. 'Decolonization' also appeared as an emergent frame, without prompting by the researcher or *encuentro* organizers (the term came up repeatedly during three of the four *encuentros*).

### 3.1.7. Participant observation

Participant observation offers important types of qualitative data that are less available through interviews, especially information about the actual workings of social movements (individuals and groups) with regards to their stated rhetoric (Kawulich 2005, DeWalt & DeWalt 2011). Inconsistencies, contradictions, and verifications are all important kinds of data to get out of a longer-term process of participant observation. A snowball

sample approach through existing contacts in my focused-upon movement groups (farmworker-focused community organizations, environmental justice and urban food justice activists, ecofarming initiatives, people of colour farmers, Indigenous organizers, and agroecology researchers) was used to develop the list of potential interviewees, *encuentro* participants, and people to collaborate with in participant observation. In this way, I leveraged over fifteen years of involvement in food movements, and the relationships and understandings of the issues I developed through that involvement, in preparing for the twenty months of fieldwork conducted for this research. Regarding the contemporary case/site selection, I have selected a diversity of kinds of rural and agrarian actor groups (focused nonetheless on California), as this is a crucial aspect to developing the interactive, relational view of Othering/solidarity processes. 'If we sample strategically across a range of contexts, we increase our chances of being able to use that very detail not only to understand how things work in specific contexts, but also how things work differently or similarly in other relevant contexts. From there we may be able to develop cross-contextual generalities which are very well founded because they are based on the strategic comparison of sensitive and rich understandings of specific contexts, whose significance in relation to a wider universe we can demonstrate' (Mason, 2002, p. 125). It is important to note, in full transparency, that my sampling approach likely introduced bias towards food movements that are more politically radical and more composed of BIPOC. Because of the research interest in radical social change, and avoiding the reproduction of BIPOC marginalization in US food movement research, I do not think this bias invalidates any findings that emerge. See Chapters 5 and 6 for details on the sample cases.

My observation of and participation in social movement spaces spanned from ongoing involvement in specific organizations and their programmes (particularly, CAFA, and its retreats, strategy sessions, and work planning for a Central Valley-focused 'Agroecology Center') to more limited involvement in events, webinars, and meetings. These spaces were mostly California-based, but also included national and international processes, and events focused on areas outside of my home state. Particularly after the Covid-19 crisis hit, my participant observation by necessity shifted towards more online venues, rather than in person. My level of participation in each space varied with factors such as (a) my prior familiarity with the group and its individual participants, (b) requests upon me

for participation (for example, at times I was asked to facilitate discussions), and (c) my perception of the ‘appropriateness’ of my being more participatory than observant. For instance, as a male person often perceived as white I did not want to unduly dominate discussions focused on Black (or women’s) experiences in the food movement; however, one of the issues with racialized and gendered power inequalities is that it is hard to ‘see’ one’s own domination of others (especially for those in the privileged position). I have simply tried my best to be aware of these dangers in my fieldwork and research processes.

Some of the spaces I engaged with during this research included:

1. USFSA processes, such as its National Assembly in late 2018, its ‘Western Region’ monthly calls and smaller regional assembly (2019), and its Agroecology, Land, and Water Collective (which I co-facilitated from early 2019 to mid-2020).
2. The ‘People’s Agroecology Process’ (PAeP)<sup>6</sup>, a network of mostly grassroots organizations from the US, Puerto Rico, and international allies, focusing on ‘scaling out’ agroecology in this context. To note: the PAeP has also developed the ‘encuentro’ methodology which inspired its use in my local/regional activist work, and this research (described in depth in the link provided in the previous footnote). In 2021 I participated in the ‘First Advanced Agroecology Shortcourse’ of the PAeP, coordinated by an activist ‘political pedagogical committee’ and scholars at the University of Vermont’s Agroecology and Rural Livelihoods Collaborative.
3. The Agroecology Research-Action Collective (ARC), which as a scholar formation prioritizes working with and alongside social movements for agroecology. As such, my co-coordination of the group since 2017 has provided insights into how movements look, think, and act (through the lens of collaborating scholars), as well as how scholars interact with and as part of movement. In addition, ARC has developed formal relations with both USFSA and the PAeP, participating in one another’s functions and co-hosting a handful of webinars. As part of ARC, I have participated in other gatherings dealing with ‘radical’ scholarship, including the ‘Radical Food Geographies’ pre-conference gathering with food justice movement activists in April 2019<sup>7</sup>; this space for dialogue was also

valuable in registering some of the aforementioned tensions/issues. In 2021, I co-published with other ARC coordinators a paper on our research-action approach (Montenegro et al. 2021a).

4. La Vía Campesina – North American region: I participated as a delegate in the 2017 Conference in Derio, Basque Country, which provided an insider understanding of this much-discussed global movement. Keeping connections since then with its regional member organizations (notably, Rural Coalition, National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC), and Family Farm Defenders), I have been invited to participate in meetings, including a youth-organized gathering in November 2019 in New Brunswick, Canada.
5. The Health, Environmental, Agriculture and Labor (HEAL) Food Alliance is a ‘national multi-sector, multi-racial coalition of 55 organizations ... led by our members, who represent over 2 million rural and urban farmers, ranchers, fishers, farm and food chain workers, Indigenous groups, scientists, public health advocates, policy experts, community organizers, and activists.’ (see <https://healfoodalliance.org/who-is-heal/>). HEAL hosts member ‘summits’ every other year as spaces of deliberation, learning, healing and strategizing, which I attended in 2017 and 2019. In 2019 I facilitated a session on organizing via agroecology encounters. I have also attended HEAL events and webinars on topics such as political education and communications strategy.
6. I have attended a number of conferences, including the 2018, 2019, and 2021 (online) EcoFarm Conference in Asilomar, CA; the 2019 Latino Farmers and Ranchers Conference (organized by National Center for Appropriate Technology) in Tulare, CA; the regenerative agriculture-themed ‘Soil Not Oil’ conference in San Francisco, CA (I have attended and presented most years since 2015); the Rural Justice Summit at UC Merced (in 2018 & 2019); the 2019 summit of the ‘Celebrating Women’s Leadership in Agriculture’ network (Sebastopol, CA) and its follow-up post-Covid-19 online gatherings on racial justice; the first ‘general assembly’ of *Regeneration International*, an ostensibly international network of regeneration-focused organizations and practitioners (my perception was that in actuality it is dominated in number by white-led organizations in North America, Europe, and Australia; in addition, one organization that funds the network seems to direct its activities



and political decisions). Also of international significance was my participation in the April 2018 conference in Rome, Italy of the UN FAO, focused on gathering insight from global convenings on agroecology held from 2014-2018 (where I interacted with both US and international activists). Participating in the Civil Society Mechanism-organized spaces and discussions allowed me insights into how multifaceted groups like this cohere around similar themes, at a global level.

7. At the more local level, I have kept up (by attending events and regularly speaking with organizers) with processes of urban farms (Alemany Farm and Hummingbird Farm in San Francisco and the Gill Tract Community Farm in Albany), farmer of colour networks (Black Earth Farms Collective, CA Farmer Justice Collaborative, Asian American Farmers Alliance), justice-focused urban NGOs (People Organized to Defend Environmental and Economic Rights in SF, Planting Justice in Oakland), networks of educator-organizers who formed a worker-owned cooperative non-profit (*Agroecology Commons*), and ground-level initiatives in community mutual aid post-Covid-19. This latter access largely came through my existing social networks, which I co-convened on weekly video calls of a 'Mutual Aid Solidarity Food Systems network' from April-June 2020, and through writing up a journalistic article about the meaning of such efforts for online food news outlet *Civil Eats* (see Roman-Alcalá 2020). I also participated in a panel on mutual aid in Minnesota's Twin Cities region, via zoom, August 2020 (which focused on BIPOC-led initiatives).
8. Other events, in person and via webinars, included: panels on farmers of colour at the Center for Urban Education in Sustainable Agriculture (Jan 2020); brainstorming meetings on land access for BIPOC farmers in the Central Valley (hosted at UC Merced, 2019); gatherings of the BIPOC-led national organization Uprooted and Rising; Central Valley Partnership monthly meetings (attended thrice in person in 2019 and 6 times since March 2020); a national discussion on questions of Black Land and liberation; The East Bay Permanent Real Estate Cooperative's scenario planning web calls regarding land acquisition for anti-gentrification and food justice; the 'Growing Roots' conference held by UC Berkeley in March 2021, including events on 'Just Transition to

Agroecology: 'Transferring Power and Restoring Sovereignty to BIPOC Land Stewards', 'Ancestral healing through food and land: A peer-to-peer workshop', and 'Innovative land access for urban farming: private partnerships'; and webinar 'Rights of Nature & LandBack: Indigenous-led movements for the Protection of Mother Earth' (March 18, 2021).

9. Important to note: some of my fieldwork sites and organizations, and individual interviewees, have chosen to remain anonymous and thus are not listed here. In addition, I changed some details of some stories to strengthen anonymity, and have referenced months (rather than specific dates) in which interviews and personal communication took place, in order to avoid exposure of those who wished to maintain anonymous. In general, when subject matter was controversial, I opted to keep the description less specific in order to avoid overly personalizing the analysis and engendering within-movement discord.

### 3.1.8. Document and textual analysis

All the above information has been complemented by and triangulated with document and textual analysis. Sources for texts included: video and documentary films; online presence of groups and organizations and materials found on relevant movement websites; social movement organization-generated materials, such as brochures, reports, social media, campaign materials; published news media; government documents, such as CDFA reports and USDA census and economic research; NGO organizational documents regarding 'diversity, equity, and inclusion' initiatives; conference programmes; field notes and event notes (which were sometimes taken by others, such as at the *encuentros*). Post-Covid-19, it became even more important to rely on such online sources of information.

## 3.2. Research process

In sum, the process of research began with a more historical phase, which included initial exploratory fieldwork, through a phase of historical analysis and refining that analysis through both fieldwork and interview-based dialogue with informants. Then came intensive fieldwork in California and more limited fieldwork outside the state (including trips to Canada with Via Campesina; to Arizona with HEAL Food Alliance; and to Washington

D.C. for the Radical Food Geographies activist-scholar encounter; I was also informed by participation in the 2018 ERPI conference in The Hague and UNFAO Agroecology meetings in Rome, which took place during the historic research phase). Fieldwork included the *encuentros*, informal and more formal (recorded) semi-structured interviews, and participant observation. This phase generated data while continuing to refine the conceptual and theoretical framework. This iterative analysis of data attended to processes at different scales, among them interpersonal, organizational, and discursive. In this, the already mentioned theories and understandings of the world were used in a recursive way, moving back and forth from empirical specificity to general and specific theories, and up and down and between layers of reality, since generative mechanisms and emergent forces vary and are not the same in all layers.

The final phase of analysis, while not actually ‘final’, and interspersed with some further data collection, formed the culmination of the research process, seeking to answer the central research question, in the light of the entire research process and multiple rounds of iteration between data, theory, concepts, informant dialogue, and thought processes of induction, deduction, abduction, and retroduction. Here the expectation is that the ‘final’ analyses presented in the concluding Chapter 7, based on the developments of Chapters 4 through 6, effectively link the key questions of this investigation, through its key analytic, practical/tactical, and conceptual terms: what is the history of Othering and solidarity in agrarian-rural development in California and the US; how do contemporary movements relate to this history; what constitutes emancipation to contemporary agrarian movements, especially in relation to the recent rise of rightwing power; how effectively are these movements reaching these goals, in relation to strategies of Othering and solidarity; what are the challenges and prospects for convergence given these strategies; how and to what extent do these contemporary strategies counter rightwing power?

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> I should point out here that I began this investigation informed mainly by critical realism as a (Western) scientific orientation, but became more and more aware over time of how this orientation is largely a recapitulation of various Indigenous ontologies. Much of this methodology was initially developed as a critical western scientific endeavor, but I have over the course of the research revised my original thinking to de-emphasize such science’s tendencies to generalize and

de-contextualize knowledge, and to encourage myself (and readers) to consider the limitations to scientism itself (see Yunkaporta 2020, Simpson 2017, Smith 1999).

<sup>2</sup> I was a coordinator of the ARC workgroup which developed these principles for the Collective, based on crowdsourcing of practices and our collected experience as researchers attempting ethical movement-partnering research.

<sup>3</sup> Mann (2009, p. 339) makes the point that all ‘historical materialism’ should be geographical, in the sense that place, like time, matters in the diversity and dynamism of socio-ecological processes.

<sup>4</sup> As mentioned elsewhere, the organizing methodology I worked from held parallels to, and took inspiration from, the model for *encuentros* developed by the People’s Agroecology Process; see <https://whyhunger.org/category/publications/the-peoples-agroecology-process-unlocking-our-power-through-agroecology/>.

<sup>5</sup> Here I would like to thank those involved in this organizing, recognizing that I was by no means acting alone. In particular, Janaki Anagha and Kassandra Hishida from San Joaquin Valley’s CAFA; Doria Robinson from Urban Tilth (Richmond, CA); Hetty Chin (CASFS); Kaitlin Oki and Chanowk Yisrael (Yisrael Family Farm); and support from Tanamá Varas (Black Earth Farms) and Carmen Cortez (Community Agroecology Network).

<sup>6</sup> See <https://whyhunger.org/category/publications/the-peoples-agroecology-process-unlocking-our-power-through-agroecology/>.

<sup>7</sup> See [https://gfasg.files.wordpress.com/2019/10/radicalfoodgeographies2019-workshop\\_report.pdf](https://gfasg.files.wordpress.com/2019/10/radicalfoodgeographies2019-workshop_report.pdf).

## 4

## The development of rightwing Othering and strategies against it in California's historical agrarian and rural social movements<sup>1</sup>

### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter investigates how social movements have sought – successfully or not – to counter their own Othering through California's histories of agrarian struggles. This includes asking how and if these movements have acted with solidarity. Solidarity can be thought of in two senses. The first more simple sense is of working together, or 'internal' solidarity: solidifying internal group ties through mutual support. The second sense is of working across difference, or 'external' solidarity, and this latter definition is my focal interest in this research. Many movements and theorists have posited working together across lines of difference (for example, race, class, gender, etc.) as a key factor in movement success against injustice (Barber 2014; Brent et al. 2015; Constance et al. 2014; Gray & Hertel 2009). Accordingly, it is key to understand how and why movements do or do not act in solidarity, particularly across differences, and to counter Othering.

The first half of the chapter (after this overview) elaborates a roughly (but not exactly) chronological discussion of the social, political, and economic forces that shaped and shape California's agri-food system, as well as the contours and strategies of rightwing political power and dynamics of emancipatory struggle of agrarian Others. In the second part of the chapter, through cases involving a handful of emblematic struggles in the twentieth century involving Indigenous people, farmworkers, Black agrarians, and agrarian environmentalists, I analyze these struggles in terms of three overall strategies: *assimilation*, *valorization*, and *differencing*. I conclude

the chapter with lessons about these strategies, and their relations to dynamics of Othering and solidarity, before moving on to contemporary movements in Chapters 5 and 6. While inevitably we must contend with forces and changes at the national and international level, I focus throughout empirically upon California, which offers movement histories from all of the above sectors. As described in Chapter 3, my selection of cases is directed by ‘strategic sampling’ and ‘illustrative/evocative sampling’ considerations (Mason 2002: 123-125, 126-127). The cases described offer a sense of the diversity in people, processes, and outcomes. I try to appreciate the contingencies and nuances vis-a-vis processes of countering Othering and acting in solidarity, and avoid a trans-historical and over-deterministic reading of one or the other group’s histories.

#### 4.2. US and Californian histories of agrarian Others - assessing a multitude of Otherings

Contrary to the view that the United States has always had an identity as a ‘white’ society, whiteness was created over a long and fraught period during which racial inventions helped to solidify and maintain property relations, including chattel enslavement of Blacks and the continued expropriation of Indigenous people from their lands (Omi & Winant 1986; Roediger 2017). The US itself is foundationally rooted in settler-colonialism. Tuck and Yang (2014: 224) describe this thus:

Settler colonialism refers to a triad relationship, between the White settler (who is valued for his leadership and innovative mind), the disappeared Indigenous peoples (whose land is valued, so they and their claims to it must be extinguished), and the chattel slaves (whose bodies are valuable but ownable, abusable, and murderable). We believe that this triad is the basis of the formation of Whiteness in settler colonial nation-states, and that the interplay of erasure, bodies, land, and violence is characteristic of the permanence of settler colonial structures.

Within this context, matters of landscape have always been racialized, but not always in the same ways (Mitchell 1996: 83-109). From Indigenous people who have maintained traditional land management practices against all odds, to those migrant settlers whose identity transitioned from specific and ethnic (for example, Irish, Italian, Polish) to generic and racial (‘white’) as they ‘pioneered’ new landscapes, to escaped or freed formerly-

enslaved people: many different groups have been and continue to be active in rural and agrarian issues. These histories are not anomalies or irrelevant, as farmers and rural workers not identified (at the time) as white have continually shaped US agrarian development through contributions of labour, culture, values, and biocultural knowledge (e.g. McWilliams 1978 [1935]: 71, Bandele & Myers 2017, Carney 2002).

Indigenous people in the United States are one such non-white group. Although associated with rurality, over half of Indigenous people have led urban lives for generations (Fixico 2000: 4). One scholar argues for recognizing differences within original Indigenous experiences of encounter, and therefore that one narrative cannot define them all:

the Americas were and are home to a great many different nations and tribes who have often had dissimilar experiences depending upon their location, the period of contact, who they had contact with, and the various strategies of confrontation and/or accommodation each group adopted. ... [N]ative responses to contact varied and evolved over time based on previous experience, contingent circumstances, and individual actors. (Alvarez 2016: 4, 5)

We know, for instance, that some tribes allied with colonists to subjugate other tribes, and this occasionally provided the crucial resources for colonization's success (e.g. Taraval 2015: 86).<sup>2</sup> Acknowledging heterogeneity, we can justifiably describe California's post-colonization Indigenous history as one of violence, displacement, forced assimilation, and ongoing invisibilization and marginalization (Lindsay 2015, Akins & Bauer 2021). The state came into being as part of the United States in 1850, following Mexico's loss in war with the US and the Gold Rush of 1848. In this period of accelerating colonization and development, California policy specifically targeted tribes, as seen in the notorious scalping payments offered by governments to vigilante settlers (Johnston-Dodds, 2002). Many Native Californian languages have been lost or nearly lost, and with them much of the knowledge of human interaction with nonhuman relations in specific places. Despite this attempted genocide, science in recent decades has begun to acknowledge historical management of the California landscape by Indigenous tribes and how it relates to contemporary issues of food systems:

First, we stress that California is blessed with Indigenous populations who generated many unique cultural traditions centering around pyrodiversity

economies – specific kinds of practices employed by complex hunter-gatherers that emphasize diversity and flexibility in their engagement with food and nonfood resources. ... Second, we need to stress the close interaction that California Indians maintained with the natural world. ... The basic principle of pyrodiversity economies is not to transform the natural world into a humanly constructed artifact, but rather to enhance the diversity, productivity, and availability of the wild resource base by complementing and working with ongoing natural ecological processes. (Lightfoot & Parrish, 2009: 143-145)

This approach contrasts with agriculture, and capitalist agriculture in the modern era in particular, guided as the latter is by a focus on productivity and profit. Much of modern US agricultural production (aside from crops such as corn and soybeans) requires heavy amounts of hand labour, particularly the harvesting of seasonal and quickly-ripening fruits and vegetables which form a large part of California's cropping patterns, and this labour tends to fall to those who will accept or can be forced into accepting low rates of pay. The history of California is one where a rotating cast of exploitable labour, constituted largely but not only of groups racialized as non-white, has been drawn into California's agrarian economy and then expelled or excluded from it (by law or practice, geographically or structurally) as soon as those groups gathered any collective power (e.g. Guerin-Gonzales 1996, Chan 1986, Daniel 1982). After the early exploitation of Indigenous tribes tied to the Spanish mission system came Chinese labourers arriving in the 1800s to work in mining, land reclamation, railroad construction and agriculture, then Filipinos migrating in the shadow of the US's late nineteenth-century invasion and occupation of the Philippines, Armenians who were escaping persecution in their homeland, and who were for decades federally classified as 'nonwhite Asians' (Guerin-Gonzales 1996: 21) and referred derogatorily as 'Fresno Indians' in that particular Central Valley frontier town (Arax 2019: 237), along with waves of Japanese, Mexicans, Punjabis and other national and ethnic groups since the late nineteenth century: many migrant groups have played this important role as agricultural labourers at various points in California history. In fact, scholars of Californian agrarian development have pegged exploitable migrant labour as indispensable to that development (McWilliams 1978 [1935], Mitchell 1996, Street 2004, Walker 2004). And while white (Euro-descended) labour has also figured into California's agrarian development, back to the 'hoboes' and 'bindlestiffs' hired for the state's early bonanza



wheat crops and through the 1930s refugees of Euro-American 'Okies' moving west to escape the fall out of the 'Dust Bowl' (described further in this chapter), the continued racialization of BIPOC groups has been a pivotal mechanism to retain a farm labour sector *as exploitable enough to maintain farm profitability*.

Within the US, California is a rare case of an agricultural economy that was born capitalist (Walker 2004, Guthman 2004a). It has little yeoman history – no idealized 'family farm' to which to return. Although the region has seen periods in which smaller-scale farm enterprises were economically viable and the imaginary of family farming has had cultural relevance, the actual contours of 'California Ag' developed out of its colonial seedbed, according to profit motives, and through networks of private sector interests and state enabling mechanisms – from subsidies to support land commodification, distribution, and improvement to public assistance via research and 'management of labor flow' (Brown and Getz 2008: 1185). Mitchell (2010: 147, *emphases original*) describes how

The *typical* – or *modal* – landscape of agricultural production in California, therefore, is one of highly intensive monocropping. Large farms (or more accurately large farmers) dominate. Even where small-farming has been preserved, as in some strawberry production, the landscape is dominated by big capital.

Today, California alone accounts for 11 percent of US agricultural output, virtually all of which comes from three areas: the Central Valley, the Central Coast, and the Imperial Valley. The Central Valley – 18,000 square-miles – supports production of dairy products, cattle, vegetables, fruits, and nuts. California's agri-food economy since the mid-1800s has been structured around 'growers' – that is, agribusiness bosses – and an Otherized labouring class (as just described). The growers have historically been diverse, representing numerous ethnicities, cultures, and national origins – but whites and the Euro-descended have been a dominant presence. Some of these Euro-descended groups (for example, Armenians, Portuguese, Italians, Germans) transitioned from poor migrants to major landholders and power brokers (Arax 2019). Politically growers have tended to unite around issues that threaten their continued power. Using the parlance of contemporary politics, the grower class in California has long been solidly 'conservative' or 'rightwing'.

Latinxs (ethnic groups coming from Central and South America, but in particular from Mexico), and especially migrant Latinxs are now the dominant source of wage labour in agriculture (Minkoff-Zern 2019). This predominance is not incidental. As I describe further below, it traces back to state actions that attempted to support capitalist agricultural development and maintain white supremacist social relations, all while maintaining governance legitimacy amidst a shifting ground of ideologies about what working class ‘belongs’ in the US and was able to partake of its ‘American Dream’ (Guerin-Gonzales 1996). But the state did not act alone against farm workers and for the grower class: farm owners worked to undermine pro-labour legislation, deny the American-ness of workers through racialism and anti-radicalism, and stoke racial divisions between workers, sometimes successfully, though not always. Farm owners used many methods to undermine labour agitation, including stoking intra-working-class divisions (through Othering), collaborating with state officials and agencies, and deploying the culturally hegemonic affinity for independent ‘family farmers’ to gain public sympathy despite their obviously dominant class position (Olmsted 2015, Guerin-Gonzales 1996). Each exploitable labour group could be moved to ‘scab’ on other workers, given incentives variously economic, cultural, and political – but each group’s histories also show examples where workers refused such incentives and united across ethnic and racial lines. For example, in 1903 Mexican American beet thinners stood up for Japanese co-workers, whom bosses tried (unsuccessfully) to exclude from labour contract negotiations (Street, 1998), while Filipinos in another instance were successfully convinced to break Latinx based strikes (Mitchell, 1996: 125). According to Guerin-Gonzales (1996: 22), ‘Filipino farm workers had a profound impact on labor relations on California farms. Their militancy and organizing expertise provided inspiration and leadership for farmworker unionizing efforts in California throughout the 1920s and in the early 1930s’. Later on, starting in the 1950s, Filipinos and Mexican Americans together created the perhaps best-known farmworker union, the United Farm Workers. Time and again, ‘white’ sectors of the working classes (some of whom were emerging out of their own racialization as non-white turned up to undermine the labour power of BIPOC (Saxton 1971, Olmsted 2015, McWilliams 1978 [1935])). These race-class dynamics, which have played out on-farm but involve evolving interactions with national policy and international

processes of war, migration, and change, are central to this chapter's understanding of the dynamics of agrarian-political economy, Othering, and solidarity.

Although generations of workers and allies have mobilized to oppose worker exploitation and mistreatment, and have fought the political projects of grower class and state dehumanization with their own ideological and political struggles, conditions for farmworkers in California have to this day remained harsh, characterized by low pay and dangerous working conditions. In the context of a lack of national legal workplace protections, dangers of farm work include (as mentioned in Chapter 1) the denial of consistent breaks and access to drinking water and bathrooms, often in dangerous high-heat weather conditions; the inability to avoid substandard and crowded housing conditions; constant fears of deportation for undocumented workers (which are realistic, especially in eras of uptick in immigration law enforcement); combined with constant stressors from chronic food insecurity, separation from family, and general poverty. Historically, farm workers (and warehouse/food processing and distribution workers) have been some of the worst-paid and most exploited workers in society (Lo & Jacobson 2011), and even though as 'essential workers' during the Covid-19 pandemic they became rhetorically praised as heroes, such conditions remained or worsened during this period (FCWA 2021, COFS 2021). To understand how this general condition came to be, and to understand how it reproduces as a condition, the next sections describe legal and social-political precedents for today's agrarian economy.

### 4.3. California: Testing-grounds for agrarian racialization and authoritarian populist tactics

#### 4.3.1. 1850s-1920s: Preconditions for agrarian capitalist take-off

A handful of land barons seized the arable lands, mobilized an army of farm workers to operate the vast estates, secured governmental programs to tame the arid environment and chaotic markets, and freely used repression to block challenges. -- Craig Jenkins (1985: 29) writing of California's agrarian history

As indicated in the quote above, California's agricultural and rural economy has been organized via large concentrations of land, power, political control – and mobilization of violence to maintain a socially unequal status

quo. Perhaps the ‘original sin’ of the state in the era of modern US expansion was the 1848 Gold Rush, which set off ecological, political, social, and economic changes that transformed the state profoundly. Certainly, the Spaniards from the 1760s and on affected the geography and demography of ‘Alta California’, through extensive cattle ranching, forestry, and their capture and forced conversion of Indigenous people (see Akins and Bauer 2021). But the invention of modern, industrial agriculture began in earnest in the years following the Gold Rush, when tens of thousands of migrants arrived from the Eastern US and countries abroad, especially China. Oddly enough, the initial land colonization attempts of agriculturists faced off against the frenetic intensity of gold mining, which increasingly destroyed the naturally fecund river basins with mining runoff as mining shifted from small-scale and individualized to highly capitalized, industrialized methods like ripping apart the headwaters of the Sierra Nevada mountain range with hydraulic-pressured cannons (Arax 2019: 166–176).

The ‘second gold rush’ (that is, the rush to agriculture) began ‘in California time, which is to say the second rush began before the first one ended. By 1862, eighteen thousand men, as well as a handful of women, were calling themselves farmers in California’ (ibid: 177). This may seem like not such a large figure, but this rapid development of agriculture-as-business, incorporating California into global markets (particularly for wheat), was quite consequential. For one, it consolidated the genocidal effects of earlier colonial efforts; which ‘played out over eighty haphazard years’ (ibid: 155). While scholars debate whether the term ‘genocide’ is applicable, Arax reminds us that the outcome remains genocidal regardless of definitional argumentation:

In a fight over who owned the natural resources of California, one culture supplanted another. ...There were 300,000 California natives when [Spanish missionary] Father Serra arrived and 150,000 [by the outset of the Gold Rush]. There were 16,277 at the time of the 1880 census” (Arax 2019: 155, referring to data from Madley 2016).

Early California state policy starting just after the Gold Rush supported settler-vigilante murder of Indigenous peoples, a reduction of resistance that set the stage for all later rural capitalist development (see Lindsay 2015, Madley 2016). Also crucial were the incipient infrastructures to control and redirect water, first to mining then to agriculture (Arax 2019). The

large scale of land holdings in the post-Gold Rush period, especially consolidated in the rush for land grants from government via federal policy and frontier-busting cross-country railroad construction, lent itself to large infrastructures involving large amounts of labour – roles filled by Chinese men in the shadow of a decimated Indigenous population. As California entered the US as a ‘free state’ (that is, without legalized chattel slavery of Blacks), other sources of cheap labour were demanded.<sup>3</sup> The large scale of early extractive endeavors relates to California’s being sown in large-scale wheat monocultures before becoming the nation’s fruit and vegetable basket by the 1930s (Olmstead & Rhode 2017). Olmstead and Rhode (2017: 2) describe the early wheat complex thusly:

By the mid-1850s, the state’s wheat output exceeded local consumption, and California’s grain operations began to evolve quite differently from the family farms of the American North. The image is vast tracts of grain grown on huge bonanza ranches in a countryside virtually uninhabited except at harvest and plowing times. California grain farms were very large for the day and used labor-saving and scale-intensive technologies, pioneering the adoption of labor-saving gang plows, large headers, and combines. Californians vigorously pursued the development of technologies and production practices suited to early California’s economic and environmental conditions. This search for large-scale, labor-saving technologies culminated in the perfection of the world’s first commercially successful combined grain harvesters ... in the early 1880s.

Importantly, it was not just scale that characterized this early California agriculture as industrial or capitalist: it was also tied tightly to expanding global capitalist food markets:

Most of the wheat and barley was shipped to European markets, setting a pattern of integration into world markets that has characterized California agriculture to the present. Their size, the extent of mechanization, and a reliance on hired labor would also become hallmarks of the state’s farm sector (ibid).

This took place during what has been since theorized as the first ‘food regime’ – a food regime denoting a period characterized by a ‘rule-governed structure of production and consumption of food on a world scale’ (Friedmann 1993: 30–31; see also Friedmann & McMichael 1989, McMichael 2013, Friedmann 2005). Food regime theory allows historicizing of agrarian developments within the world-scale transformations of political

economy that are rooted in, and that greatly shape, food production and consumption patterns. The proposed first, ‘colonial-diasporic’ food regime (Friedmann 2005: 237-241), understood most often as spanning roughly 1870-1920<sup>4</sup>, included the US as a pivotal source of inputs (as a settler-colony) to the British empire and its world-wide integrated colonial economy. The colonial connection allowed British industrial development, the lowering of its working-class wages, while it also generated (European) migrants for colonies, new agroecologies of cattle ranching across the ‘New World’, the rush to build railways to move new frontier commodities back to colonial metropole centres, and – ultimately – the new normalized political economies of settler-colonial proto-hegemonic centres of capitalism like California.

Such world-scale processes entailed racialized divisions between colonizer and colonized, but also classed divisions between owners, financiers and land barons (on one hand), and frontier settler workers and family farmers (on the other). This prefigures two essential aspects to California’s agrarian economy. One is the prevalence of racial dynamics as shapers of economic processes, political thinking, and political action. For instance, Anti-Chinese populism, with origins in post-Gold Rush San Francisco, introduced the notion that white workers as ‘the people’ were being undermined by the Chinese ‘Other’ (Saxton 1971). The ‘Valley of Heart’s Delight’, also known as the Santa Clara Valley, became a fruit production epicentre from the mid-1850s until the early 1910s, largely due to the labour of Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, and other (mainly Asian) immigrants. When these workers organized themselves as workers on European or white American-owned farms, race-based reactionary movements emerged from white farm owners to mitigate their success (Tsu 2013). When these immigrants managed to develop some of the few truly family-based farms, they were often prevented from owning land or building wealth by racialized land ownership and citizenship laws (*ibid*). Race and racism (in the late 1800s and early 1900s, anti-Asian racism in particular) have been central to the uneven sweep of California agricultural development and are thus central to the state’s broader political-economic history (Almaguer 2008, Street 2004). This includes racialization at global and local scales.

*Early industrial California's labour battles*

The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), founded in 1905, was an early effort to bring Californian workers, including farm workers, together around an emancipatory programme (Cole et al. 2017, Hall 2001). As a revolutionary syndicalist pan-international labour union, the IWW sought to organize workers across industries, including farming, for immediate material gains and to foster a post-capitalist future. They were present in forestry camps, itinerant labour camps, and were central to the so-called 'Wheatland Riot' of 1913 that placed California's farm labour mistreatment and unrest on the public docket (McWilliams 1978 [1935]: 152-167). The IWW gathered momentum (and international connections; see van der Walt 2004) in the early twentieth century before largely disappearing by the 1920s due to harsh repression by state and private forces. This harsh repression wasn't unique to this particular union, but pervaded the US in the first decades of the twentieth century, as business and political elites responded to major destabilization from worker action by leveraging the law, media, and violence to demonize and repress worker organization across the board. New and more harsh federal immigration laws were passed and 'applied to immigrant anarchists and communists in a sweep of post-war vengeance against radicalism and labor militancy, culminating in the Palmer Raids in the winter of 1919-1920, in which authorities arrested ten thousand alleged anarchists' (Ngai 2004: 59). This period's 'Red Scare' (and its repetition in the following decades) was simultaneously about painting worker organizing as subversive and 'communist', and associating communism itself with 'foreign agents' and outside agitators (see Guerin-Gonzales 1996: 133-134, Ngai 2004: 58-59, McWilliams 1978 [1935]: 152-167, 169-172).

Another consistent theme in this period was the use of coercive state force, agrarian mythologies, and racialized Othering to control farm labour, cyclically denying one racial group access to work, wealth, and citizenship (for example, the Chinese), and then with their absence requiring the cheap labour of another group:

At the same time that California farmers tried to promote and protect an image of California as a place where farming was a family affair, where neighbors contributed their labor during harvest season as part of a communal project, and where the American dream held out the promise of land ownership and economic independence, they created an agricultural society

in which farming was a business, labor was constituted by an army of migrant and impoverished workers, and access to the American dream was determined by race. Racial discrimination prevented most Asian immigrants from acquiring land and economic security— from becoming “Americans”—and from undermining the economic and social order of California. Racism also resulted, however, in the loss of a source of cheap labor for growers. (Guerin-Gonzales 1996: 23)

‘In this context,’ Guerin-Gonzales continues, describing the period following the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and California’s Alien Land Law of 1913 (which prohibited Asians from owning land), ‘Mexicans appeared as a viable labor force to replace Asians’ (ibid: 24).

In this same period, tracking or just following the first food regime, was a shift in the political economy of California’s agriculture (Olmstead & Rhode 2017: 3):

Between 1890 and 1914, the California farm economy shifted from large-scale ranching and grain-growing operations to smaller-scale, intensive fruit cultivation. By 1910, the value of intensive crops equaled that of extensive crops, as California emerged as one of the world’s principal producers of grapes, citrus, and various deciduous fruits. Tied to this dramatic transformation was the growth of allied industries, including canning, packing, food machinery, and transportation services.

It was in the latter part of this era that some of the most conservative institutions of farm-owning class power were founded, like the American Federation of Farm Bureaus (known most often simply as Farm Bureau). Chambers (1952) described the conflicted class politics of the Farm Bureau, which compared with the populist organization the Grange – rooted in family farm ideologies – leaned towards conservative, anti-worker positions, and ideologically linked itself to capitalist and colonial racial projects. Patel and Goodman (2020: 439) discuss the period’s development of ‘national lobbying organizations for farmers who saw farming neither as a front line in class struggle, as some farmers unions did, nor as a keystone to broader community transformation and freedom from monopoly, as the Grange Movement did, but rather as a bulwark against rural insurrection’. This character of the Farm Bureau (in particular) only deepened and solidified over the hundred-plus years since its founding, its ‘long history of racialized ethnonationalism’ leading to its policy orientation today characterized by ‘...militarized, racialized, patriarchal overtones ...[and a] a



prosperity theology of individualized accumulation' (Graddy-Lovelace 2019: 399).<sup>5</sup> While composed of actual farmers in its origins (farmers of various scales but leaning towards the larger scales), and comprising local chapters as well as a federal-level apparatus (thus leading to more internally varied politics at its outset), the Farm Bureau was soon to be influenced from and flanked on the Right by the 'Associated Farmers', an organization set up specifically by and on behalf of industrialists, land developers, and large landholders (Guerin-Gonzales 1996: 122, and footnote 44). This organization will be discussed further in the next section, because it is in the 1930s, in response to even greater upheaval among workers and Othered groups, that the organization began.

Surveying the creation of California's farm sector, labouring classes and groupings, and their interrelations to global political-economic development, we begin to see the outlines of an agrarian sector heavily shaped by racial relations, capitalist values, its birthright colonial nature, attitude, and relations, and a large-scale and industrial character. These characteristics drove agrarian capital classes into conflict with workers, but also drove the political development of certain classes of workers, against others. Next, we turn to the agrarian labour organizing of the 1930s, largely linked to self-consciously socialist labour organizers, which provoked further reaction and organization by the business class. These forces began developing tools of authoritarian populism, especially the effective stoking of working-class and middle-class resentments of political, ethnic, racial, and 'alien' Others, which became ever more pivotal to rightwing success through the latter half of the twentieth century.

#### 4.3.2. 1930s: Economic and ecological crisis, worker upheaval, and the problematic liberal state

A decade after the IWW's enforced retreat, continuing strikes and workplace resistance in both rural and urban industries prompted action from the political elite. Coming off the heels of the Great Depression's impact starting in 1929, and codified in the 1930s New Deal, the liberal government's answer to radical restiveness was federal legislation developed and implemented partly in favour of worker interests, rather than narrowly on behalf of capital (Piven and Cloward 1978, Klare 1978, Goldfield 1989).<sup>6</sup> From the perspective of politicians like President Roosevelt and the handful of supportive business elites, the New Deal ameliorated worker anxieties while also buffering their own: the possibility of socialist

rebellion. Describing the New Deal's formation from the perspective of today, Patel and Goodman (2020: 433) argue that

The New Deal today appears as a miracle, an incredible moment in which the nation stood united behind Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his Keynesian policies to accomplish Big Things. Such a reading is only possible because the New Deal's working-class intellectual labor, and the history of class conflict throughout the 1930s, has been muted. The New Deal's victories were achieved not because the nation united behind them, but because the nation was profoundly divided. The New Deal sat at the conjuncture of global financial and ecological crisis, and class struggle, and is most helpfully understood as a series of victories and defeats in the management of that struggle by an anxious bourgeoisie, across rural and urban America.

Give workers a welfare net, the logic of those anxious bourgeoisie (in business and politics) went, and they are less likely to foment revolution. For many workers – offered access to pensions through work, affordable state medical insurance, and increased ability to unionize – communist insurgency might lose its appeal. Yet ironically some of the labour groups whose agitations prompted the New Deal reforms were later blocked from its benefits: domestic workers and farmworkers were excluded to placate Southern congressmen who defended the imperative to keep these largely black labour forces subjugated and marginal. The New Deal's support for workers was thus contradictory and uneven (Patel & Goodman 2020: 441). It reinforced existing divisions among the working class along various axes, most notably race and gender. It also strengthened collective bargaining and labour's position in routinized class struggle, while undermining politicized sectors of the labour movements' longer-term struggle against the inviolability of capital-wage relations. The same reproduction of existing divisions in the working class is seen in governmental and elite responses to 'the labour question' from the outset of the Great Depression. According to Guerin-Gonzales (1996: 79)

The US secretary of labor [who was formerly a union leader], William N. Doak, had a simplistic explanation for the depression and an equally simple solution: the country was an economic trouble because US workers were unemployed; workers were unemployed because aliens had taken their jobs; therefore, once aliens were expelled from the country, US workers would find employment, and the depression would end.

Doak, in collaboration with economic power centres like the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, began a campaign to expel, deport, and pressure to repatriate Mexican and Mexican American (that is, US-born) labourers. Workers – mainly farmworkers – were regularly arrested without warrants, preemptively considered to be aliens by virtue of their participation in strikes and labour organizing, and had their civil liberties violated by both state and private forces (ibid: 80). Although the government claimed to be targeting temporary workers in the country illegally, they actually deported many legal residents and citizens, women and children included. Guerin-Gonzales (1996: 77,79) notes:

The 1930s marked the first time in the history of international migration between the US and other countries that the federal government sponsored and supported the mass expulsion of immigrants. Because federal, state, and local authorities refused to recognize that Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants were permanent members of US society, people of Mexican descent were especially vulnerable to governmental programs to deport and repatriate foreigners as a panacea for economic depression. ... Mexican removal had devastating effects on the lives of all Mexicans living in the US because, from its inception, the policy constructed both Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants as foreigners, as “aliens”, to be sent back to their home country. ... By including Mexican Americans in these programs, authorities underlined the widely held belief that Mexican Americans had no legitimate claim to the US as their home country.

This characterization of Mexicans as by (racialized) nature not belonging in the US paradoxically enabled their exploitation by growers, even though before 1933 the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and other business elite organizations opposed repatriation:

California Farm employers initially opposed repatriation, but they later used the programs to break agricultural strikes. This reversal revealed both the constraints under which agricultural employers operated in trying to maintain a labor force perceived as foreign, and the strategies they develop to get around or to manipulate these constraints to their advantage. (ibid: 113)

In addition to the existing patterns of unrest among labour, and the anxieties of elites in response, there were crucial political-ecological and global foundations to the New Deal. In particular, the so-called Dust Bowl, which ruined farm economies across large expanses of the dry western US,

and drove many capital-poor white and Euro-descended settlers westwards towards California. The Dust Bowl held crucial significance to the social conditions that precipitated the New Deal era, and to the agricultural policy and development that emerged out of that era. Hannah Holleman (2017: 236) describes the Dust Bowl thusly:

During this time on the US Southern Plains [late 1800s to 1930s], the grasslands that evolved to hold the soil in place and sustain regional species were destroyed within just a few decades by the expansion of cash crop agriculture and ranching following the opening of the Plains to white settlement. When major drought hit, the loose, dried, exposed topsoil was lifted by winds from the land and accumulated in dust storms that wreaked havoc for years. The land could no longer support life as it had.

Relating this to the food regime theorization/periodization mentioned earlier, and to the interacting forces of political economy that move through scales, Holleman (2017: 235) critiques the existing scholarship on the Dust Bowl, which too often ‘make[s] invisible the colonial and racial-domination aspects of the crisis and lead to the whitewashing of Dust Bowl narratives’ and ‘generally ignores the intensive, violent confrontation between settlers, the US government, and private organizations on the one hand, and [US Indigenous] tribes on the other’ (ibid: 241). Instead, Holleman

re-embeds the Dust Bowl on the US Southern Plains within its broader historical and social context. In so doing, it becomes clear that the disaster was one dramatic regional manifestation of a global socio-ecological crisis of soil erosion generated by the conditions of economic expansion via the ‘new imperialism’ beginning in the 1870s and lasting through the early decades of the twentieth century. (ibid: 234)

Thus, the linked political and ecological effects of colonial capitalism came around by the 1930s in crises of ecological harm and massive migration, shaping a moment of great uncertainty for the country as a whole. The displaced white working classes, moving west to California, also altered the calculus of worker organizing there, influenced as it now was by the contradictory class-race-colonial position of these white workers. Their arrival to the fields of California simultaneously sparked greater sympathy among the white-dominated public and political fields (as those could now see whites as victims of California’s industrial agriculture’s exploitation of

labour<sup>7</sup>), but also political reactions that prioritized these sectors as 'victims' of the Dust Bowl, rather than seeing their position as related to a globe-spanning project of imperial capitalism, or questioning racialized assumptions about what kinds of people deserve what kinds of labour conditions. Both the ramifications of the ecological crisis and the political solutions proposed to this (and to the financial crisis of the Great Depression more generally) were laden with a continuity of white supremacist structures of thought and power. For one, Holleman (2017: 235) shows, the ecological response elevated white saviorism, and leveraged this idea for further colonial and agrarian development: '[t]he problem of soil erosion, and the international recognition of it, [was] described in the 1930s as another "white man's burden"'.

On the economic policy front, the New Deal (as mentioned) left out many BIPOC sectors of the working class, recapitulating the differentiation of the working class, as defined by the national state. Yet at the same time, the New Deal had an unintended mobilizing effect on farmworkers in California – who were a diverse lot. Though they were left out of the New Deal's labour protections, farmworkers began to assert themselves in the fields. They were emboldened, argues historian Kathryn Olmsted, by increasing social acceptance of workplace organization, unions, and workers' rights – an effect of both decades of insurgent action and organized efforts to develop working-class consciousness, and the recent liberal political reaction surrounding the New Deal.

A strike wave began California's fields in 1933. It involved Mexicans, Filipinos, Japanese, and the increasingly Euro-American farm labour force, and was organized largely by overt Communist union organizers. As Olmsted describes in *Right Out of California* (2015: 41-42): 'In all, thirty-seven strikes involving almost fifty thousand workers delayed or destroyed the harvests of about two-thirds of the state's fruits, vegetables, and cotton.' The cotton strike – 'the largest farmworkers' strike in US history' (ibid: 40) – ended with government mediation. As mentioned, grower attitudes on Mexican repatriation reversed from opposition to support, after 'workers waged the largest number of strikes in the history of California agriculture, with Mexican workers active in every one' (Guerin-Gonzales 1996: 116).

While the New Deal in some ways bolstered labour's overall position relative to capital nationally, particularly by legalizing unionization and creating millions of government jobs, its programmes also served grower

elites in California. The Central Valley Water Project, for example, was constructed with federal funds during this period, providing cheap water to agribusinesses across the Valley. The grower class, however, soon felt stymied by the pro-labour policies of the New Deal. Already used to squashing the rights of rural workers – tactics honed against the IWW, for instance – the illiberal grower class of California clashed with liberal politics at US federal levels (that is, liberal politicians who were mainstream and pro-capitalist, but willing to accommodate labour). They even reacted to squash bottom-up rural economic planning efforts (which mainly would involve white farmer communities in the Midwest, and was by no means anti-capitalist), as advocated by the USDA's budding New Deal 'agrarian intellectuals' (Gilbert 2015). This antagonism became a breeding ground for authoritarian populist strategies that proved essential to future Californian, and national, politics.

In the 1930s several of these new strategies for the Right emerged. Growers moved beyond ad hoc violence and repression, especially in the context of Communist labour organizing in California's Central and Imperial Valleys. By the 1930s, however, they realized brute force could not be relied on, due to the critical gaze of New Dealers and increasing public support for labour. In contrast to responses to the IWW, when growers and state actors effectively squashed the movement by brute force and legal action against organizers and their 'sedition', in the 1930s growers started to leverage internal working-class divisions and populist rhetoric more consistently. Growers effectively spread these divisive tactics through institutions that linked grassroots conservative activists with corporate elites. One example was the Associated Farmers, which allied growers and business tycoons and provided a space for nurturing practical and ideological ties between conservatism and populism. Such tactics worked to de-legitimize the emancipatory Left, and remained effective more than 80 years later, during the ascendancy of Trump.

#### 4.3.3. Culture Wars: the holy alliance of social conservatism

The resilience of California's grower class was not primarily based on gaining working-class support through class-driven narratives or economic appeals. Instead, it relied on forging political alliances around socially conservative values. Tying communism to nefarious cultural forces undermining Christianity, 'the growers exploited anxieties about chal-

lenges to racial, gender, and sexual norms' (Olmsted 2015: 128). This strategy succeeded in getting white workers – especially the middle class – to oppose multi-ethnic Central Valley workers' struggles, on the premise that these would destroy the white social fabric. Protecting family, community, and nation became tantamount to supporting growers' interests. At the same time, growers benefitted from the spectre of 'outside agitators' who interfered in local issues. Those intruders included Jewish labour organizers arriving from New York City (Jews at the time being considered an inferior 'race' to whites) and Mexicans who formed much of the striking agricultural workforce (Mexicans being described as 'childish foreigners who needed a firm hand and little pay' [ibid: 111]).

Populist sentiment based on white identity was of course not new to this era. But the Associated Farmers' socially conservative line used longstanding divisions and tensions to engender a reactionary opposition to anything that could be associated with 'communism', including even liberal reforms to the labour system pushed by New Dealers. Phillips-Fein (2009: xii) argues against common understandings of conservatism's rise as a popular reaction to cultural-political upheavals of the 1960s. Instead, she suggests:

If we shift focus from cultural to economic issues, it becomes clear that the origin of modern conservative politics and ideology predates the 1960s. ... the roots of the movement's triumph can be found in the disaffection of people very different from the white working class conservatives who are so often seen as central to its rise. It begins instead in the [businessmen] reaction against the New Deal.

Phillips-Fein depicts the essential role of businessmen in US conservatism's success. Other studies complement hers, describing elements of the transition from corporate-driven reaction to the New Deal to modern conservatism steeped in nationalist, populist rhetoric and white supremacy. These include McGirr's (2001) emphasis on the grassroots movements of suburban, well-off whites mobilized by prominent businessmen in the early 1960s; Conner's (2013) 'personal history' of the infamous John Birch Society, which effectively mobilized that grassroots and pushed the Right rightward; and Schuparra's (1998) study of how reactionaries won out over moderates in conservative California after WWII. Each of these show California as a key location for the emergence of contemporary conservatism, through the founding of institutions like pro-'free market' think

tanks, innovating tactics like propaganda via church-based radio networks, and increasing attention by rightwing leaders to articulating their political-economic agenda to resentments among white voters (that is, leveraging Othering) in order to achieve political success. Individuals and family lines show continuity between generations in this process: today's politically influential Koch brothers learned political values and strategies from their father Fred Koch, a wealthy and powerful founder of the John Birch Society. Such lineages can be traced, but equally relevant are the tactical innovations that link conservative reaction from the 1930s to today.

#### 4.3.4. Spinning Stories: mass media and manufacturing populist commonsense

Social conservatism in California relied on new discursive strategies that propagated a populist 'commonsense' aligned with business interests. The Associated Farmers, for example, depended heavily on radio, leaflets, newspapers, and civic groups of women and men to disseminate their message.<sup>8</sup> By the 1930s, the professional mass media and the emergent industry of PR – consultants, campaign advisors, and advertisers – also helped to equate labour organizing with communism and civic disorder. The very first purely political campaign consultants, 'Campaigns, Inc.' started in California, pioneering these anti-communist messaging techniques while serving the state's conservative leaders from Frank Merriam<sup>9</sup> to Richard Nixon. At the time, local prosecutors had begun acting in concert with growers, informants, and anti-communist military intelligence operatives to bring charges against known labour organizers, accusing them of 'criminal syndicalism' under California anti-sedition law (Olmsted 2015: 198). Aside from outcomes that largely favoured the growers, these court cases fomented political fear of Communists and radicals in general. Many of the trials were in fact show trials, based upon dubious accusations, designed by experts, and paid for by growers. Along with similarly bankrolled election campaigns against liberals such as gubernatorial candidate and author Upton Sinclair, the trials helped turn public sentiment against workers' concerns. Many of the state's leading newspapers – including the *Los Angeles Times*, *San Francisco Examiner*, and *Fresno Bee* – ran frequent editorials lambasting both communism and labour, often conflating the two. Majority-owned and published by economic elites, major landlords, and capitalists, these media were directly invested in status-quo agriculture.



The Right, in California and nationally, also began to depict New Deal liberalism as a slippery slope into communism. If all New Deal policy was characterized as 'pro-labour' and pro-labour was framed as communism, then anything but an anti-labour position was inimical to commonsense. As Olmsted (2015: 105) points out, author John Steinbeck and other liberal cultural icons inadvertently abetted this rightwing project. While Steinbeck brought rural labour struggles to public attention, he also vilified Communist organizers and overlooked BIPOC and women in his depictions of the era's justice-seeking leadership. Reinforcing an assumption that achieving rights for native-born white working-class men was the vanguard of political possibilities, the work of many a New Deal-era writer and artist indicated that inclusion of women, people of colour, or immigrants in political vision was at best foolhardy, and at worst 'un-American'.

Authoritarian populism, at its base, has thrived on the creation of one or multiple 'Others'. In a textbook case of appealing to 'the people' versus 'the others', pre-World War II populist narratives told ordinary Californians that they would be protected – against outside agitators interfering in local issues, against the breakdown of socially conservative values, and against the threat of Communist rule. Liberal New Dealers who validated farmworker struggles all too easily became spun as communist enablers. Meanwhile, liberals' own narrow visions of race and gender in forming an alternative hegemony were inadequate to cope with ascendant authoritarian power – especially when the Left-baiting narratives were paid for and crafted by California's grower elites.

#### 4.3.5. 1940s-1950s: Interlude?

This period is often seen in US Leftist history as a lull, or interlude, between the 'Old Left' upheavals of the 1930s and the 'New Left' near-revolutions of the 1960s. Unfortunately, this kind of historical account underplays the organizing, educating, and agitation that took place within the country during the period (see for example Cornell 2016), as well as the global changes taking place that held major ramifications for US emancipatory movements. For instance, China's communist revolution of 1949, and Cuba's in 1959, along with national liberation struggles across Africa and Asia from the 1940s to 1960s, all influenced the theory, outlook, and radicality of insurgent Indigenous, ethnic-focused, and socialist/communist movements within the US, especially in the 1960s. The fact of these rising insurgencies against the imperialism of the developed world

(particularly the US and Europe) led also to reactions among ruling US elites, and played a role in the transition to a second ‘food regime’. Taking place roughly from the 1940s to 1970s, in which US imperialism post-WWII shifted towards a strategy of ‘containment’ of communist threats, the second food regime enrolled US-produced grain surpluses and US-led agrarian reform policies to alter the balance of forces and incentives (to undermine revolution) in the developing world, and to continue US over-production (Friedmann 2005: 241-247). In this ‘mercantile-industrial’ food regime, ‘food aid’ from the US

transformed Japan and the colonies and new nations of the Third World from self-sufficient to importing countries. It transformed Europe from the dominant import region of the colonial-diasporic food regime, to self-sufficiency and eventually major export region. And it paradoxically framed the emergence of a number of giant agro-food capitals, which eventually became powerful actors, whose interests diverged from both farmers and national states. It did this through promoting industrialization of agriculture and elaboration of manufactured edible commodities sold by ever larger retail capitals. (Friedmann 2005: 242)

This period around World War II was decisive in the intensification of farming and the development of California as the leading agricultural state in the US. International forces were crucial not just in terms of markets and development in the industrialization of production, but also in the ways that labour was made available for industrial farming in California, in the context of the Great Depression and then US policy efforts to bring the country out of the Depression, largely through war industry. The war led to an immediate need for greater production, alongside a lack of cheap labour availability. Mexicans (and Mexican Americans) in California found themselves in a push and pull with the US state, which went from seeing them as rights-demanding threats and drains on welfare rolls during the 1930s to essential – and in fact culturally, racially, inherently suited – workers for the harsh working conditions of agriculture. The main vehicle for once again generating a sufficient and sufficiently exploitable labour force was the so-called ‘Bracero’ programme, a federal initiative that from 1942 to 1964 enabled farm owners to legally import a pliable labour force from Mexico, deportable once no longer needed (see Cohen 2011). Growers and the state agreed to the new programme – apparently forgetting that Mexican labour was not as ‘tractable’ as industry and political leaders claimed publicly (Mitchell 2010: 144).

The Bracero programme's false promises to workers of fair pay and decent working conditions, along with its overtly racialized structure and enormous profitability, did not *create* – but certainly reinforced – the grower class's expectation that they would be entitled to low-paid wage labourers indefinitely (Ngai 2004: 138-147, Guerin-Gonzales 1996: 135, Mitchell 2010, 1996). The means to maintain as low wages as possible involved various forms of anti-immigrant and specifically targeted Othering – and the suppression of labour rights and organizing when required (Mitchell 2010: 152-153). Othering actions included business and state actors painting Mexicans as 'birds of passage' who were not interested or able to settle into American citizenship (Guerin-Gonzales 1996: 25-50), and employers 'consciously segregated workers along racial and ethnic lines and created separate, segmented labor markets' to reinforce the division of 'white' and 'Mexican' (or other non-white) jobs (ibid: 53). This period of agribusiness efforts to sustain a pliant workforce also rolled into its racial logics gendered and sexualized representations of migrant workers, such as stigmatization of Filipino sexuality through its proximity to 'sexually aggressive' Blackness and primitiveness (Ngai 2004: 110). And so, the divide-and-rule strategy of California's agribusiness class thus played into the Othering of Mexicans (today's primary agricultural workforce, and continued the racialized valorization of white workers above BIPOC workers of whatever origin.

Mitchell (2010: 147,149) argues that 'the World War II debates and struggles over the Mexican labor importation program were at once a function of a long history of violent labor relations and therefore violent landscapes and the foundation for the continuing violence in that landscape'. That violent history, as I've touched on throughout this chapter, was pervasive:

This violence included the work of vigilante committees burning Chinese workers out of camps in the 1870s and 1880s, deputies opening fire on workers peacefully gathering to complain about conditions in the Wheatland hops ranches in 1913, and the remarkable, deadly attacks on striking workers up and down the states in 1928, 1929, 1930, 1933, and 1936, when deputized growers and local and state police resorted to open fire to assert their rights to control wages and the labor process. (ibid: 149)

It is important to see such violence as based not just in ‘lawless’ acts by the grower class, but crucially as involving the state, its laws and enforcement mechanisms. At the local level were police and sheriffs supporting grower violence against workers, but at the national level were important legal proceedings and legislative acts that shaped ‘the historical origins of the “illegal alien” in American law and society’ (Ngai 2004: 3). This social-legal construction of the ‘illegal alien’ is ‘deeply implicated in the development of twentieth-century American ideas and practices about citizenship, race, and the nation-state’, and contributed greatly to the structural violence against migrant labour that continues to today (ibid). In Mae Ngai’s (2004) book on the creation of ‘Impossible Subjects’ through immigration law through the period 1924–1965, she

examines the experiences of Filipinos, Mexicans, Japanese, and Chinese, who variously comprised illegal aliens, alien citizens, colonial subjects, and foreign contract-workers — all liminal status categories that existed outside the normative teleology of immigration, that is, legal admission, permanent-resident status, and citizenship. I argue that the adjudication of these groups’ legal status not only directly underwrote their particular social experiences but also profoundly shaped the general character of American immigration, citizenship, and the state in the twentieth century. (2004: 13)

In emphasizing ‘the role of racialized foreign labor — Filipinos and Mexicans — in the political and cultural economies of the United States West and Southwest’ (ibid), she argues (ibid: emphasis added)

that the region’s industrial agriculture practiced a kind of ‘imported colonialism’ which created a migratory agricultural proletariat *outside the polity*. Imported colonialism also challenged cultural and political norms across a broad spectrum, from the proprieties of interracial sex to nation-bounded definitions of the working class.

These forces together – legal and cultural, state-violence-enforced marginalization and societally-reproduced Othering – created the ‘impossible subject’ of migrant workers, who are simultaneously *already living in the US*, part of its society, and required for its capitalist economy to function, *and* ‘impossible’ to integrate into society, never allowed a legal or cultural status of belonging. Ngai’s deep legal history shows us how crucial these ‘impossible subjects’ are to the US economy and polity, regardless of their contradictory and unjust status, and how crucial are mechanisms of coercion (legal and vigilante) and consent (especially in cultural ideas about

'unassimilable' migrants who are variously well suited for hard and underpaid labour or too dangerous to keep around) are to sustain the industrial agribusiness labour regime.

#### 4.3.6. 1960s-80s: New labour movements, urban/rural interactions, and consolidation of the Right

The United Farm Workers (UFW) emerged in the 1960s following decades of failed attempts by other groups to organize farmworkers. Much has been written about the UFW (*inter alia* Bardacke 2012; Ganz 2009; Jenkins 1985), but we focus here on how these rebellions differed from the Communist-influenced efforts of the 1930s. UFW struggles developed alongside the Bracero Programme. Promised but never delivered pay equal to native US workers, the *braceros* were harshly treated by employers and disliked by factions of the farm labour movement, including parts of the UFW, which saw them undermining local labour power. The *braceros* were also demonized by conservative politicians who portrayed them as fear-some dirty foreigners, tainting white America. Under assault from many sides – including critics of *braceros'* presence in California and movements concerned with their dignity and rights – the programme was terminated in 1963.

The UFW was not an internationalist workers' movement like the IWW. It was a unionization movement to achieve better wages and working conditions for certain parts of the agricultural labour force. Because Mexican Americans (or 'Chicanos') dominated the UFW, the movement found traction in ethnic struggles for recognition and representation (particularly citizenship rights) more so than it mobilized a larger anti-systemic vision. Justifiably described as paralleling the civil rights movements for African Americans, the UFW is lauded for achieving more gains than farmworker movements before or since. Still, those gains have been limited and tentative. A half-century after its founding, UFW membership is small, few UFW union contracts remain, and workers remain notoriously exploited (Brown and Getz 2008: 1186). Paradoxically, the Bracero Programme led into a distinctly anti-immigrant positioning of the union: supporting immigration and (illegal or imported) immigrants came to be considered antithetical to achieving farmworker rights, even if most of the Mexican American and Filipino UFW members were themselves from immigrant families.

Though the UFW effort was solidly domestic and sought rights for only a narrow sector of workers, it did create new social connections that had not existed in previous rounds of California farmworker organizing. For one, it moved from the ‘colour blind’ rhetoric that characterized its organizational precedents, to a consciously racialized class analysis that enabled the ‘union within the union’ of Mexican and Filipino worker sectors (Cruz 2016). By positioning the struggle as against an unjust racist system, these groups unified within the UFW as they had not in previous decades. By also partnering with progressive churches, students, and concerned consumers – groups generally more urban than rural – the UFW built broader-based opposition to the grower class. Without the economic pressure that these partnerships enabled, it is unlikely that the UFW’s boycotts, particularly on the fresh-grape industry, would have succeeded to the extent that they did. Cross-race alliances were also key: the UFW and the Black Panther Party (BPP) provided mutual support for one another, despite their many contrasts. Although the BPP ‘was African American, militant, urban, and socialist and therefore differed in nearly every way from the largely Mexican American, nonviolent, rural, and Catholic UFW ... [the two groups]’ willingness and ability to find class-based commonalities across racial lines ... enabled the UFW and the BPP to form a successful, mutually beneficial alliance’ (Araiza 2009: 200). I return to this partnership dynamic later in the chapter.

#### 4.3.7. The Reagan Lens

The rise of Ronald Reagan provides insights into how authoritarian populism matured as a strategy in and through the elaboration of neoliberal capitalism. Vocally anti-communist during the McCarthy era, Reagan made his mark in a 1964 speech, ‘A Time for Choosing’, delivered in support of far-right Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater. In this speech, Reagan spoke to a vision of politics where government was ‘the problem’ and where unbridled market freedoms coupled with individual responsibility were solutions (Reagan 1964). This retort to both Keynesianism and Communism became a signature of Reagan’s later campaign for the California governorship, where he effectively whipped up anti-Soviet zeal, US patriotism, and white supremacy into a glide towards Chicago School ideology. In his governor’s run in 1966, Reagan promised to ‘clean up the mess at Berkeley’, (referring to student movements against

racism and the Vietnam War and for 'free speech', particularly at University of California, Berkeley), while deploying racially coded terms for Black people in 'sending the welfare bums back to work'. During the 1969 UFW grape boycott, he ate grapes live on television, directly antagonizing the union and its supporters, but appeasing and energizing his resentment-filled, mostly white base. A politics of anti-BIPOC and anti-radical Othering underpinned Reagan's success at various points in his rise.

As Governor, Reagan cracked down on popular insurgencies of the late 1960s. Protests and direct actions were causing such disruption, in Reagan's view, that 'law and order' was the necessary response. Liberals like University of California President Clark Kerr, Reagan suggested, were only enabling the rabble. Whether critiquing Washington D.C. or the UC, Reagan continued to argue, as he had in his '64 Goldwater speech, that 'a little intellectual elite in a far-distant capitol' was using government to run roughshod over 'our rights' to 'plan for ourselves' (Reagan 1964). Here we see echoes of the California growers' demonization of New Deal liberals in the 1930s.

Reagan took these populist tactics to the 1980 presidential election campaign. Entering the political limelight through a career in television and film and a brief US-based military detour, he was best known for his 'avuncular style, optimism, and plain-folks demeanor' (Dreier 2011). As he pivoted from a Roosevelt-supporting actor to a Goldwater-conservative, Reagan quickly settled into the laissez-faire, free-market logics that would define his legacy. Together with UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and building with the power of their subjective and objective allies distributed across business, politics, and civil society, Reagan helped neutralize the political ferment of a generation – anti-Vietnam unrest, the civil rights movement, the free speech movement, the American Indian Movement, the Black Panther Party and surging Black radicalism in general, the environmental movement – by obscuring critiques of capitalist modernity with indictments of an interventionist state.

The hitch is that neoliberalism has always needed government (and arguably big government) in order to function (Busch 2010, Barandiarán and Gottlieb 2018). While neoliberalism as utopian economic design posits an invisible hand with little state intervention, the neoliberal political project knows better – and so did Reagan. As president, he refined the notion that a neoliberal state performs essential functions. It must provide the legal

and institutional apparatus to ensure private property rights. It must bolster industry through investment, research and infrastructure, and tax alleviation policy. Importantly, it must use the coercive powers of intelligence, military, and police to surveil, make war, and keep restive populations in line, in particular to clamp down on labour and other political opposition.<sup>10</sup>

Reagan and his circles thus ushered in contemporary global capitalism through strategies developed starting in the 1930s, deepened through subsequent decades of conservative organizing, and honed under his governorship of California. Across a career that had him send in the National Guard to suppress university uprisings (resulting in one death and many injuries), support a repeal of Second Amendment protections (specifically to take away Black Panthers' ability to protect themselves from police), and continually squash the rights of BIPOC immigrants, he continued to project avuncular likeability, and indeed is often remembered as the country's most popular leader. This potent mix of authoritarianism, populism, and charisma helped to unleash neoliberalism, the dysfunction of which produces the very conditions under which reactionary politics grow.

Reagan's mobilization and rise against surging Black-led movements in particular is notable in this research. That is, in focusing on the Black experience, and Black agrarianism in particular, we can see the development of anti-Black Othering, but also alternative ways of being in rural spaces, and the development of strategies to counter Othering. Against governmental neglect, outright dehumanization, and state-sanctioned, citizen-driven violence, Black people in the US have developed pioneering methods of cooperative structures for organizing food production, financing, and consumption (Nembhard 2014), and political organizing for defense and social change. Having stood at the bottom of a US racial hierarchy involving many and rotating Others, Black people's forms of struggle – including in agrarian contexts – are particularly generative of relevant insights for strategies to counter Othering (see Davy et al. 2017, Penniman & Snipstal 2017). And it is to an early Black-led project to found an agricultural community that we now turn (after which we will look at Indigenous, farmworker, and broadly democratic-environmental, multi-ethnic movements).



#### 4.4. Assimilation, valorization, and differencing in twentieth century rural and agrarian movements

##### 4.4.1. Assimilation as liberation?

The town of Allensworth, California was a Black-led land development project, founded by Colonel Allen Allensworth and four close allies in 1908 (Cox 2007). Col. Allensworth agreed with Booker T. Washington's vision of liberation: 'that the Negro as an efficient worker could gain wealth and that eventually through his ownership of capital he would be able to achieve a recognized place in American culture' (Du Bois 1940 [1967]: 61). As an advocate of this vision for Black liberation, Allensworth was committed to education and an entrepreneurial spirit by which Black people might advance themselves into full rights and participation in Western civilization. As a response to Othering, this strategy may be called *assimilation*. Typically, assimilation is thought of in cultural terms: as abandoning attributes of one's culture in order to assimilate to a new culture. Although this is at play in the assimilation I describe here, conceptually I consider assimilation as *a set of acts, which seek to improve one's conditions through use of and accommodation to the established structures, values, and processes of the mainstream society* (which has excluded one as an 'Other'). According to some accounts, a main reason for founding Allensworth was to influence white society and how it judged Blacks, asserting that Blacks could become an accepted part of society as well (Cox 2007). In theory, creating a new 'colony' owned and managed by Blacks would generate autonomous wealth and capacity, while signaling Blacks' ability to participate in the American project at large. An assimilation approach can also assume that building wealth through land ownership and agriculture – 'Africans' blueprint for economic independence' (Davy et al. 2017, p. 42) – would provide a foundation upon which to combat oppression by providing a base of support for efforts to make political change.

The history of Allensworth offers lenses into the limits of assimilation as a strategy. For one, the very alliance with a white-owned, urban-based capitalist land development firm, which arranged the original land purchase and was slated to provide irrigation water to the town, was to prove fatal for the effort to found the town:

Allensworth's prosperity peaked in 1925 and after that date the lack of irrigation water began to plague the town. Irrigation water was never delivered in sufficient supply as promised by the Pacific Farming Company ... As a

result, town leaders were engrossed in lengthy and expensive legal battles with the Company, expending scarce financial resources on a battle they would not win. (Mikell 2017)

Secondly, Allensworth's efforts came up against more integrationist perspectives on Black liberation held by urban Blacks in cities like San Francisco and Los Angeles:

In keeping with Colonel Allensworth's idea of self-help and self-reliance programs, city leaders in 1914 proposed to establish a vocational education school ... Although it received support for a state funding appropriation from Fresno and Tulare County representatives in the California State Senate and Assembly, the proposal was defeated by the entire state legislature. (ibid)

Allensworth's efforts to achieve state support for their school failed in part because of opposition from integrationist Blacks, who saw the town's efforts to advance themselves as Blacks *separate from white society, but through alliance with white politicians*, as a threat to the long-term vision of equal rights within the institutions of white society (Cox 2007: 9).

Allensworth's example shows that on its own assimilation is an incomplete strategy against Othering. Success is not just a matter of working together across differences, but also *who* works together and *on what terms*. As we see with the town's 'development' of stolen Indigenous land, in partnership with a colonial enterprise, these latter questions matter for forms and outcomes of solidarity. Also, lack of ideological unity (in this case, regarding education and its relation to the strategy of integration) can reduce the likelihood of solidarity within a sector. There is also the more fundamental question of whether assimilation is worthwhile, given the brokenness of hegemonic society's institutions, as alluded to by Black civil rights icon Martin Luther King Jr., when he said: 'We have fought hard and long for integration, as I believe we should have ... But I've come to believe we're integrating into a burning house.'<sup>11</sup> Sectors are not monolithic, nor do they hold the same politics over time, and these differences provide sources of tension in efforts to counter Othering (as we will cover further in Chapters 5 and 6).

#### 4.4.2. Valorization: The vital self-worth of the Other

Allensworth sought to improve the image of Blacks, directing this effort towards 'changing white sentiment' (Cox 2007: 30). 'Valorization' *can* result in external recognition, but it is motivated firstly by affect, on personal and intracommunal levels within a sector of Others; that is, it is about 'we' – as Others. This is the sense in which I use *valorization*. If assimilation could be described by the statement 'We (Other) are just like you (in the hegemonic position)', valorization would claim 'We are valuable, *because of who we are, as we are.*'

The creation of the American Indian Movement (AIM) in the 1970s was a pivotal moment in US Indigenous peoples' valorization, in response to centuries of Othering. AIM was active in California, dramatically launching its efforts through the 1969 occupation of Alcatraz Island in the San Francisco Bay. Through AIM, Indigenous identity was reclaimed, re-fashioned, and revitalized. AIM gathered all tribes into a common project of asserting the right to exist, of recognizing and exposing past and present injustices (particularly those perpetuated by the US state), and revalorizing Indigenous identity, particularly by revitalizing Indigenous traditions, ceremonies, land and resource management practices, and storytelling. Though the formal movement was largely crushed by federal suppression, its effects were profound:

before AIM, Indians were dispirited, defeated and culturally dissolving. People were *ashamed* to be Indian. ... [now] you find young Indians all over the place who understand that they don't have to accept whatever sort of bullshit the dominant society wants to hand them, that they have the right to fight ... that in fact they have an obligation to stand up on their hind legs and fight for their future generations, the way our ancestors did. (AIM leader Russell Means, quoted in Churchill 2003: 181)

Internal valorization can be supported by external validation, such as how federal recognition can bring access to reservation land and US state resources to consolidate tribal identity.<sup>12</sup> Science (from 'outside', but also increasingly through the work of Indigenous scientists; e.g. Kimmerer 2013) has also played a role in validated Indigenous wisdom as it pertains to food systems, as described by Lightfoot and Parrish (2009, p. 147):

Native Californians were able to maintain strong cultural traditions and successful economies for thousands of years. They handcrafted small-scale

economies that were tailor-made to the specific environmental parameters of local places ... This emphasis on local, small-scale enterprises that are ecologically sensitive may be prudent for us to consider in developing sustainable food economies in California today.

Indeed, Indigenous people are already acting on the suggestion, working to advance ‘food sovereignty’ throughout so-called North America, as tribes revitalize old food traditions, re-cultivate old seed varieties, continue (or deepen) practices of wide scale ecological management, and re-integrate tradition and ceremony into ways of gathering, preparing, and sharing food (Coté, 2016; Daigle, 2017). One example from California is the Karuk tribe (described further in the next section), organizing to regain traditional land and fisheries management rights and practices.

Since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the many Others composing California’s farm labour workforce struggled for rights, pay, and dignity, but rarely did they make appeals to valorization. These struggles varied in character – some revolutionary, others reformist; some parochial, others inter-ethnic – but ultimately none achieved substantial transformation of the state’s exploitative labour regime. It was not until the 1960s and 1970s – during a period of cultural re-valorization among various ethnic groups, an ascendant and dynamic socialist Left, and an increasing legitimacy for civil and human rights – that something like success was seen (Ganz, 2009; Shaw, 2008). The UFW pioneered a form of union organizing that achieved wage gains and policy changes, and launched their founder Cesar Chavez into prominence as a national figure. Their emphasis on Mexican American culture – seen in their predominant use of Spanish in organizing, the folk songs sung at rallies, their official flag’s display of a Mexican Eagle symbol, and description of the union as ‘La Causa’ (the Cause) – shows how UFW utilized a strategy of valorization. But they only succeeded due to working in solidarity with others: students, clergy, multiple ethnic groups of (farm and non-farm) workers, politicians, and Left activists from differing ideological and class positions. Coming up against the entrenched power of growers, the UFW mobilized this wide array of allies and used novel tactics of farm product boycott, leveraging consumer and working-class power from cities across the country. A prime example of this solidarity work is found in the UFW’s relations with Black liberation movement groups of the time, notably the BPP, whose nationwide chapters mobilized to support the UFW’s boycotts (Araiza, 2014). The BPP

was an urban-based revolutionary organization founded on internationalist-socialist (mixed with ethnic nationalist) principles, but was firmly grounded in an articulation of valorized Black history and identity.

Perhaps ironically given its urban constituency, the BPP's politics, strategy of armed self-defense, name and logo were inspired by Black liberationists in rural Lowndes County, Alabama (Anderson, n.d.). Clearly, the urban and the rural are connected, sharing challenges and tactics of response. In struggles against discrimination and oppression, we can learn from both the post-slavery US South and the ostensibly less racist North and West. These efforts were linked not only through similar experiences of anti-Black Othering, but also lineages of countervailing rural and agrarian identity and practices. To this day, as Bandele and Myers (2017, p. 20) remind us, 'Africans in America...are still surviving, struggling to retain their land, agrarian roots, and memory of communal beliefs about land ownership and caring for nature.' These memories and communal ways of being have provided resources for generations of cooperative and resistance movements, both rural (Davy et al., 2017; Penniman & Snipstal, 2017) and urban (Akuno & Nangwaya 2017).

Importantly, just because a movement uses valorization does not mean it forecloses possibilities for assimilation. The UFW in particular offers examples of this, in the ways that it (especially in later years) incorporated its leadership into mainstream Democratic Party politics, playing insider politics instead of organizing at the grassroots, and dumping money on candidates while losing grassroots participation as individual activists lost the sense of the union as movement and became disillusioned by its increasingly top-down leadership (Ganz, 2009, pp. 239-254). As mentioned previously, the UFW at times also played into anti-communist and anti-undocumented immigrant sentiments – supporting (even if inadvertently) existing forms of ideological and nationalistic Othering (Guthman, 2017, p. 28; Shaw, 2008, pp. 194-198). And as has been pointed out by sociologists (Pulido, 2006, p. 57) and farmworker organizers (Bacon, 2017, p. 165), Latinxs can, like any sector of Others, reproduce unjust social relations as they assimilate, for instance by becoming farm owners who exploit labour to make a profit. For valorization to overcome the negative aspects of assimilation, it must surpass identity politics (Haider, 2018) and effectively enroll different groups in a common cause, to build strength in unity beyond (self)valorization or (relatively) individualistic-capitalistic forms of

assimilation. This brings us to the third strategy for countering Othering: differencing’.

#### 4.4.3. Differencing: An essential complement to solidarity

The bootstraps modality of Allensworth (and the concomitant potential that workers of all sectors pursue only narrow-horizoned assimilation) has long been opposed by more revolutionary Black liberationists like the BPP, whose anti-capitalist perspective linked the liberation of Black workers to the liberation of the entire working class globally. The BPP’s ‘inter-communal’ approach (see Vasquez 2018), like that of other internationalist socialists, sought to create a common movement from disconnected struggles, by emphasizing the antagonism between ‘Us’ (workers) and ‘Them’ (the capitalist class). This approach parallels calls for a ‘Left populism’, as in the work of Ernesto Laclau (2005) and Chantal Mouffe (2018). As described in Chapter 2, Laclau’s formulation of populism relies on a collective antagonism, brought together through a ‘chain of equivalences’ linking diverse demands, against a common enemy that refuses to accommodate them. A key aspect to such Left populism is its creation or re-creation of ‘the people’ around this chain; the act of naming the people being a constitutive act. Clearly, the socialist movement concept of working-class struggle fits well, even if not perfectly, in a Left populist strategy that seeks to link disparate struggles. In turn, a Left populist strategy parallels but is not equivalent to the strategy of differencing. Differencing can be thought of as a process by which a new ‘we’ is created, but without obscuring the preexisting differences contained within this new ‘we’. It unsettles (and in Left forms, expands) categories of identity and political community, without necessarily displacing the valorization that sustains self-worth in those existing positions or categories of identity. It demands neither that Others become assimilated to hegemonic politics, nor for them to validate their political claims only through existing self-categorization (valorization). While socialist politics could attempt to subsume intra-working-class differences to a ‘workers of the world’ (or perhaps more commonly, ‘workers of the nation’) political party line, and Left populism defines ‘the people’ solely around its antagonist, differencing entails the unification element, without (or with less) political homogenization.

Differencing unsettles categories, not disclaiming or reifying identity, but reshaping it in relation to both close and distant others. The passion that drove so many people to volunteer years of their life for the UFW

was linked to 'La Causa' – a defined identity as a movement. During the UFW's heyday, a perception emerged that diverse national (and even international) struggles in actuality constituted one capital-'M' Movement, encouraging broad participation and big ambitions. Identity as a movement supports acts of solidarity, while acts of solidarity build identity as movement. The BPP's revolutionary internationalism similarly built up collective identity from diverse ethnic groups in the US, crafting a revolutionary movement identity among various marginalized ethnic workers through the development of the 'Rainbow Coalition' of Latinx Brown Berets and Young Lords, white Young Patriots, Asian American Red Guards, and AIM (Tracy & Sonnie, 2011). In this intercommunal work, BPP supported the UFW, while the UFW also returned that support as the Party moved into electoral politics. The BPP's successful alliance with UFW can be contrasted with Black Nationalist groups that refused alliances with other ethnic groups; in the 1970s, Black-led groups that previously supported UFW withdrew their support as the groups moved in nationalist directions (Araiza, 2014, p. 53-64). That era's movements at times took valorization too far: due to Blacks' position at the bottom of the US racial hierarchy, Black struggle was often given priority, while Asian Americans (who participated widely in some of the most notable struggles of that era) saw their marginalization unappreciated, because they were seen as being higher up on the racial hierarchy (Pulido, 2006, pp. 156-160).

Differencing can also occur at smaller or less all-encompassing political scales. The Karuk tribe of northern coastal California have been working for decades to remove dams from the Klamath River, which have been profoundly detrimental to the lifecycle of the salmon, upon which the tribe depends (Hormel & Norgaard, 2009). Built during California's rush of modernist development, the dams now serve non-Native and Indigenous communities alike with drinking water and electricity. The Karuk have had to generate Western scientific forms of knowledge, including by having tribal members trained in Western science programmes at reputable universities, in order to validate their traditional methods of land management. In order to reclaim its role in the rural ecology, the tribe has had to negotiate with the federal government, white ranchers, and many other dam resource-related groups, in order to create a common understanding that can lead to the removal of the dams (and has achieved some success; see Kober, 2018). The Karuk thus built a new and expanded identity as 'watershed stakeholders' that transcended Indigenous/non-Native

boundaries, which simultaneously revalorized their cultural worldview and tangibly improved their base of economic survival. In addition, the tribe has developed alliances with researchers from non-Native backgrounds. Considering a history of colonial, extractive, and exploitative forms of research, Indigenous people have rightfully been skeptical of researchers interested in researching them. As such, Karuk developed principle-based partnership rules, in order to protect their sovereignty while co-developing new knowledge of service to both social justice and ecological ends (Karuk and UCB Collaborative, n.d.).

At the scale of California, but with larger ramifications, was the story of National Land for People (NLP). Formed through the 1960s and 70s, and led by George and Maia Ballis, the NLP involved farmers, farm workers, consumers, lawyers, and others, in a struggle for democratic reallocation of farmland, against ‘the Biggies’: large-scale agribusiness and its political enablers. NLP acted variously ‘as a lobby, advocacy group, and community/farm alliance that ran a food coop and organized a network of farm suppliers’ (Welch, 2017, p. 237). But its main battle was over the Newlands Reclamation Act. The Act was

passed in 1902 to fund large irrigation projects for 16 states in the American west, [and] stipulated that federally funded water could only be used by landholders who owned 160 acres of land or less. However, for decades, large, corporate farming enterprises, as well as the Bureau of Reclamation charged with enforcing the law, were ignoring this restriction. National Land for People used the information they had gathered and maps they had produced to bring a bill to the Senate to force the Bureau to enforce the Reclamation Act’s excess land law and break up the large farms and sell them in small parcels to farm workers. (Ballis & Ballis, 2011, pp. 3-4)

NLP nearly succeeded in forcing agribusiness to break up its concentrated land ownership of California’s agricultural heartland, using a combination of strategies, including direct and prefigurative forms of action, in addition to education, grassroots mobilization, and state-focused advocacy. They organized tours that brought Californian residents, citizens, and legislators face to face with the Valley’s agrarian dysfunctions, in the process, ‘lacing together environmental concerns; the anti-Vietnam War movement; criticism of US imperialism; the civil rights struggle; fear of corporate power; and demands for a pesticide-free, unprocessed “health food”’ (Welch, 2017, p. 235).



...the NLP sought to create a development model for a reimagined Central Valley. Implementation of the 160 acre limit was the strategy for bringing a flood of small-farm properties to the market. To prepare, they collected information on farmworkers and others who might want to farm their own land and generated guides to small scale farming. The main public thrust included gathering information to feed the publication of newspaper articles and production of film documentaries; they also included public speaking appearances, membership growth, and petition drives. To be prepared for winning the battle, the NLP also worked to support existing small farms, to recruit farmers like Berge Bulbulian, an Armenian grape grower with 150 acre farm on the Valley's east side, and outreach to former farmworkers like UFW organizer Jessie de la Cruz, who belonged to a small cooperative farm. The Board of the NLP was headed by Bulbulian and included representatives not only of Armenian growers and Mexican farmworkers, but also of African American and Asian farmers. (ibid, p. 237)

From this base of multi-ethnic activists NLP found an attorney willing to take on the Biggies in court. Surprisingly, their 1976 lawsuit against the Federal Government succeeded, forcing the U.S. Interior Department to create new rules in compliance with the Reclamation Act (ibid, p. 238). Efforts by agribusiness organizations and their aligned politicians to undermine implementation of the rules, however, continued until the 1980s, when the Reagan Administration passed updated legislation to change the Act. By raising the acreage limit nearly six times and removing the key requirement that farmers reside on their acreage, this law change took away the foundation of NLP's central strategy.

Rallying various sectors against an articulated enemy, NLP addressed the state head-on, where what looked like success quickly turned to defeat. Likewise, UFW's initial successes dissipated in the face of agribusiness power and a state complicit with a low pay, seasonal labour regime. Unequal distribution of land and water resources (as in NLP's case) and exploitable migrant labour (as in UFW's) are necessities for existing systems of agriculture and power in California, and are not easily changed. As this history shows, however, differencing strategies laden with acts of solidarity and the prefigurative implementation of community serving resources (like NLP's co-op farms and BPP's 'survival' programmes) may be expected to increase the chances of (less partial, more sustainable) successes.

#### 4.4.4. Conclusion: Differencing our way to emancipation?

All the above movements, including even those focusing on assimilation, utilized support from groups outside their own: external solidarity is ubiquitous. Efforts by elites to undermine working-class solidarity through divide-and-conquer Othering are similarly constant, but non-elite responses vary, failing to follow any apparent determinative mechanism. Considering that the most relatively successful movements surveyed here have encompassed (or at least worked alongside) anti-capitalist elements – which enable an expansive and oppositional formation of ‘we’ – we might at least propose that working against ideological Othering of those holding more radical/anti-capitalist views is a formidable but indispensable task for movements of Others (especially given the weight of anti-communism in US history). Debates between non-elite people of similar interests about how to achieve emancipatory change are a key place where solidarity breaks down, thus requiring careful navigation of the tension between the obvious need to engage institutions for immediate reform (or to assimilate in order to thrive) and the less obvious need for an expansive vision (of both the horizon of emancipation and ‘the people’ included therein). For instance, to the extent that reform efforts ‘[take] the present structure of the farming economy in California for granted (Mitchell 1996: 181)’, they limit the vision of what new worlds may be possible, and who may be included therein.

Assimilation offers the promise of wealth creation, building political power, and control of land and resources, but can undermine solidarity without a necessary complement of communal and intercommunal tenets – in other words, both internal and external solidarity. Valorization brings an essential assertion of human value and the right to self-determination, and provides cultural resources through lineages of ancestral strategies for resistance and survival. While it may be readily accessible and generative, valorization cannot alone build ever-larger movements, and must be combined with differencing in order to avoid undermining cross-sector solidarity. Differencing is the least concrete strategy, regarding immediate needs, and is especially difficult, because working across differences and creating (new) common identities is no easy task. Yet differencing is essential, as it generates new affective and organizational resources for broad ambitions to take root and blossom. Differencing brings the creation of new political communities to the task of countering Othering, and in so doing keeps alive the possibilities of acting in (and experiencing) an ever-

enlarging spiral of solidarity. Forces for Othering can absorb tendencies towards assimilation and valorization (for instance, elites today celebrate meritocratic, assimilationist ideas of social advancement and non-threatening 'lean-in' forms of identity politics). But elites are harder-pressed to divert or subvert energies of differencing, because it creates greater unity among counter-hegemonic forces, and it generates affective commitment (and greater shared material resources) towards the long-term struggles needed to overcome elite strategies of movement cooptation, demonization, and direct suppression – making differencing the pivotal strategy. Movements to counter Othering – if seeking broader change in social structures, and not more narrow, immediate, and only self-serving kinds of change – thus should pursue a combination of self-aware assimilation, valorization, and differencing strategies, but with emphasis on differencing.

Having developed a better understanding of these three major solidarity strategies, I now turn to my contemporary fieldwork data. The next chapter deals with the major categories of tensions that emerge as various food movement groups and sectors attempt to achieve their emancipatory goals. These interpersonal, inter-organizational, and philosophical tensions are analyzed with guidance from an intersecting fusion of radical political theoretical traditions (Marxism, intersectionality, Black radical and Indigenous thought, and anarchism), which introduces the chapter. Although not always explicit, the discussion of tensions exhibits how forms of Othering sometimes go unchallenged in food movement spaces, how some movement elements have been agitating against Othering, and how assimilation, valorization, and differencing strategies have variously contributed to the tensions, or worked to lessen and mitigate them.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Authorial note: this chapter includes material from Montenegro et al. 2021, which I co-wrote alongside Maywa Montenegro, Siena Chrisman, and Alex Liebman. I appreciate their collaboration on this paper, and its contribution to the larger dissertation study process. The chapter is also based on my single-authored paper for UNRISD, published online and presented at a UNRISD conference in Geneva in 2018 (Roman-Alcalá 2018a).

<sup>2</sup> Today, differences and divisions between and among tribes remain. Federally-recognized tribes have access to resources that unrecognized tribes do not, for one. Issues of unequal, unjust, and patriarchal control can be compounded when resources are allocated to and by tribes by state-sanctioned, official tribal leadership, which may not overlap with traditional leadership that tends to cultural values and traditions.

<sup>3</sup> In actuality, slavery and unfree labour *did* exist in early California; including of Blacks, Chinese, and Indigenous Natives (see ACLU 2019, Kong 2004, Smith 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Although see Rioux (2018) for an alternative periodization.

<sup>5</sup> Granted, Graddy-Lovelace (2019: 399) seemingly obligatorily states that the Farm Bureau 'is not monolithic'. The important fact is that its dominant political effects *have* been dominantly unidirectional, towards the rightwing politics addressed in this research.

<sup>6</sup> Central to the New Deal's agriculture policy was 'supply management', which included price floors, grain reserves, land set-asides and other measures to keep prices in check through constraining overproduction. In 2020, a coalition of grass-roots farmer organizations and allied academics (including leadership from the Agroecology Research-Action Collective) launched the 'Disparity to Parity' project to renew conversations on these policy legacies and their implementation today, with greater attention to racial, colonial, and gender dynamics. See <https://disparitytoparity.org/>.

<sup>7</sup> The widely-known example of this popularization of farm labour struggle is John Steinbeck's fictionalization of these matters in *Grapes of Wrath* and other novels, discussed further below.

<sup>8</sup> Information from the following three paragraphs come largely from Olmsted (2015).

<sup>9</sup> Olmsted recounts how the Associated Farmers took credit for convincing Governor Merriam to oppose an apricot strike effort in Contra Costa County. After the governor's aides were given a tour of the region by Farmers' publicists, Merriam publicly painted the strikers as 'alien agitators'. Growers, shippers, and businessmen launched their own counter-campaign and, backed by Merriam, solicited telegrams hailing the governor's support and provided press coverage of the whole affair. This strike, according to Olmsted, gave the business class 'the opportunity to improve the tactics they would use in future strikes: shaping media coverage and public opinion, working with allies in law enforcement and [politicians in the state capitol] Sacramento, and deploying vigilantes when necessary' (160).

<sup>10</sup> As we saw in Chapter 2, these are functions not *unique* to rightwing administrations, but are acutely visible when mobilized in response to Left (or even liberal-reformist) upheavals and pushes for change.

<sup>11</sup> This quote is attributed to King by Harry Belafonte, a close friend of King's, civil rights activist and well-known entertainer, who met with King shortly before his assassination.

<sup>12</sup> Fifty-five of California's tribes lack – or have been stripped of – federal recognized status. Many tribes have reduced their efforts to seek recognition, and the California state government has recently developed its own 'recognition' process in the absence of meaningful and good faith engagement of recognition processes by the US federal government.

## 5

## Radical convergence across diversity: intersecting theories and food movement tensions in a time of racial reckoning

### 5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I combine traditions of theory (from intersectional Marxism, the Black radical tradition, Indigenous resurgence, and anarchism) and consider their relations to various sectors of social movements around food and farming, in order to unpack the differences that confront convergence. The social change traditions I leverage are simultaneously theoretical and based in social movements; that is, the theories often exist in parallel to the movements in question (for example, Black agrarianism in relation to the Black radical tradition). While theories emerge from movements and simultaneously movements are inspired by theories, I have elected a formal structure here of presenting first theory, then practice. In actuality, theory and movement fields overlap. Also, as *movement-theories/theories-in-movement* these four fields have historical and conceptual overlaps, having evolved relationally as intersecting theories/movements, from gestation, growth and development, to maturity.

Considering the diversity of marginalized sectors and theories in their specificity, and seeking to address them relationally, I am motivated in this chapter by Coulthard and Simpson's (2016: 250-251) line of questioning:

In what ways can and do marginalized subjects and communities work across their micro-specificities to align more effectively against macro-structural barriers to freedom and self-determination? What is the composition of these macro-structures of exploitation and domination and what sorts of ideological attachments do they produce to blur them from view and thus

block our ability to work collectively against them? Are these structures reducible to capital, white supremacy, anti-Blackness, heterosexual and cis-male dominance, and/or the violence of the state, or is our collective unfreedom overdetermined by all of these at once and in complex ways?

Narrowing such a big inquiry to what is concretely relevant to my central research question, here I gesture towards potential responses to Coulthard and Simpson's questions by attending to how diversities play out in Californian food movements today, how they are met and negotiated, and how they are influenced by (and in turn influence) diverse social change theories. I look at my fieldwork via two interrelated, central considerations: (1) how economic class dynamics intersect with other axes of co-constitutive social relations of race, gender, generation, nationality – all axes involved in marginalization and Othering; (2) how these relations all together translate (or not) into sectors moving from objective 'classes/identities in themselves' to subjective 'classes/identities *for* themselves' with the agency and force needed to change existing social relations. Within these two considerations, I pay attention to dynamics of assimilation, valorization, and especially the creation of bigger 'we's' involved in differencing. These considerations, as well as attention to how movements-as-theorists themselves view them, historically and in my fieldwork, form the chapter's use in helping me answer my research questions. Furthermore, I seek to understand all of the above within a Gramscian view of the 'integral state' (see Bosteels 2014, Gramsci 1971, Humphrys 2018), wherein state apparatuses themselves move in dialectical articulation with racial and other group-structure-identity dynamics, coloniality and ongoing colonial structures, capitalism, and broader 'civil society' (including institutions and discourses). This chapter focuses mainly on the latter dynamics and structures, seeking to understand how wider shifts in politics intersect with food movement emancipatory politics, before turning in the next chapter to centre the state apparatus in analysis. The theories combined here provide a fuller picture of the racial-settler-colonial-capitalist-integral state.

After a survey of theoretical traditions relevant to the US food movement context and focus of the research, which in combination help me address the aforementioned considerations<sup>1</sup>, I shift quickly to empirical description of the dynamics among movement sectors I experienced in fieldwork. These dynamics indicate a 'racial reckoning' has been taking place among the mostly white led ecofarming sector organizations, alongside a shift towards greater visibility for BIPOC food movement sectors.

These shifts parallel – both contribute to and are reflections of – a similar shift in the integral state whereby racial justice has become a polarizing political issue – opening up space for greater convergence. This leads to a discussion of the major tensions that emerged among movements, and how these are informed by the theories covered earlier. These are tensions that emerge out of consideration #1 (class and intersecting axes of difference and marginalization) and affect the process of #2 (sectors/movements becoming ‘for themselves’) and whether this supports differencing and convergence, or not. I then discuss ‘lessons learned’ from combining the reviewed interacting theories and interacting movements, proposing five principles for (studying) convergence: (1) humility, (2) starting at the relational register but always keeping in mind the structural, (3) *explicit* dialogue on capitalism and Othering, (4) accompanying redistributive discourse with redistributive action, and (5) the generative nature of conflict. Following a description of these principles I assess what has been learned and what is left to learn in order to answer the research question. Unearthing and understanding better these tensions via both the aforementioned theoretical traditions and the perspectives of contemporary movement actors illuminates some of the dynamics involved in considerations #1 and #2, but calls into greater scrutiny the state apparatus element of the integral state. This leaves some unanswered questions as to how we should see the state as an anchor point within the constellation of power described as an integral state, in relation to emancipatory goals, and how we thus should assess movement approaches to state apparatuses. These are questions picked up more fully in Chapter 6.

### 5.1.1. Intersectional Marxisms

With these caveats and justifications, I begin with Marxism. Marxism’s general approach of ‘materialism’ – grounding analysis in empirical assessment of economic relations and the power relations appearing in them – elevates economic classes (defined as such by their collective and ongoing, dynamic relationship to the means of production) as units of analysis. This is indispensable. The standard understanding of Marxism’s claim that ‘the whole history of mankind ... has been a history of class struggles’ (Marx & Engels 1848: para. 8) may not itself describe the detailed diversity of actually-existing class positions beyond a coarse ‘workers’ versus ‘capitalists’ understanding of class conflict (for example, small business owner;



land-rich but cash-poor farmer; worker with inherited wealth). But Marxists back to Engels (1894) have concerned themselves with political actors of many stripes (including peasants and the unemployed), and useful Marxist analysis has always been ‘intersectional’ (without necessarily naming it as such), insofar as it has seen as consequential to political-economic analysis of individuals’ relationship to the means of production, *and* their participation and placement within other groups of like individuals (Bhattacharya 2017, Levien et al. 2018). Marx (1847: 79) himself sought to identify how and when economic classes develop from objective ‘classes in themselves’ to subjective ‘classes for themselves’; in this, the role of culture and other axes of difference have appeared as relevant time and again (Hall 2002). Antonio Gramsci’s (1971) prison studies of how class fractions compete on the field of the ‘integral state’ (a concept introduced in Chapter 1) to construct a ‘historic bloc’ in order to achieve hegemony (via a combination of coercion and consent), helps us to identify ‘class projects’: concerted efforts by certain classes to direct political-economic development. As E.P. Thompson (1966, 1971), Stuart Hall (2002), and others later showed, ‘culture’ in a broad sense (which includes moral economic standards and expectations, rooted in particular cultural experiences, as well as racial and ethnic-specific experiences) influences the genesis and progress of such class projects, and marks them as not *only economic* class projects. Such a ‘class projects’ (or, ‘race-class projects’) lens is helpful insofar as it calls attention to collective efforts at the political-economic level, and to struggles between classes, and alliances across class, whether consciously registered or not.

Two additional concepts are relevant to Marxism’s contribution to debates on ‘emancipation’. One is the assertion, associated with socialist movements of the Western tradition after Marx, that any social change worthy of the term revolution must necessarily entail a change in the relations of production. The wage relation and the owner/worker dichotomy must be eliminated to transition to socialism, and therefore to achieve emancipation. Many interpretations of Marx’s original philosophical (and later political) writings (e.g. Marx 1959 [1875]) agree that he emphasized the goal of eliminating all economic classes and the capitalist state itself as an element of class rule. While widely accepted by Marxist scholars *as foundational to Marxist theory*, this position *as practice or strategy* has been heavily debated by socialists, from Leninists to social democrats and anarchists.

Importantly, as we will see, such abolitionist/revolutionary goals/commitments are rarely articulated by contemporary social movements, who even while proclaiming anti-capitalism do not necessarily speak of such emancipatory horizons. The second concept is the historical claim that Othering emerges as a means of dividing the working class internally, that is, that Othering and its linked axes of marginalization (for example, racism) are artifacts of class struggle under capitalism; as with many aspects of Marxism, this claim more so comes from self-described Marxist political formations than Marxist theory per se (e.g. Socialist Alternative 2021). Even if not rooted in pure ‘theory’, such understandings have real world implications, as debates on whether racial issues can be solved by generating greater economic equality influenced Bernie Sanders’ campaigns for president, and broader US left debates (e.g. Norton & Stein 2020, Bonilla-Silva 2019: 1779).

This claim that racial inequality can be solved via a prioritized focus on class is questioned by theorists of ‘intersectionality’. While intersectionality is a contested and multivalent term, I bring it in here firstly for its recognition that economic class is not *the only* or necessarily *the most important* factor in political-economic dynamics. Intersectionality ‘both notices and contends with the realities of multiple inequalities as it thinks about “the interaction of” those inequalities in a way that captures the distinctive dynamics at their multidimensional interface’ (MacKinnon 2013: 1019). Recognizing multiple sources of oppression, marginalization, and inequality, intersectionality theory emphasizes the simultaneously *independent* nature of factors like race, gender, or national origin – *and* their combination (or ‘intersection’) in practice, whereby an individual’s multiple statuses, classes, or conditions might generate a multitude of political-economic positions or outcomes. From this view, Othering *may* indeed serve to divide workers, but (for example) sexism and racism may also have their own authentic, independent lives among workers (and structures of power) that is not reducible to an effect of owner class elite hegemony. Importantly, historical-materialist analyses of intersectional ‘class and identity’ dynamics are encouraged to be ‘dialectical’, to see ‘how working classes are constituted in and through (i.e. internally related to) multiple social differences’ (McNally 2015: 131) and how relations operate within a social reality whole (McNally 2017). For example, much of social reproduction theory has addressed gender and family relations as historic sites of inequality and oppression, *and* how these relations intersect with the

development of capitalism and capitalist production (see edited volume Bhattacharya 2017).

Hence, intersectionality demands attention to multiple axes of difference and domination in any particular setting, and to the layering of oppressions, and therefore emphasizes the various *internal* group stratifications that members face within the working classes. In short, the best intersectionality theory is in dialogue with Marxism's attention to capitalism. The Marxist assumption that the working class is a collective protagonist of progressive social change still holds for such intersectionality theorists; indeed, proto-progenitors and early coiners of the term 'identity politics', the Combahee River Collective (1977: 212), were self-consciously vocal socialists. As they asserted, 'the liberation of all oppressed peoples necessitates the destruction of the political-economic systems of capitalism and imperialism as well as patriarchy' (213). Reacting to their treatment within the white-dominated women's movement, Combahee's members understood their oppression as Black women in the US as not equivalent to either the generic gendered oppression of women or the racialized oppression of Blacks. By leaning on layered personal experiences, intersectionality theories emphasized that internal-to-group differences – like racial difference within a feminist women's group – are often quite consequential to outcomes of emancipatory organizing. As such, we can imagine how the same might appear in food movements, for example, a stratification of power along lines of age in a farmers group, or gender marginalization within a multi-ethnic urban farming coalition.

Another insight for more intersectional theorists is the nonlinearity of politics and identity. For example, racially motivated white workers may defend a billionaires' worldview against political changes that might better support the working class; the phenomenon of 'Black faces in high places' (such as political office) has been necessary and useful at times, but has also proven insufficient for securing full Black liberation (Yamahtta-Taylor 2015); similarly, queer inclusion in the US military has done little to end homophobia (or militarism) at large (Conrad 2010), and so on. Non-liberal intersectional theory does not assume that belonging to a particular group (whether economic class or otherwise) translates automatically to a political position supportive of that group as a whole, or that having a particular social position delimits one's revolutionary potential.<sup>2</sup> This contrasts to orthodox Marxism's focus on a prioritized and elevated *proletarian* protagonist as the proper revolutionary subject (Brass 2017), a tendency

more attributable to Marxist political movements than their leading theorists like Marx himself (see Shanin 2018). As Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm (1996: 42) reminds us: ‘The political labour and socialist movements were not, ever, anywhere, movements essentially confined to the proletariat in the strict Marxist sense.’ The intersectional view better matches historical evidence.<sup>3</sup> Although orthodox (in the sense of proletarian-exceptionalist) Marxism may not be taken up much in contemporary academic research, it remains influential on some ‘class-first’ elements of contemporary socialist movements, who repeat some of the claims of influential Marxists like Hobsbawm who, in his (1996: 43) critique of ‘identity politics’ stated clearly that ‘the Left cannot base itself on identity politics.’ More recently, the Left pundit Chris Hedges (2018: para. 3) berated the ‘bankruptcy of the American Left’ and how ‘seduced by the culture wars and identity politics, [it] largely ignores the primacy of capitalism and the class struggle’. Such perspectives call for rejecting identity (that is, positions of difference) as an organizing principle, prioritizing instead what Hobsbawm (1996: 43) claims are (or should be) the Left’s supposedly ‘universal’ aims.<sup>4</sup> But as the previous discussion of cultural and intersectional Marxism shows (including the early work of Thompson [1966, 1971] and Hall [2002]), identity and (economic) class are placed in false opposition, as ‘identity’-based struggles are also class struggles, generating (potentially) greater shifts towards socialist affinities, while narrowly class-focused politics are likely to alienate those whose identities and group positions (that is, as Others) have provided them a personal account of injustice that is far from ‘universal’.

In sum, socialist or otherwise anti-capitalist intersectionality promotes attention to multiple axes of stratification and harm, in society at large, at (inter)personal levels, and within emancipatory movements themselves – all helpful pointers in addressing emancipatory food movement convergence.

### 5.1.2. Black radical tradition(s)

Among components of radical, anti-capitalist theory that shape radical food movement efforts to change the food system, Marxism and intersectionality theory have evolved in conversation and debate with a broad ‘Black radical tradition’, or BRT. As developed in Cedric Robinson’s pioneering study *Black Marxism* (2000 [1983]), the BRT is not a simple outgrowth of Marxism or a complete rejection of it. Like the interaction of

Marxism and intersectionality itself, BRT has formed and continues to develop in productive tension among various radical traditions. From Robinson, we might take up a couple of points that mark the BRT as distinct in its conceptual and historical treatment of capitalism – and capitalism’s potential undoing. First is Robinson’s unpacking of the pre-global-colonization period, wherein he shows the racialized roots of the transition from feudalism to capitalism, with racialization shaping economies and social relations *within Europe*, between peoples and ethnicities which today might all be called ‘white’. In this unpacking, Robinson effectively argues for viewing capitalism *as racial capitalism*: that we cannot see capitalism and racism as independent forces, but rather interlinked logics and forces of power. I find Fred Moten’s (2018a) description of the relationship as ‘asymptotic’ to be helpful: although they veer towards each other, race and class dynamics never completely overlap.<sup>5</sup>

The BRT also has its own *internal* divisions and (hopefully) productive tensions, as in the more recent school of conceptual thought from Black studies naming itself ‘Afropessimism’. Afropessimism insists on a *more* independent life for racism, specifically its anti-Black element. Positing this anti-Blackness as an ontological condition of *all* human life (indeed that the category of ‘the human’ is predicated on its negation of the Black), Afropessimism pushes against theories of ‘racial capitalism’ insofar as the latter encourage readings of anti-Black racism as epiphenomenal of capitalism, or tied to it. A relatively accessible representative of Afropessimism is the 2020 book of the same name by its figurehead Frank Wilderson III. The Afropessimist tradition is hotly debated. Racial justice movement scholar-elder Angela Davis (2018) has raised concern about the political ramifications of Afropessimism’s ‘anti-Blackness’ on non-solidarity between Black and non-Black people of color. Other (and younger) Black scholars of feminism, anti-colonialism, and abolition have also offered critiques (McCarthy 2020, Mitchell 2020, Okoth 2020, Olaloku-Teriba 2018: 96), expressing concerns (among others) that ‘theories of “anti-blackness”, specifically those rooted in Afro-pessimism, are predicated on a theoretical shift away from relational social theory to identitarian essentialism which obscures, rather than illuminates, the processes of racialisation which undergird racial oppression.’

In positioning anti-Blackness as a central logic of society, not linked firmly to economic class or capitalism, Afropessimism remains pessimistic about prospects for emancipation: overcoming capitalism will not address

structural anti-Blackness, it claims. Its position of critique refuses to offer solutions to supposedly universal and ontological anti-Blackness, nor do its most known proponents seem to find it necessary to offer society solutions. (Some of its readers, however, are certainly suturing its critiques to proposals for liberatory action, so this statement is not to dismiss Afropessimism but rather to point to its more likely (non)enactments.) Even less does the theory speak to non-Black audiences as potential allies in Black liberation. As Olaloku-Teriba (2018: 96) notes, this stems from the concept's 'exceptionalisation of a thing referred to as "anti-blackness" [and] ... the mobilisation of this charge against "non-black people of colour" who attempt to draw comparison between black struggles and their own'. As such, Afropessimist theory – as outlined by its most well-known figure Wilderson – is challenging to research such as this, informed as the research is by a desire for mass forms of change and movement solidarity and growth among many oppressed sectors. From Afropessimism it might be usefully taken that, due to the 'afterlives of slavery' (as first developed in the work of Saidiya Hartman), anti-Blackness is a *qualitatively* distinct form of racism, which (especially in the US context) requires particular attention in movements for food justice (see also Bledsoe 2019). And as an extension of the broader BRT, Afropessimism emphasizes the protagonism of Black people in social struggles at large. Connecting this protagonism to wider struggles is where I find more benefit in the 'Black Optimism' of Moten who – although he shares much with Afropessimism's analysis and is careful not to oppose his work to Afropessimism – has argued (2018b, timemark 29:00),

We [Black people] need to renew our habits of assembly and recognize that we're part of a common project and that project has been given to us by our ancestors, along with the responsibility to pass that project onto our children. And that this is not just about the redemption of Black people or the liberation of Black people. It's at this stage now, it's about the continued capacity for the earth to carry human existence and our tradition has something specific and important and indispensable to say about that.

Returning to Robinson's project, another key task of his *Black Marxism* was to show the wide prevalence of constant resistance by enslaved Africans in the Americas. His coverage of armed rebellion throughout the continent, from Brazil to the eastern United States, focused particularly on marronage – communities of the formerly enslaved who escaped and created their own hidden, fortified, self-reliant settlements on the outskirts of

colonization's then-extant edges. Often, these maroon communities also involved Indigenous people, fighting off the advancing line of colonial dispossession. In fact, some Indigenous theorists also point to maroon communities as theoretical anchor points for their own models of resistance and emancipation (Simpson 2017: 17-18). Robinson, and others since (Wright 2020, Bledsoe 2017, Roberts 2015), call up the figure of the maroon to indicate a fundamental escape strategy among those who were never included as equals in political and social life, and who (arguably) are still to this day not included.

This tradition of marronage links to more recent theorizing and explication of US 'Black agrarianism', as in the work of Monica White (2018). White explores the theoretical basis she found in the writing and action of Black agrarians from Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver to Fannie Lou Hamer's 'Freedom Farmer' cooperative and Detroit's modern-day urban farmers. She shows that a twin focus on 'collective agency and community resilience' constitute much of the agrarian efforts of the BRT lineage. White (2018: 7) argues that we can speak of collective agency and community resilience when 'social actors' ability to create and enact behavioral options necessary to affect their political future' is leveraged to plan for and respond to various threats through 'community-based forms of social organization' (ibid: 8). White proposes we pay attention to forms of resistance that are 'constructive, in the sense that the aggrieved actively build alternatives to existing political and economic relationships' (ibid: 6). In this she draws attention to three main strategies for collective agency and community resilience: '(1) commons as praxis, (2) prefigurative politics, and (3) economic autonomy. These strategies, while not mutually exclusive, encompass the ideological-social, political, and economic aspects of community reliance and community determination as strategies for freedom and liberation' (ibid: 8).

Collective agency is especially key for individuals from marginalized groups (for whom individual agency is more delimited), while collectivizing any and all resources (including political agency) helps strengthen the positions of individuals involved and to effect larger social change. Community resilience is brought about via collective agency, but also via investment in a productive base of resources – hence Black agrarianism's historical emphasis on '40 acres and a mule', collective land projects, cooperatives, and sharing economies of food (Figueroa 2015, Nembhard

2014). Hence, escape (via marronage) from bondage and from adverse incorporation into the mainstream political-economy, and the prefigurative creation of moral economies that strengthen collective agency and community resilience and capacity to exert political/social power are key contributions of BRT to our understanding of Black liberation struggle specifically, and emancipatory politics more broadly.

### 5.1.3. Indigenous theory

Indigenous struggles in so-called North America and the theorizations of Indigenous people on that landmass are also potent ingredients in any understanding of emancipatory rural or agrarian politics in the US. As Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2009: 11) says in introducing a special issue on ‘critical Indigenous theory’, ‘critical Indigenous studies as a mode of analysis can offer accounts of the contemporary world of Indigenous peoples that centre [Indigenous] ways of knowing and theorizing’. I focus within this larger body of theory on Indigenous *resurgence* theories, which are focused on questions of emancipation, by, from, and for Indigenous people. Based on my reading of resurgence scholars and my fieldwork, I think of *decolonization* as the deconstructive principle and *indigenizing* the constructive principle within a broader process of Indigenous resurgence.<sup>6</sup> Like the BRT, Indigenous theory emerges from particular experience and are therefore not unproblematically generalizable, or equivalently applied to non-Indigenous groups. Still, I believe this body of theory can be relevant beyond Indigenous people themselves, and particularly to this research, given the relevance of the Indigenous experience to US history and culture, Othering processes, and articulations of emancipatory politics.

Recognizing the diversity of Indigenous thought, experience, and practice, one common thread among *critical* or *radical* Indigenous theorists is an emphasis on relationality, or a relational ontology (also discussed in Chapter 3’s methodology section). All economic modes of production are premised upon relations – but what is the *quality* or *ethic* of that relation? To all the Indigenous activists I spoke to for this research, the normative ethic is one of obligation to *all* relatives.<sup>7</sup> Two scholars from so-called Canada (Leanne Simpson [2017] and Glen Coulthard [2014]; Simpson and Coulthard 2016) have described this as ‘grounded normativity’: the norms that stem from belonging to particular lands and places, which oblige one to protect that land, and all relations within it, from harm. Romero-Briones et al. (2020) describe a ‘kincentric ecology’ practiced by California’s



Native tribes. This land/place-based ethic points to two other contributions of Indigenous theory: (1) understanding land as a fundamental factor of life, upon which all political-economies (and what Marxists would call societal ‘superstructures’) are based, and (2) the non-reducibility of injustice to economic class considerations.

In my reading of the above scholars, as well as Romero-Briones et al. (2020), Estes (2018), Corn tassel (2012), and Morrison (2008), Indigenous theory contains a *qualitatively* different set of considerations in addition to Black agrarianism’s practical consideration of land-as-means-to-collective-agency-and-community-resilience, including a greater emphasis on more-than-human nature in reaching an ethical imperative of being-on-land-in-order-to-fulfil-relational-obligations. It moves land access politics from mere material to spiritual. It points to a non-possessive politics of belonging, wherein the active practice of land relations is central, and ‘ownership’ specifics are structurally important derivations of these first principles of belonging.<sup>8</sup> Still, the ‘Land Back’ movement makes clear that ‘decolonization’ is indeed a process that demands change in (colonial) land ownership and use dynamics (see <https://landback.org/manifesto/>, and Pieratos et al, 2020; Ramírez 2020). Since settler colonization is a continuous, present process (entailing *ongoing* dispossession, see Wolfe 2006, Kauanui 2016), *decolonization* is about more than epistemological or cultural recognition (Tuck & Yang 2012). It is about acknowledging harms from historical and current dispossession, and making physical changes so that Indigenous people can access land and revitalize relations.<sup>9</sup>

Although Indigenous theory is critical of capitalism, its critiques are not equivalent to Marxism. Indigenous theory has not always been productively engaged by Marxists, indeed has been antagonistic to it at times, as evidenced in Ward Churchill’s (1983) edited book on Indigenous critiques of Marxism’s perceived determinism, scientism, and industrialism. Such tensions are still seen in dismissive articles that reiterate Marxist ontologies (e.g. Rose 2016). As Indigenous Marxists, Estes and Dunbar-Ortiz (2020) remind us: ‘Marxists in Anglo North America—with some very important exceptions—have historically failed to accurately tell the history of the United States to the rest of the world because they have frequently elided the question of settler colonialism.’ Prominent academic Marxists work to deny Marx’s original (potential) oversights and defend Marxism as theory (Bellamy Foster et al. 2020), seemingly unwilling to humble their intellectual and political tradition to Indigenous peoples. Yet looking back to the

righteousness of Marx's theory does little to alter the conditions in which active Marxism-inspired *social formations* push agendas and ideas opposed to radical Indigenous thought and demands. In treating land and dispossession not only as an economic issue, but broadly as implicating identity, culture, ecology, and forms of human governance, Indigenous theory counterbalances the developmentalism/economism that still lingers in some Marxism, especially in its praxis of socialist movements and parties. In politics with greater Marxist and Indigenous political influence (for example, Bolivia and Ecuador; see Lalander & Lembke 2018), these ideas show up as more in conflict than in the US, where neither tendency is even near-hegemonic. Thankfully there *have* been productive debates between the traditions in theory and practice (e.g. Mauro 2013; Tóth 2019; Balthaser 2016; Estes 2018), which are worth engaging towards movement convergence on issues like extractive industry and local food systems.

Indigenous theory speaks to a centuries-long struggle against colonization not simply as a struggle *against* colonization-as-element-of-capitalist modernity, but as a *continuity* of cultural tradition and place-based belonging – an assertion of Indigenous pride and strength rather than a mere reaction to an imposition (Corntassel 2021). As such, *resurgence itself* (of Indigenous ways of being) is a prime vector of emancipatory action. In this way, Indigenous critical theory harmonizes with more autonomist Marxist (Holloway 2016), Zapatista (Fitzwater 2019: 31–46), and Freirian pedagogical (Mueller 2012) emphasis on the generative character of humanity's essential dignity. Black radical theorist Fred Moten (2019) also shares this value of seeing peoples' struggles as emerging from *our* power and soul (a focus on 'what we do'), not as mere reaction to the agency of oppressors ('what they do').

#### 5.1.4. Bringing anarchism back in (and lessons taken)

Anarchism as theory has lurked in the background of my discussions thus far. Now that I have elaborated the above theories – as relevant to my analysis in this chapter – I would like to offer some reflections on how they relate to the anarchist lens (or at least, to my interpretation thereof). First, it should be clear that anarchism shares revolutionary Marxism's socialist aspirations to the revolutionary transformation of capitalist social relations into a new totality that is neither capitalist nor limited by the machinations of capitalist-dominated state apparatuses. In this way, anar-

chism shares revolutionary sentiments with BRT's concern with total social transformation and with Indigenous resurgence theory's aspirations to overcome colonization and to actively *decolonize* society (over the long haul); see Corntassel 2021, Lewis 2017. Anarchism also parallels BRT and Indigenous theories in their criticality directed at economically-reductionist tendencies in Marxism (perhaps these attacks are at times against strawmen, but such reductionism appears at least in some Marxist-inspired social formations, if not Marxist theory itself). Instead, it ontologically prioritizes relations of domination *in all guises* – and this fits well with intersectionality's non-privileging of economic class. In both the maroon examples, and in Indigenous resurgence's overlap/inspiration with anti-fossil-fuel struggles conducted via direct action, we see reflections of anarchism's emphasis on non-mediated forms of political action which are simultaneously attacking formations of the opposition (capital, state, colonizer, enslaver), while building capacity and moral economies among the excluded, marginalized, Othered. Collective agency and community resilience shares anarchism's interest in prefiguration and community-level action, but it is quiet on the role of direct, obstreperous (and some might argue implicitly violent) action against class/identity antagonists in achieving emancipatory goals. But all share anarchism's inclination towards direct action that constitutes political subjects, prioritized above mediated forms of politics, or 'politics of distraction' (Corntassel 2012), that reproduce and strengthen institutions of social control and bring Othered populations into them, rather than strengthening alternatives to those institutions.

Taken together, these theories provide *analysis* of how society and its structures function, and *strategies* or proposals for emancipatory politics. Regarding analysis, an accord between all these theories is that economic class is but one of many axes of marginalization, domination, and stratification, and that (from different perspectives, with different focuses) convergence processes must therefore not attempt to subsume one to another. Regarding strategies, they support differencing across axes of domination, combining attention to capitalism's dynamics and specificities of Othering and marginalization within these. Tensions, of course, remain, since which axis is prioritized is regularly debated, as seen in leftist debates regarding identity politics (Bonilla-Silva 2019). Still, regardless of these debates, agrarian political economy analysis continues to require Marxism's four main questions on the social relations of production, as described by

Bernstein (2010): Who owns what? Who does what? Who gets what? What do they do with the surplus (from production)?

Agrarian political economy's four questions lead us to the strategic/proposal aspects of these theories. For one, the outcome of these questions weighs on analyses of who can be part of a counter-hegemonic bloc regarding the relations of production, and therefore strategies of *who to converge*. In addition, Indigenous resurgence theory emphasizes the continued centrality of land as the fundamental basis for production, while the Black radical tradition in its focus on collective agency and community resilience strategies emphasizes land and resources arrayed in some form of autonomous production, to build power. All of these traditions theoretically are opposed to capitalism, but not all in the same way. While Marxist and anarchist opposition to capitalism largely developed through a worker versus capitalist social movement struggle, which was largely based in white worker segments in Europe and settler-colonial countries in its earlier stages of development, BRT and Indigenous theory are antagonistic to capitalism from social positions as centuries-long targets of racialized oppression by the colonial and capitalist state.

Thus we can expect tensions among US food movements along three general lines, based in individuals' and sectors' historical, real, perceived, and hoped for relations to: (1) capitalist social relations, including class position; (2) relationships to the state; and (3) conceptions of race and other axes of oppression, and how they are perceived to relate to emancipation, class, and state dynamics. For instance, we can expect that certain emancipatory views that promote assimilation into capitalist-state relations undermine revolutionary tendencies, as we will see in Chapter 6. Certain emancipatory strategies engage the state and are changed in the process, sometimes altering the state, sometimes reinforcing its very nature as an exclusionary, politically alienating force, or bolstering its power. Certain emancipatory views regarding race (such as Afropessimism) undermine *economic* class solidarity and convergence. Other emancipatory views of economic class-centric ideologies undermine cross-racial solidarity.

Resurgence, maroon strategies, and anarchism's focus on prefigurative politics all offer one suggested strategic path through these tensions. I focus here on the tensions, and will pick back up questions of strategy and the state in Chapter 6. Empirically my research shows that white and mainstream ecofarming sectors engage these cultural, specific, relational, disruptive, and oppositional tactics and strategies less than their BIPOC and

other counterparts (but this may be changing as these sectors are more greatly influenced by BIPOC leadership). Today's food movements maintain a contradictory transformative vision which like the radical theories seek a broad change to capitalist and colonial society, while still relying on assimilation into capitalist processes to some degree, and relying on state regulation as an occasional necessity.

Next, I introduce the food movement sectors involved in this study, some of the tensions within and between them, and how some of my interviewees are navigating these tensions, before discussing these dynamics in light of the theoretical insights reviewed just now, and how these contribute to our understanding of convergence amidst diversity.

## 5.2. Food movement sectors in CA

[T]he Progressive and Radical politics anchoring the world's food movements are also reflections of class interests. Practical, community and identity-based food justice alternatives and structurally-combative food sovereignty demands are political projects that express overlapping class interests expressed through the politics of food. If these interests were to converge, they might contribute significantly to the construction of a different food regime. However, in contrast to the homogenous projects on the neoliberal/reformist's agenda, the political projects of the Progressive and Radical trends are heterogeneous and fragmented. Given the political state of the left overall, this should come as no surprise. Apart from the hegemonic influence of neoliberalism, the challenge of turning 'a movement in itself' into 'a movement for itself' is complicated by the blurring of class interests with identity politics and the socio-political influence of relations of consumption vis-a-vis the relations of production. – Holt-Giménez and Shattuck 2011: 131

I begin with an overview of the landscape of food movement sectors. As this research calls for data on a diverse array of food movement sectors in order to answer my central research question, I sought to include sectors representing or characterized by different ethnic, racial, and economic class constituents, as well as differences within structures of Othering. This diversity allowed me to assess movement sectors in tension; how the objectively co-constitutive relations of class, race, nationality gender and generation are actually translated to coalitions (objective and subjective);

and if and how sectors transform via their work from an objectively existing 'class in itself' (and 'identities in themselves') to class/identity for itself; and lastly, from this, how such dynamics alter social structures of agrarian and political reality.

I hope the section conveys some of the overlaps between sectors (historical and contemporary), which are visible in relations between individuals, groups, and the ideas they hold and promote. The reality is that social movements and movement groups have always been non-homogenous. As seen in Chapter 4's discussion of National Land for People, Black Panther Party alliances, and UFW's multiethnic solidarity campaigns, social movement organizations have been composed of people with diverse ideas, backgrounds, and theories of change for generations. Today, individuals also exhibit overlaps between sectors, like Indigenous seed saver and farmer Rowen White, who is well-known in the eco-farming sector, but whose work centrally concerns Indigenous resurgence and food sovereignty.<sup>10</sup> This doesn't mean that movements have gotten along well, across various lines of difference. On the contrary, the history is replete with drama stemming from these diversities. But efforts to make solidarity across lines is a constant feature of social struggle. We should start by acknowledging this, before advancing to any presentation (such as this) that categorizes social movement participants. The reader is encouraged to keep in mind the heuristic value of dividing complex societies into analytically separate parts, knowing that such divisions are never fully accurate.

I describe food movements in California as containing, for the purposes of this chapter, the following sectors: non-governmental organizations (NGOs) promoting ecological agriculture and representing 'small' or 'family' farmers (and individual farmers themselves); Indigenous tribes and organizations; farmworker-focused organizations; environmental justice groups; (mostly urban) food justice groups, including food banks and urban farms; agroecological research and training efforts; and funders. Many other groups might be identified (for example, 'local food' promoters; farm extension service providers) but the above are the sectors I mainly encountered and engaged in my research. In addition, I focused on groups composed of people of colour, immigrants, and those whose identities or groups have been Othered, attempting to correct for the bias towards the more well-seen elements of food movements.<sup>11</sup>

In the realm of ecofarming organizing, we see a shift (a ‘racial reckoning’) in white-led organizations towards internal discussion of racial injustice and efforts to change accordingly to act on those issues. This has coincided with a greater attention (from white and more privileged sectors) to (and thus visibility of) BIPOC and Othered sectors of food movements. This shift, I argue, is related to – and perhaps a reflection of – longer-term and larger-scale shifts in the ‘integral state’ as white supremacy’s hold on both civil society and state apparatuses has loosened. I believe that this shift has emerged from a combination of: (1) BIPOC and marginalized sectors’ generations-deep assertions of dignity and rights against white societal exclusion, including through callouts, protests, disruption, and cultural valorization<sup>12</sup>; (2) BIPOC’s greater valorization through assimilation (especially as leaders in capitalist industry, NGOs, and government, resulting in racial diversification of elite class segments); (3) a multitude of previous efforts of differencing – for examples the earlier cases of National Land for People, the HEAL Food Alliance, Food Policy Councils and other spaces where BIPOC have articulated larger ‘we’s’ with whites; and (4) The Trump effect – that is, that in times of high racial polarization, whites are more compelled to choose sides. This change in the integral state towards awareness of the *racialized* basis of society and food systems (that is, one form of Othering) has opened space for greater convergence with regards to *race* (but not necessarily as much in regards to other axes of Othering along lines of migrant/citizen, female/male, queer sexualities/heteronormativity, and so on; then again, there seems to be movement towards a wider uptake in mainstream culture of critical awareness of socio-political injustices).

#### 5.2.1. Ecofarming, racial tensions, and contemporary changes in concern for “justice”

Likely the most visible, well-known sector is the ecofarming sector. Some of its leading organizations include the Community Alliance with Family Farms (CAFF), California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF, the farmer-led organic certifier begun in California in 1973), the Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems (CASFS), and the Ecological Farming Association, organizers of the popular annual EcoFarm Conference. These decades-old organizations, and newer ones like the California Climate and Agriculture Network (CalCAN), have been founded and run by and composed of white people, mostly – an issue already established in

research as consequential for movement convergence (Bradley & Herrera 2015). In addition to their work of providing education, practical support to food producers (for example, on-farm workshops), and spaces for ecological farming communities of practice, CAFF, CalCAN, and CCOF also work on policy advocacy. The ecofarming organizations named here for the most part seek to be directed by farmers themselves, or more precisely, farm-owners/operators (excepting CASFS, which is an educational institution for farm apprenticeships and university students and is beholden to a wider constituency): these organizations seek to constitute farmers as a class and represent their interests politically. For instance, CAFF's mission is 'to build sustainable food and farming systems through policy advocacy and on-the-ground programs that create more resilient family farms, communities, and ecosystems' (CAFF 2021).

Over many years, and especially in recent decades, such organizations have faced ongoing critique from those who have felt excluded from their visions and practices. Particularly, people of color have pushed against their exclusion and mistreatment – from 'microaggressions' towards BIPOC programme participants and staff to structural barriers of white-dominated Boards of Directors – and sought various means of rectification. Confronting unequal access, resourcing, and voice, and opposing the ways in which Othering takes place within movement spaces, have been key approaches taken by marginalized people themselves (and at times people of other backgrounds acting in solidarity). Based on statements I have heard in conversations at EcoFarm conferences (2007–2009, 2011, 2013, 2018–2020) and the Celebrating Women's Leadership in Food symposium (2019), as well as talks with CASFS staff and apprentices in 2009, 2011, and in 2017, the following are some of the (paraphrased) questions that have been asked in recent years of white-led ecofarming organizations: Where are the farmworker voices in farmer(owner)-dominated spaces? Why are there no Indigenous people on panels about ecological land management at the EcoFarm conference? Why is there no discussion in organic farm training programmes about the Black experience in agriculture? Why can't farmers of colour present on a conference panel about, say, seed saving, using their expertise *as farmers*, instead of consistently being relegated to a track on 'justice' issues facing people of colour?

In addition, debates continue about the 'conventionalization' of ecological farming (particularly organic-certified farms). While this debate appeared twenty years ago, and continues in the academic literature (see



Guthman 2004; Allen & Kovach 2000; Schor & Fitzmaurice 2017), it is also a lively one within movement spaces as well. Should Earthbound Farms (one of California's largest organic producers, at 45,000 acres) be allowed to align itself with the small/ecological farm movement? How should movement elements with a market focus (like CCOF and its foundation arm) address the bifurcation of the market, wherein corporate and input-substitution organic farming continues growing, while the direct markets preferred by smaller growers reach saturation?<sup>13</sup> Critiques of the eco-farming sector for failing to make truly transformative change in the food system continue to be of relevance, and to be taken up by diverse movement organizations.<sup>14</sup> This issue has now 'diversified' as well, as BIPOC/minoritized communities also question the limitations of the organic market and the ideal of small, independent family farms as well. One Asian-American farmer, Aaron Dinwoodie of Feral Heart Farm, insisted that 'diversification needs to include at least a critique of conventional business models'. He told me:

As an Asian farmer interested in Asian diasporic crops and foodways, I find the conventionalization of ecological farming, especially Organic, to essentially marginalize diasporic food crops in general, or tokenize them at best with "discoveries" of "new superfoods". It will only be through small-scale, diversified farms working within a network of cooperative economic models, both with vendors and customers, that we will have any chance of subverting the dominant capitalist farming business model to truly transform our food pathways.<sup>15</sup>

Chris Newman, a Black and Indigenous farmer on the East Coast has controversially argued (2019: para. 7-8):

As much as I like farmers markets, the amount of resources that small farmers pour into them is terribly misdirected if we're serious about mounting a real challenge to the conventional food system. The cultural power of farmers markets is a symptom of what's fundamentally wrong with sustainable/regenerative agriculture: veneration of the small family farm. It's the sacred cow of American cultural identity dating back at least to Thomas Jefferson's dream of a nation of yeoman farmers.

Upon previous critiques of the conventionalized organic model sits this critique that the purported 'small farm alternative' has likewise failed to affect substantive change. Instead, Newman advocates more collective

forms of farm organization and economy, resolving ‘to evolve our business into a farming collective ... with a particular focus on providing opportunities of ownership for people traditionally denied such roles in agriculture: people of color, LGBT folks, and women, in particular’ (2019: para. 26). The aforementioned Asian-American farmer agreed, arguing that ‘collectivizing resources, sharing costs’ would be the only way for his kind of ecological farming (focusing on less common, specialty Asian crops) to succeed.<sup>16</sup> The push for regeneration by diversifying farming systems, in this perspective, is accompanied by a push for diversifying the social nature of that farming, and helping that farming succeed through greater economic collectivity.

The above hints at how preexisting food movement tensions have been shaped and re-formed by recent, broader societal events surrounding racial injustice and related political discord. The election of Donald Trump and resurgence of rightwing political power, with its concomitant rhetoric of racial resentment, xenophobia, and authoritarianism, has put progressive sectors in the food movement on edge. At the same time that so-called ‘Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion’ (DEI) initiatives have expanded across organizations and institutional spaces like universities, often precipitated by long-term critiques similar to the aforementioned, white-led organizations are facing ever-more stark contrasts between reproducing white supremacy and being ‘good white people’. The fact that ‘white supremacy’ is a term in greater circulation is itself an indication that the stakes are higher for addressing racial injustices (in particular) in food movements (Google 2021). CAFF (2021) has stated on its website that it recognizes these stakes:

We recognize the historic and lasting inequities in the California food and farming system. In order to achieve justice, we believe farmers of color, and other historically oppressed people, including immigrant, indigenous and women farmers, should have the opportunity to create and participate in a food and agriculture system that aligns with their needs, values, identities, knowledge systems, and communities. We commit to advancing racial, gender, and environmental justice in our larger systems, as well as in our own workplace because it is morally right and this diversity yields enhanced creativity, problem-solving as well as system-level resilience and wisdom.

Greater attacks on marginalized groups by elites in power, and more visible agitation for better treatment by marginalized peoples within non-elite

spaces and organizations has generated an uptick in interest by white-led organizations to explore, attempt, or perform anti-racist solidarity, even if they are – as white-led organizations – ‘swimming up a powerful stream of distrust’.<sup>17</sup> Alongside this has been a shift towards proclaiming principles of organizing *alongside*, rather than *for*, marginalized groups of all sorts. As a ‘movement within the movement’, and as I will describe in the following paragraphs, various justice-focused efforts have begun in the past 10 years seeking to democratize ecofarming organizations and bring them into greater alignment with BIPOC and BIPOC’s articulated needs and demands.<sup>18</sup>

DEI-type initiatives have shown up in various guises. CASFS crafted new modules on racial justice and brought in more diverse guest teachers for farmer-apprentices; its ‘Farmers of the Global Majority’ apprentice alumni group created a scholarship fund for BIPOC applicants.<sup>19</sup> EcoFarm formed a ‘Diversity Advisory Group’ (DAG) tasked since 2016 with attending to diversity issues in the yearly conference planning. A handful of interviewees – even some long-skeptical of EcoFarm’s potential to become truly inclusive – remarked positively of its most recent conferences (‘it has really come along’ said one farmer of colour), indicating that the DAG has managed to effect some real change.<sup>20</sup> CalCAN formed a racial equity committee, but also revised its criteria for what issues they (as a coalition of organizations) can sign on to. Renata Brillinger, Director of CalCAN, explains that ‘until recently, we, by agreement in our coalition, did not take any positions on social justice issues unless they were at the nexus of both climate change and agriculture. That’s just an agreement we made because we’re asking coalition members to do this on top of their work.’ But this became ‘untenable’, and since changing their criteria they signed onto a bill supporting the establishment of a task force on reparations in California. ‘That was a brand-new thing for us to consider, because we think there’s an agriculture nexus in taking up reparations. It’s going to have to touch on land theft and so on.’<sup>21</sup>

The Biodynamic Association (another white-led ecofarming organization) began inviting BIPOC keynote speakers on issues such as Indigenous sovereignty, against pushback from some of its members (its former director also sat on the DAG, and shared that the Association saw less organizational pushback resulting from its DEI efforts than DAG did). CAFF has pivoted to hire Latinx organizers to specifically serve Latinx farmers, in regions where Latinx-run operations are more common. CAFF

has also held internal discussions about serving ‘equity’ issues, and its director Paul Towers participated, along with other staff, in the multi-ethnic, racial-justice focused agroecology encounters I organized alongside BIPOC-led organizations. Paul said of CAFF’s changing towards racial equity:

We've often overlooked historically underserved farmers, farmers of color, more limited resource farmers. How much do we have a responsibility and commitment to serving those farmers? Right now there's a lot of energy and interest in putting more focus there. But that hasn't necessarily been historically the case. It's also a bit of a reflection of the current demographics of farming in California. We're more than three-quarters white farmers still. So yeah, those are some of the things that we're overall wrestling with as an organization, that we're collectively pretty excited about digging into.<sup>22</sup>

Many groups have increased their willingness to make statements of solidarity with Black Lives Matter, especially in 2020. In addition, new farmer networks formed with specific focus on equity issues, most notably, the BIPOC-led California Farmer Justice Collaborative (CFJC).<sup>23</sup> In 2016 Caiti Hachmyer, the white female manager of Red-H Farm in Sebastopol, founded Celebrating Women’s Leadership in Food, which hosts a yearly symposium focused on women’s leadership in food movements, but which has built a consciously multi-ethnic, multi-sectoral’ organizing structure with Black, Latinx, Indigenous and queer leadership, and has always focused on discussing issues of racial equity. Speaking to the issue of moving *beyond* statements in support of racial equity, Caiti says:

[I]t's a dangerous difference because centering that language and not actually centering that work reinforces a lot of the problems, right? I think that that's to me essentially the trajectory of the symposium. There's a difference between asking women of color to speak, and then having women of color on the leadership team developing it. And those are two different things. The first of which is totally well intentioned, but is not necessarily actually shifting the way the work is done and moving things forward from a movement perspective.<sup>24</sup>

The same trajectories of acknowledging structural harms and incorporating BIPOC voices and perspectives can also be seen in some governmental spaces. California as a state has begun to admit to its role in histories of Othering: in 2019 Gavin Newsom became the first Governor of the state to acknowledge the state’s genocide of Indigenous people. CDFA

has acknowledged past harms by its agency's treatment of BIPOC. Notably, the CDFA was pushed (via legislation the CFJC organized and advocated for) to hire a 'Farmer Equity Advisor', and to complete a report in 2020, which outlined various challenges facing 'socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers' (a legislative euphemism for BIPOC producers), and means of addressing these via CDFA's existing programmes and processes (see CDFA 2020, Spitler 2018).

As shown in examples of ecofarming sectors stepping up (especially following the election of Trump) to address and mitigate (internal) racism and the reproduction of structural inequalities in how they pursue regeneration goals, we see that changes in the society-wide conditions of hegemony in the 'integral state' can contribute to convergence processes. That is, while white supremacist forms of political economy maintain a hegemonic position structurally, the battle over the 'commonsense' understanding of white supremacy and its value has deepened, marking the consent-based aspects of hegemony as more so contested and unstable. The great prevalence and impact of recent upheaval in US society over racial injustice attests to this, as a 'racial awakening'<sup>25</sup> of some sort seems to be taking place among farm-owner-oriented organizations, NGOs serving the ecofarming sector, and some government agencies, moving DEI concerns from marginal to very visible. At the same time, political-economic critiques and alternatives associated with BIPOC sectors are becoming more visible within the ecofarming sector itself, as we saw with the desire for collective rather than individualized approaches to transforming food systems towards ecological production.

### 5.2.2. Indigenous, farmworker, and environmental justice efforts

Indigenous-focused organizations and efforts, farmworker struggles for rights and resources, and environmental justice struggles against the negative impacts of food and farming systems have decades if not centuries of precedent. However, their visibility has (in differing ways) increased in recent decades, and especially in the twenty-first century. Here I introduce these sectors, and in so doing, describe their roots and their contemporary visibility within the aforementioned shift. Phruksachart (2020, para. 8) argues that '[f]or decades [left] formations have rejected radical Black and minoritized thought in favor of white-centered class reductionism, regarding POC as elements to be "included" into a multicultural fold rather

than as a transformational intellectual force,’ but the political moment indicates that perhaps this is shifting in some movement spaces.

Indigenous-based groups in California interviewed for this research include the Cultural Conservancy and the First Nations Development Institute (FNDI). Both of these groups emerged from the resurgence of Indigenous activism of the 1960s and 1970s, seen prominently in the founding of the American Indian Movement and the 1969 Occupation of Alcatraz Island (in the San Francisco Bay). These pivotal moments and organizations arguably generated a greater pan-tribal Indigenous identity and politics than had existed prior. Indigenous people, whether organized in organizations, in tribes, or as families, have always worked on issues of food, via daily life practices and struggles to maintain ways of living and livelihood in specific places – enacting ‘grounded normativity’. Much of this work has been about regaining land, retaining land, remaining on land, and working on and with the land (such as the story of the Karuk tribe mentioned in Chapter 4). Here I note that the collective agency and community resilience approach (elaborated by White 2018) applies to Indigenous strategies, and more broadly seems apt to various BIPOC sectors of the food movement, supporting as it does their pushes for recognition, redistribution, and regeneration. This contrasts with (white) ecofarming sector organizations, which largely focus on regeneration and the use of representational tactics (that is, state-focused advocacy), and less prominently seek (or utilize consistently) the strategies of commons as praxis, prefigurative politics, and economic autonomy to build collective agency and community resilience.

Natives in California historically were diverse in their food-getting, with many tribes managing landscapes over large scales (Anderson 2005, Akins & Bauer 2021). Very few were agriculturally-focused. Yet today, some tribes are reclaiming relationships to the land through gardening. Darlene Franco, chairperson of the Indigenous Wukchumni tribe in the Visalia area (Central Valley), is one interviewee who discussed this work of reconnection:

When my mother was a child and being raised, they gathered food. They went out and gathered whatever times of the year, and stored the food, whether it be acorn, whether it be berries, whatever that may be. My grandfather would go hunting. We didn’t actually farm like today’s farming way.

So, we didn't tell the plants where to grow and how to grow. We gathered wherever they were at the time of season, wherever they were growing. There came a time when farms starting to be put up, where people were starting to buy the properties that used to just be free roaming land.

So, my grandfather was no longer able to go hunt and provide for his family. My grandmother and the other ladies were not able to go gather freely their medicines and their foods. So, it forced us into assimilation and away from Native ways of eating. It also forced my grandfather to go work on ranches to provide financially for his family, forced him to live away from his family for a while. It took away his responsibilities and masculinity, his reason for being here. ...So, that happened very quickly. It tore our family apart.<sup>26</sup>

After a childhood supported by family members working in the region's agriculture and ranching operations, Darlene took note when 'people around started looking at pesticides' in farming: 'I wanted to feed my family healthier'. And so she started gardening with her family, and then learning with and alongside other local ecological farmers. Lacking a land-base on which to practice traditional food-land practices, the tribe has sought opportunities where it could: partnering with the Quakers (a Christian denomination) for decades to hold ceremony on land the Quakers 'own', building community gardens in the urban centres where many of their tribal members live, and partnering with non-Indigenous allies to develop new community infrastructures for agroecological development (discussed below). Tribes, NGOs, and individuals have advanced seed saving and sharing capacity, youth training and intergenerational mentoring projects, and manifold, personal/non-public instances of healing through reconnection to ceremony, tradition, ancestors, and place. Since colonization, diverse tactics have been pursued, including valorization of cultural assets (especially seen in efforts to hold onto and revitalize Native languages), and building collective power with other groups, Native and non-Native (Grossman 2017). They also use assimilation, as when A-dae Briones-Romero (Director of Programmes in Native Agriculture and Food Systems for FNDI) became a lawyer to fight for her tribe in court, then became a judge to try to keep Native youth out of prison.<sup>27</sup> These stories reflect a theme I saw with Indigenous action: the use of many 'tools' of social change towards dignity, resurgence, and justice.

Indigenous people and their perspectives have been more visible in recent years, as evidenced in popular food movement websites like Civil Eats, which now regularly features pieces about Indigenous food sovereignty work – a topic largely absent in the site’s first nine years from 2009–2018.<sup>28</sup> This visibility – and its link to food movements – seems at least partly due to the impact of the 2016 Standing Rock actions. Members of Bay Area urban farming organization Planting Justice (along with many other food justice activists), went to Standing Rock in solidarity, and returned committed to working with Indigenous people in their own geographic areas.<sup>29</sup> This led to projects described in Chapter 6, wherein Planting Justice has deeded a portion of land from their nursery to the Indigenous urban women-led Sogorea Te’ Land Trust. Indigenous peoples’ vanguard role in movements against the ecological suicide of fossil fuel capitalism has inspired many non-Indigenous groups (in and outside of food movements) to move towards gestures of solidarity and, to an extent, actions of decolonial repair.

As described in depth in Chapter 4, farmworker organizing goes far back in California’s history. One could argue that Native Californians’ escape attempts from Spanish Missions offers some of the first instances of worker response to exploitation. Post-colonization, and especially beginning in the post-Mexican period of the state’s history, many waves of farmworkers arrived, were exploited, and organized against that exploitation. An especially notable upsurge was seen in the 1930s, as a result of increasing communist organizing and influence (Montenegro et al. 2021, Olmsted 2015), but this was beat back with racialized Othering and farmworkers failed to make substantial gains from the 1930s to the 1960s. Then came the notable success of the UFW in the 1960s/70s. Similar to the influence of AIM on wider Indigenous resurgence, the UFW’s success provided the foundation for many subsequent efforts in the farmworker sector, as well as influencing the broader ‘Chicano’ movement (Muñoz 1989). Because of their early opposition to pesticide usage, farmworker organizations are historically linked to environmental justice campaigns and groups. In fact, CAFF’s late 1970s founding was aligned with farmworker organizing, especially across the Central Valley (Allen et al. 2003: 66).

Tracing back to the creation of the ‘illegal alien’ juridically and in popular concern through the first half of the twentieth century (Ngai 2004), but especially since the 1980s, farmworker issues have largely been tied to



Mexican immigration. This tie is largely due to the effects of US immigration, border, and visa policies, as well as ‘free trade’ agreements like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (see Ngai 2004, Guerin-Gonzales 1996, Bacon 2004). Various groups formed to represent these sectors politically, based in the sector’s own leadership.<sup>30</sup> More recently, Indigenous migrants from Oaxaca, Mexico (some of whom are not fluent in Spanish) have become a large portion of California’s itinerant migrant labour, leading to organizations focusing specifically on Indigenous migrants. Many but not all farmworker-serving formations are formal NGOs.<sup>31</sup> Most combine activities of organizing, service, and advocacy. Some (like UFW) work to change policy, such as the UFW-promoted farmworker overtime pay bill brought to the California Assembly by Assemblywoman Lorena Sofia Gonzalez, which passed in 2016 after failing multiple times in decades prior.

‘Food justice’ is an established sector in the food movement literature (Gottlieb & Joshi 2010), which is multi-ethnic and multi-class but often driven by Black and POC leadership. Typically, food justice groups focus on consumer-side politics, addressing race-influenced lack of food access and diet-related health concerns (Alkon & Agyeman 2011). At the same time, food justice includes projects that produce food, breaking down the producer/consumer dichotomy (e.g. Sbicca 2018, 2016). Urban agriculture is often a first line of entry into food politics for many urban people. This indeed is my personal story, and it is one shared with active leaders in leading Californian food justice organizations including Planting Justice, the Gill Tract Community Farm, Black Earth Farms, La Mesa Verde, and Yisrael Family Farm. Every one of these projects involves ‘returning generation’ farmers, who have rediscovered heritage connections to food production, and passionate knowledge for ecological farming techniques, by starting or joining urban farm projects. Urban farms are also a tactic taken up by the more transformation-minded food banks, which seek to move beyond charity. FoodLink for Tulare is such a food bank that has organized food production opportunities for its community members, along with political educational programmes, seeking to achieve ‘a world without food banks’.<sup>32</sup>

Increased media attention to food justice work and ideas has led to a renaissance of recognition for farmers of colour, who have generally speaking been marginalized in both conventional and alternative food systems. BIPOC as a whole (and women) experience great disparities in farm

access and ownership (Horst & Marion 2019), even if there are differences between different groups of BIPOC. For example, while Black land ownership reduced from 14 per cent of producers in 1910 (owning over 16 million acres) to only 1.3 per cent of producers (on 3.6 million acres), Latinx have grown from the 20<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, reaching now 3 per cent of total land owned (the largest ethnic group ownership after whites) (see Agyeman & Boone 2020, Danish 2019). The East Coast's Soulfire Farm, and its best-known spokesperson Leah Penniman, are known for their BIPOC-centred writings and trainings (Penniman 2018). Similar to Standing Rock's influence for Indigenous visibility, the Movement for Black Lives and recurring uprisings against racist police violence, have seemed to once again put Black people on the map as vanguards of progressive social change, and the food movement has followed suit.<sup>33</sup> Latinx and other migrant contributions to new, sustainable food systems have been recognized in the press (Danish 2019), scholarship (Minkoff-Zern 2019), and by organizations oriented towards supporting their business development (KTA 2020). Farmers of colour are not a new phenomenon, but they are garnering greater recognition after decades of outright institutional discrimination and land loss. The National Young Farmers Coalition (NYFC), a younger organization that has moved towards BIPOC since its 2009 founding by white young farmers, reflects on the falsity of BIPOC farmer 'newness':

The contributions to agriculture made by people of color in the United States are immense. At its founding, this country's wealth was built on the agricultural labor of black slaves. Latinos, Latino immigrants, and other foreign-born farmworkers of color currently undergird the U.S. food system and produce the majority of the food we eat. More than 60% of the world's food supply comes from crops originally cultivated by Native American farmers. Chicano farmers have led the charge for farm worker rights and continue to be leaders in grassroots farmer organizing. African American farmers modeled today's intensive and profitable small farms fifty years ago, and pioneered farmer cooperatives and community land trusts. And Hmong American farmers are now at the forefront of popularizing local food in the Midwest. However, these vital contributions to agriculture by people of color go largely unacknowledged within the dominant narrative of farming in this country.<sup>34</sup>

Even more radical farmer of colour formations emphasize BIPOC leadership, and goals of autonomy; The manifesto of Black Earth Farms (2021,

para. 1) demands centring the leadership of 'Black and Indigenous Women, non-binary, trans, and queer folks ... to achieve true and absolute liberation'. They insist on the need for 'autonomous and sovereign communities that steward and produce their own ethically harvested food without pesticides and other chemical inputs' (ibid: para. 3).

Another of my fieldwork subjects indicates the multifaceted, interwoven nature of contemporary food movements. The Community Alliance for Agroecology (CAFA) is a coalition focused on the Central Valley that links farmworker communities, environmental justice concerns, and sustainable agriculture and encompasses members both urban and rural. CAFA network leaders have coordinated a project to found an 'Agroecology Center' in the Valley, which brings together leaders from the Indigenous Wukchumni tribe, FoodLink for Tulare, farmworker-community-based organization El Quinto Sol de America, the Central California Environmental Justice Network, an Indigenous Permaculture specialist and instructor, and the director of a broad labour/progressive coalition, the Central Valley Partnership, with input and consultation from local farmworkers and individual farmers of colour.<sup>35</sup> The proposed Center is to work towards through a training programme 'designed specifically to serve socially disadvantaged specialty crop farmers, farm workers, and beginning farmers in the San Joaquin Valley' (Agroecology Center 2020: 7). The programme is to advance technical training, economic development, political education, and to link all these activities to base building and advocacy, through locally-autonomous centres distributed throughout the Valley.

As a whole, the Agroecology Center effort involves various economic classes, including nonprofit professionals but also providers and recipients of services for low-income communities, farmers, and volunteers; the organizations represented in the coalition effort are largely steeped in and driven by working-class communities of colour (who are seldom landowners). Although the project's leadership works in various NGOs, as individuals they bring their 'whole sense of self' to the project, for instance backgrounds in permaculture and land trust efforts, rather than participating as a function of their organizational 'hats'.<sup>36</sup> I return to this effort in Chapter 6, but for this chapter, the important thing is that California groups are already working across difference, in CAFA's case unifying around agroecology as a frame, working to create a greater We through practical programming and visioning processes. CAFA's member organi-

zations incorporate ‘political education’ into their work – from community-level focus groups on agroecology with Latinx communities to the annual ‘Rural Justice Summit’ that brings together in dialogue youth, activists, and academics who work on Central Valley food systems issues.<sup>37</sup> In addition, CAFA itself (as a coalition of groups) has worked on *internal* disparities, given that some of its member groups are more well-resourced than others, and that incoming funding to the coalition could reinforce inequalities in capacity.

This funding-minded attention to equity brings up a final sector that cannot be left out: funders. Funding continues to shape movements, their rhetoric and campaigns, and even their modes of staffing. Evidenced by webinars and statements from progressive funders like the Swift Foundation (focusing on Indigenous food sovereignty), the Agroecology Fund (which according to its director ‘prioritizes BIPOC leadership in the Global South’), and California’s 11<sup>th</sup> Hour Foundation, funders are increasingly considering DEI in their activities.<sup>38</sup> An increased responsiveness to DEI concerns can be interpreted in different ways; from one side, increased representation on foundation staff and boards is ‘progressive’ (indeed, the suggestion seems reasonable that increased BIPOC representation, in government especially, has shifted the integral state); from another, it is the sign that ‘the system’ is desperate to bolster its stability by incorporating and demobilizing those sectors who have been most harmed by that system’s existence (Rodriguez 2021).<sup>39</sup> What is important is increasing funder interest in DEI activities, with some actively shifting funding focuses towards BIPOC organizations. Michael Roberts, formerly a programme officer with 11<sup>th</sup> Hour, writes (2018: para. 15) that ‘Meaningful conversation about race is disruptive. For predominantly white organizations – including ours – talking about race is challenging because our culture has conditioned us to avoid the discussion’.

The fact that discussion is now taking place indicates that cracks are appearing in the unspoken racial-class project of hegemonic whiteness in the food movement. White-led groups are now valorizing BIPOC groups more often, which opens up opportunities for differencing that are not there when some groups are shut out and ignored. This change in the integral state towards awareness of the *racialized* basis of society and food systems (that is, racial Othering), has opened space for greater convergence with regards to race. Still, tensions remain, and it is to those tensions to which I now turn.

### 5.3. Movement tensions

Even with these cautiously optimistic positive signs of food movements shifting away from the negative state in which they are often depicted in critical research (as white-dominated and class privileged, ineffectual and at times regressive; e.g. Guthman 2011, Slocum 2007), tensions continue among food movement sectors in at least three registers: (1) Interpersonal, (2) Inter-sectoral and inter-organizational, and (3) Philosophical/theoretical.<sup>40</sup> Since in actual instances of conflict, tensions arise from the interplay of conflicts taking place in each of these registers, I make such a separation only to enable the ordered presentation of my fieldwork results, not to make any claim for their conceptual separability.

#### 5.3.1. Interpersonal

Interpersonal conflicts and tensions emerge constantly in *any* social space. Such conflicts often embody macro divisions and relations of power (such as racism or patriarchy) within the micro level of personal experience. The ‘classic’ formula is seen when people of marginalized social status are further marginalized in interpersonal interactions and organizational choices, based on their group identity, status differentials, and structural power imbalances (see Alkon & McCullen 2011, Guthman 2011, Hoover 2013, Tyson 2020 for precedents in recent food movement history and literature). These dynamics are not new to US food movement scholarship. There are three other related dynamics, however, that I feel have not received due attention or analysis: (1) increased performativity of allyship in a context of heightened awareness of social injustice; (2) inter-ethnic, BIPOC non-solidarity; and (3) the perpetuation of harms along racist, sexist, generationally-unjust lines by members of marginalized and Othered groups.

A couple of examples of the ‘classic’ formula from my research are worth mentioning. In one, a decades-old white-led sustainable agriculture nonprofit saw all of its staff resign in protest, after its white female founder-director abruptly fired a staff member she saw as threatening her power over the organization. That staff member (also a white woman) had spent years pushing the organization towards hiring BIPOC *and* altering the organization’s structure such that ‘lower’ level staff held more decision-making authority, eventually seeking a worker-owned cooperative structure. Secondly is the case of the white-farmer-focus of the EcoFarm

conference. Although not static (see above and below discussion), many interviewees complained to me of hearing years of talk of ‘bringing justice in’ to the conference, but seeing the same dynamics of whiteness year after year. One explanation for this was the persistent obstruction by two powerful white elders in the eco-farming community, who for years denied efforts on the conference’s planning committee (including input from the DAG) to emphasize BIPOC leadership, participation, vision, and goals. In claiming to defend the space for ‘farmers’ (perhaps subconsciously coded as white land owners), these elders – though valued visionaries in developing the eco-farming sector and according to interviewees deserving of great respect – mobilized their own privileges to shut down discussions they did not want. One white, male DAG member repeatedly stood up to these leaders, incurring much negative attention and acrimony. He was later told that his interventions contributed to some BIPOC members remaining on the DAG, and told me that he feels it’s the responsibility of people like him to put themselves in the ‘line of fire’ to advance equity.<sup>41</sup> At one ‘equity’-themed EcoFarm conference event, another white elder on the planning committee proclaimed that he ‘doesn’t see race’ – a problematic ‘colourblind’ statement to most antiracist activists and theorists (see Bonilla-Silva 2019). BIPOC, queer farmers, migrant farmers, and other marginalized people I encountered in fieldwork report feeling tokenized, ignored, and subverted in such white-dominated food movement conference and committee spaces. Queer Asian-American farm educator Kellee Matsushita-Tseng spoke of the ‘decades’ in which

there have been groups of people who have come through [CASFS], folks of color that have been apprentices or students and have experienced lack of relevance or instances of actual racist comments and practices. One point of awareness-raising that happened was in 2000 when [apprentices formed] JACI, Justice for all Cultural Identities ... They had a walkout when there was a really inappropriate ‘diversity training’ that CASFS had for folks. ... Since then, every year, despite changes, students of color have continued to express dissatisfaction with the Eurocentricity of the curriculum, a lack of cultural relevance, and other programmatic gaps.<sup>42</sup>

Beyond these ‘classical’ dynamics of marginalization within food movements are the three dynamics I listed earlier. First, there appears to be in recent years an increase in *performativity* – the display of allyship – in responses of people with relative (white/male/class) privilege, and more broadly among movement organizations of all identities. The proliferation

of ‘Black Lives Matter’ statements from politicians, police, and corporations are emblematic of this trend. In fieldwork and organizing work, I’ve seen interpersonal and mistake-based problems recast as racial issues, instances of a larger trend of ‘call-out culture’ (Ahmad 2015). Noted contemporary social justice organizer and writer adrienne maree brown (2020: 40) explains the ambivalent nature of call outs:

Call outs have a long history as a brilliant strategy for marginalized people to stand up to those with power. Call outs have been a way to bring collective pressure to bear on corporations, institutions, and abusers on behalf of individuals or oppressed peoples who cannot stop the injustice and get accountability on their own. There are those out of alignment with life, consent, dignity, and humanity who will only stop when a light is shined onto their inhumane behavior.

Instances of ‘call outs’ can be based in real underlying trauma (whether made by ‘allies’ or the aggrieved themselves, and whether performative or not). One Black feminist farmer organizer argued that when done with compassion, callouts are generative: ‘We need to have these difficult conversations between us and white folks, but even among us, too, because you can be POC and still fuck things up!’<sup>43</sup>. In this way, performative allyship may not be automatically harmful to expanded solidarity and convergence. Call outs may cause deeper rifts and breakdown of processes within movements<sup>44</sup>, but they also can spark conversations that many interviewees argued should be had anyway. According to some interviews, these ‘courageous’ or ‘difficult’ conversations are even actually welcomed at times by the more *privileged* sectors of the movement:

‘There was a film screening of [US agrarian writer and food movement luminary] Wendell Berry’s documentary, and there was a panel afterwards. And it’s pretty easy to just like Wendell Berry, right? He was one of the inspiring figures for me and for many of us inspired to farm ecologically. On a personal level, this person who is a farmer and an academic and a writer, and I’m like “that’s what I want!”. Then bringing up the hard questions afterwards, difficult stuff around colonization and things like that, the feedback I got was that people were so juiced to have that stuff brought up and not just another, “Yeah, it’s like the Agrarian dream. Being on the land is amazing.” People were like, “Oh thank you for bringing up the hard questions.”’<sup>45</sup>

There also seem to be more instances of – or at least increasing discussion about – inter-ethnic, BIPOC non-solidarity. This is partly described by the notion of the ‘Oppression Olympics’, where different marginalized statuses are pitted against each other in arguments about who deserves the most space, redress, attention etc. Also, as touched on in my previous discussion of Afropessimism, there exist ideologies of non-solidarity between people of marginalized groups such as POC anti-Blackness and Afropessimism’s Black exceptionalism, motivating harmful acts and triggered reactions which at times spiral into greater conflict. Sometimes conflicts result from elevating one axis of marginalization against another, as when more economically privileged Black female members of a recently-formed BIPOC-only group pushed out non-Black male members of the group who had less class privilege, following a surge of donations to the group during the George Floyd uprisings – and used ‘anti-Black misogyny’ as the reasoning for their removal. In another case, a mixed-ethnicity farming collective ignored the input into farming decisions of the most experienced member of the collective, because she is an older cis white woman (who also happened to be the collective member with the lowest income). In cases like these, it might be interpreted that *political* tensions (such as control over funds or farming decisions) are being recast based on racial or identity-based differences. Debates about Black-Indigenous (non)solidarity emerged online and on various listservs following the 2020 introduction of a ‘Justice for Black Farmers Act’ in the US Senate. While some Black and Indigenous individuals critiqued the bill as continued colonization (Newman 2020), others proffered support, seeing the Act as a step forward for justice in general, even if it made no provision for decolonization or repatriation of land to Natives. The National Black Food and Justice Alliance (NBFJA) pointed to the awareness by the bill’s grassroots advocates of the Indigenous question, and limitations of federal policy-making; that is, they advocated that movements extend the benefit of the doubt rather than assume ill intent and non-solidarity.<sup>46</sup>

Perhaps most vexing, I found that some of the most vocal critics of white supremacy, colonialism, patriarchy, and other structures of violence are also sometimes perpetrators of these same dynamics. A widely-regarded Latinx food justice activist scholar who later in life discovered his Indigenous identity, and mobilized these identities often in his critiques of others around him in the food movement, was outed in 2020 as a serial sexual harasser.<sup>47</sup> This scholar has even published on the need for food



movements to overcome patriarchy, indicating how the chasm between rhetoric and practice, and the reality of internal contradictions, is one that movements and scholars should acknowledge and address. One of my interviewees, a well-respected spiritual leader and proudly ‘undocumented and unafraid’ Latinx man who contributed to various food justice projects, and who often proclaimed himself a ‘recovering sexist’, was formally requested to give up his leadership roles and pursue accountability processes by dozens of friends and former partners in 2020, following his ill treatment of multiple romantic partners.<sup>48</sup>

In another example, a Black food systems leader found himself in conflict with a Board of Directors at the organization he was recently hired to direct – feeling he was being micromanaged with unreasonable and non-strategic work direction. The organization had decades of history of influence in progressive and radical food movement circles, and had moved (well ahead of the larger societal shift towards DEI) towards have a Board largely composed of Black individuals. However, a few longstanding Board members (including the aforementioned Latinx-Indigenous activist-scholar) had ignored mandated term limits, and instead of genuinely dialoguing with the new director, pushed on him until he resigned. When reviewing criticism directed to the Board from outside the organization (from the organization’s longtime allies and supporters in academic and activist sectors), some responded that such criticism was ‘anti-Black’. Perhaps ironically, that Black director was preceded by a white-presenting director, who had been given more latitude by the Board to direct as he desired. The Black leader told me how he had learned, in researching how to deal with the situation, that:

one legally recognized “sign” of discrimination is treating two people who hold or have held the same position differently. The Board explicitly said that they were treating me differently than [the previous director] (and that I was more obstreperous). It seemed clear to me that there was age *and* racial discrimination from internalized anti-Blackness. A lawyer advised me that while it did seem that way on its face, in his experience, juries almost never side with a Black person alleging discrimination by another Black person – it doesn’t fit their conception of discrimination. Banking on teaching a jury about internalized anti-Blackness seemed likely to lose 99 times out of 100 in his opinion – and the issue would be similar for trying to maintain anti-youth age discrimination.<sup>49</sup>

This quote indicates a need to update public (and perhaps scholarly) understanding of forms of (racial) discrimination taking place in social movement spaces. Additionally, the organization's public responses to the resignation of the Black leader centred the Board leaders' racial bona fides ('Unlike the majority of U.S. non-profits, and compared to many of our donors and supporters, [we are] a Black, Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) led organization'). This further reflects the issue of 'performativity' with regards to various forms of Othering, as opposed to a genuine reflexivity that is more likely to work towards collective, full-community liberation. As one food movement participant posted to an email list discussion regarding this controversy: 'it looks like food & farm folks are going to be having a long overdue conversation—not just about racism, but about sexism, systemic problems with non-profit organizations, turf wars, elites vs. grassroots, democratic decision-making, etc.'

In sum, not all tensions in the food movement are reducible to simple dichotomies along the lines of privileged/marginalized group identity (the focus of most of the critical literature to date, particularly in its focus on 'whiteness'). Tensions emerge out of performative displays of solidarity and 'calling out', out of non-solidarity among various BIPOC and Othered groups, and out of harms perpetuated by people of marginalized positions. Not all interpersonal tensions stem from the obviously egregious behaviours of people in obviously dominant subject positions, and oppressive behaviours are not the purview only of those in the most privileged positions. This is an easy insight of intersectionality, but it is one that is not acknowledged enough in food movement theories, or in the practices and discussions of activists. Less typical tensions (within or between the more marginalized groups themselves) are seemingly ignored until they bubble up, with little preemptive movement discussion about how to deal with them effectively in ways that strengthen the overall movement.

### 5.3.2. Interorganizational/inter-sectoral

As is common to the era of the 'non-profit industrial complex' (discussed further in Chapter 6), food movement organizations tend to be formed out of issue areas, and operate in 'silos'. Tensions emerge between organizations with fundamentally different constituents, goals, and political ideals, as well as between the sectors (as a whole) that these organizations represent, whether informally or formally. There is also, always, an

economic class element to such tensions. For example, organizations representing small farmers and farmworkers have opposed each other in state legislative processes on the issue of paying farmworkers overtime rates of pay, partly arising out of their fundamentally different class positions.<sup>50</sup> In combination with these are tensions that emerge out of (1) structural constraints on organizing (namely, the influence of funding and policy institutions and processes on organizational focus and strategy), (2) different approaches among sectors to those structural constraint conditions, (3) processes of dialogue or deliberation that reproduce or do not address existing inequities, and (4) the ways professionalism can temper pushes for change, reinforce disempowering movement-organization culture, and undermine the valorization of non-professionals from non-elite communities.

Arguments about the limiting, demobilizing, and deradicalizing effects of the ‘non-profit industrial complex’ hold true to this day (INCITE! 2004) – due in part to the outsized power and control exhibited by funders over the funded. Organizations compete for funding from relatively limited sources, and to establish ‘turf’ in a particular sector. ‘Urban bias’, wherein urban organizations and issues attract more attention and funding, also relates to the whims and biases of funders. Such bias historically translates to uneven attention in policy and discourse, neglecting rural questions and injustices – reflecting broader urban/rural tensions, at the national level and in politics (Graddy-Lovelace 2021). The food movement in the US is often seen as urban, and California policy has been easier to pass for ecological *urban* than *rural* agriculture (e.g. Roman-Alcalá and Glowa 2020). Yet even while most (urban) Californians ignore ‘rural’ issues, rural capitalist producers dominate agricultural politics at the state level (as indicated in the policy advocate’s quote in Chapter 1 expressing the difficulty of passing legislation in the shadow of large agribusiness influence). There are indications that, in response to the regressive rural politics displayed through Trump’s appeals to rural voters, interest in ‘the rural’ was sparked or renewed among sectors of food and farming reform movements (as well as progressives at large). At least one large well-known ‘progressive’ funder of food movements in California shifted its investments and funding substantively towards rural communities and organizations, particularly in the Central Valley, following 2016’s election of Trump.<sup>51</sup> A broader shift is indicated as well by greater post-election media

coverage of ‘rural’ people and their politics, and articles by leading progressive organizations calling for more attention to rural matters (e.g. Rural Organizing 2020). Unfortunately, beyond anecdotes, I could not find a systemic review of shifts in funder priorities over this time.

Harmful dynamics of funding intersect with issues of race, as described by a 2020 letter organized by the national food-justice coalition HEAL Food Alliance to major food systems-funding philanthropies, which called them ‘to unite and build together rather than continuing a pattern of paternalistic practices that entrench [BIPOC leadership] marginalization, reinforce a culture of white supremacy, and devalue the knowledge and genius in our communities.’<sup>52</sup> According to a 2018 report (FNDI/Frontline Solutions 2018), Indigenous groups receive 0.23 per cent of philanthropic funding, even though they compose 2 per cent of the population (meanwhile, sometimes their issues are used by non-Indigenous groups to raise funds). One Indigenous leader spoke to how ‘foundations’ grant cycles limit our ability to make change, and it’s up to philanthropists and funders to change their practices and focus to make it easier for us – not make it on us to fit into their “portfolios”. Funders coming to us to solve all the problems of modern society, that’s an unjust system. They have a responsibility *to listen first*.’<sup>53</sup> Multiple interviews I conducted attested to continued real barriers to collaboration based in the blind spots of funders, white-led organizations, and those representing more privileged sectors (such as farm owners), and unequal power relations between funder and funded – even while these sectors are undergoing some level of greater self-awareness and ‘racial awakening’.

In another example from California, the previously-mentioned foundation called a meeting of their grant recipients, which included some of the organizations featured in this research (I participated in the meeting as a collaborator of some of these organizations). The foundation called the meeting to ask the assembled how they might build stronger networks, including across some perceived differences. Many in the room were from the environmental justice community, alongside two of the more environmentally-focused and farmer/owner-based organizations: CalCAN and CAFF. It is important to note that CAFF and CalCAN represent how, historically, the ecofarming and environmental justice sectors have not been consistent allies. CAFF has opposed legislation to provide farmworkers overtime pay, while CalCAN has supported the state’s cap-and-trade climate funding scheme, which many environmental justice groups oppose

because it inadequately reduces point source pollution in historically impacted communities (and enables problematic ‘carbon capture’ offsetting projects abroad). Positions like these – and a general non-inclusion of BIPOC voices – have generated a lack of trust between ecofarming organizations and some individuals and groups in the environmental justice world. One environmental justice advocate distinguished well-funded groups like CalCAN seeking to ‘scale up’ ecofarming from the environmental justice challenge of shifting the nature of the agriculture system:

[W]here can we find allies in actually advocating towards the disruption of those status quo systems, and which are the groups and people who are not allied, who are more working towards this issue of scalability of these ecological agriculture technologies?<sup>54</sup>

Yet, digging into the details of such policy disputes brings nuance to the tensions. While cap-and-trade provides funding for farming practices that store carbon and reduce emissions, and supports many small-scale producers, those same funds go to programmes that are unpopular with both CalCAN and environmental justice organizations like CAFA member Center for Race, Poverty and the Environment, such as large-scale industrial dairy methane digesters. In 2015, CalCAN produced an extensive critique of dairy digesters (CalCAN 2015) and has since advocated for methane-reducing alternatives to digesters such as solid separation, compost and grass-fed dairying, rallying the support of small and medium-sized organic dairies. CalCAN participated in a state advisory committee and wrote bill language that established an ‘Alternative Manure Management Program (AMMP)’. Through that programme \$70 million has thus far been diverted from funding digesters. Renata Brillinger, Director of CalCAN, told me how ‘some of the producers who have received the AMMP grant tell us that it has kept them afloat, preventing at least temporarily the sale of their small dairy, likely to an ever-consolidating mega-dairy’.<sup>55</sup> Keeping in mind how harmful mega-dairies are to the Central Valley’s impacted communities, we can see here how policy-making brings up tensions that are not straightforward to navigate.

While many environmental justice-focused participants in the funder-called meeting called for unstructured time, to build relationships, and understand each other by ‘moving at the speed of trust’, the foundation responded essentially by saying they could not fund ‘amorphous conversations’.<sup>56</sup> These funders claimed to be constrained by their Boards, who

questioned what the value added was to funding such long-term and non-programmatic and non-policy-directed work. Policy-making also thus presents a structural and racialized constraint alongside (perhaps, indeed, walking hand-in-hand with) funding. Work that affects policy, or works towards policy change (for example, through report-making) is often more valued by funders than intangibles like relationship building.<sup>57</sup> At the same time, in the Californian food movement, groups dominated by white, middle- and upper-class professionals are more often those that focus on insider-strategy policy change work. Policy processes are also generative of inter-organizational conflict insofar as they require organizations to act fast and to compromise in order to pass legislation, which especially undermines cross-organizational and cross-sector solidarity between those sectors more well-positioned in policy spaces and those historically and/or actively marginalized in them. In sum, even in a time of increasing DEI and focus on the grassroots and its leadership, funders and policy-making processes on the whole still fail to follow the lead of the most impacted communities and their stated needs (including their requests for flexible and long-term funding).

Over decades there have been efforts to bring siloed groups together, and create dialogue between sectors, including antagonistic ones. One California NGO has pursued this approach for agricultural and environmental issues since 1999.<sup>58</sup> One former employee of that organization, Katy Mamen, an organizational development consultant very concerned about issues of inequity, promoted the idea of systems thinking and processes as ways to break through silos and achieve transformative impact:

[Through] systemic convening, [we can bring] points of view together from very different places in the system across difference and feel like real solutions and more robust solutions can arise out of that, out of dialogue with actors from these very different vantage points. The way a lot of my work is structured is coming to a shared frame or story about what's happening in the system because so often people have very different stories, right? So how can we create a unified frame together? And often that will unlock some pretty new spaces of where we can go.<sup>59</sup>

One the one hand, this approach speaks well to this research, indicating a way through and beyond inter-organizational tensions. The aforementioned consultant described this convening work (*ibid*) as 'a huge field with so many different approaches, theories of change, and practices', with her

approach focusing on ‘true long-term dialogic relationship building.’ On the other hand, marginalized people have critiqued some processes of bringing sectors together in dialogue as structurally unequal and preventative of transformational change – specifically those processes that do not begin from recognition of existing inequalities in power and access.<sup>60</sup> Be it organized by governments or facilitated by NGOs, this kind of ‘multi-stakeholderism’ has been globally critiqued (McKeon 2017). In reading over this research, one interviewee responded with a story of participating in a ‘multistakeholder’ local food policy council led by a government body. He described leaving the council due to ‘governance issues’ – the fact that the government would ‘pull rank as convener’ to influence the process. Rather than being about ‘a race, class, or gender thing (although the race, rural, language and other problems [described in this chapter] were all there too), it was more of a how-close-are-you-to-the-government-itself thing – perhaps this is a class, but not one that is normally conceived of that way’.<sup>61</sup>

At a very basic level, working people (including farmers) cannot as easily attend meetings as professionals can, which affects many local and state-level stakeholder-inclusion processes. The CDFA’s many committees’ meetings are held only in the state capital of Sacramento, making physical accessibility an issue for many communities. That most such processes are held only in English is another barrier. Essentially any person whose professional life or personal background are not conducive to meeting attendance is disempowered by such processes, if they are not specifically incentivized to participate. Certainly, some facilitators are aware of these challenges, and have sought to address them via evening meeting times, stipends for farmers and others who don’t have organizational support to participate, and asynchronous opportunities to collaborate. But addressing issues like language access remains the exception rather than the norm.<sup>62</sup> As the interviewee once involved in a food policy council reflected, ‘Suggestions to fix [language and other accessibility barriers] were bandied about but often postponed as cost-prohibitive.’<sup>63</sup>

Such meetings (especially those organized via government agencies) are also sometimes premised on *non*-antagonism, or reducing antagonism, even while many marginalized individuals experience the conditions under discussion as characterized by antagonism, given racial capitalism and settler-colonialism. For many who would be included in such processes and spaces (and according to the theories reviewed earlier in the chapter), the

status quo of land dispossession, labour exploitation, and cultural marginalization *is violence*. Emancipation cannot be achieved by creating ‘a shared frame’, if that simply means getting class enemies to talk and compromise, or by appeasing settler interests to (later) reach some minimal level of decolonization. To some, non-revolution in wage and property relations is tantamount to continuation of exploitation; and the state’s continued existence equals continued state violence. Hence, insofar as such ‘dialogues’ assume these relations and institutions as valid (and continuous), they are not inherently worthwhile. Many interviewees *did* express appreciation of dialogue in order to understand each other. One young BIPOC farmer participant in one of this study’s *encuentros* said that the *encuentro* was valuable in

just allowing space for people to voice their true opinions, making space for the emotions that come up with this work and not policing each other. And making it a safe space where people are not afraid to get critiqued, where people are not afraid of being corrected or receiving feedback. Because it’s not personal, it’s nothing personal.<sup>64</sup>

But such processes must honestly attend to uneven starting conditions between groups. And if the reasoning for getting groups together is an exogenous impetus to ‘solve’ problems via policy, negotiation, and compromise – especially insofar as that impetus comes from more economically and racially privileged sectors and institutions – it risks reinforcing the status quo marginalization of the most marginalized and radical actors, *preventing* rather than engendering greater change.

Another related issue that emerges are tensions around ‘professionalism’ – which is embedded in and deferential to existing power relations, and tied to whiteness and male-gendered behaviour. Professional facilitators, for example, are incentivized to avoid conflicts that cause discomfort for those that pay for their facilitation – even if conflicts are necessary to address core antagonisms in ‘multi-stakeholder’ contexts. Professionalism reinforces existing inequalities and discriminations. In a new urban farm project run by a thirty-year-old San Francisco organization serving Latinx immigrants and other low-income families of colour, the city government prevented the organization from self-managing the city-owned farm site, or designing its farm through community processes. City officials in charge of the land required ‘professional’ credentials to design the landscape, refusing to recognize the deep, multi-generational agricultural



knowledge of the mostly immigrant population and Latinx youth who composed the farm's constituents. Nor did the city's representatives recognize the worth of personal investments (as neighbours and residents) in the site. This dismissive non-valorization of non-professional knowledge represents another form of racism (Minkoff-Zern 2012). 'Professionalism' tensions also figure into policy-making and implementation processes, as in the reluctance of the CDFA's newly-hired 'Farm Equity Advisor' to ruffle feathers at the agency, in order to push for BIPOC farmer demands and needs.<sup>65</sup> Beyond the troubling fact that CDFA hired a white woman for this historic position meant to serve BIPOC communities is a deeper challenge: that entering into spaces of power often reinforces 'white'/mainstream values regarding professionalism and comportment, which (inadvertently or not) reinforce existing racialized power relations (see Ray 2019, Okun & Jones n.d.). It is also a facet of professionalization of social movements to deradicalize individuals through careerism (Allen 1990 [1969]), which has the usual effect of elevating 'practical' demands over 'utopian' ones – another way intersectoral and interorganizational tensions are reproduced. As described in a recent participant-review of the year since the George Floyd uprisings began (Haslett 2021, para. 11):

The past six years had seen the passions of [pre-Floyd Black-led uprisings in] Ferguson displaced by efforts to give white professionals moral lessons and a smattering of black people prestigious posts. Black professionals, after all, are the crown jewels of the liberal reformist mission: their presence on the campus or conference call performs a shining symbolic task.

In sum, inter-organizational and inter-sectoral tensions are tied to longstanding inequalities in access to material resources and immaterial recognition. Structural positions that are rooted in economic class, but also race, relations to the state, and positions in relationship to various forms of Othering, all weigh on the relationships between individuals (for example, as they professionalize), groups (for example, environmental justice communities versus ecofarming advocates), sectors (for example, funders versus the funded), and in processes that determine policy, positions, and funding (for example, multistakeholderism). These tensions reflect the difficulties of convergence amidst structured differences, difficulties which are embedded but not insurmountable. At the least, movement strategies of (self)conscious dialogue and engendering humility among the more powerful point to ways forward.

### 5.3.3. Theoretical/philosophical

Theoretical or philosophical tensions relate to often unspoken values about the way the world works, and how it should be changed for the better. This relates especially to the goals and expectations of movements regarding the horizon of ‘emancipation’, and their theories of change about how to get there. Within this realm, tensions regularly emerge over the role of policy work, especially with regards to (and often pitted against) more immediate, practical, and relational kinds of work. For instance, in the example above, funders demanding more outcomes, unity, and clarity among grantees in policy terms came up against the desire of those grantees to focus their time on building relationships (and continuing their existing work, which involved both practice and policy).

The philosophical tensions I encountered among Californian food movements included (1) those relating to private (philanthropic) and public (state) funding institutions – and their status quo of unequal relations of access and power between funder and funded; (2) the question of capitalism – whether and how to oppose it – and the difficult reconciliation of long-term ambitions and short-term ‘realpolitik’; (3) a similar question, but of decolonization – which like revolutionary socialism seeks to fundamentally transform a society away from the very system it is rooted in and based on. These latter two are both fundamentally about questions of ‘revolution’, a long-standing tension in issues of emancipatory movement convergence, and one that is closely related to perceptions of and attitudes towards *urgency*. These are the tensions I explore below.

As mentioned, philosophical tensions emerge through processes of private/foundation funding but also in movement intersections with the state, its policy and its funding. Whether and how individuals and groups access the ‘halls of power’ (including legislators, agencies, or existing programmes like the CDFA’s climate and water conservation funding programmes) affects how groups relate. Some are ideologically against relying on state support; others are ignorant of its availability, and often due to structural disempowerment unable to access it (CDFA 2020); still others find such engagement natural, obvious, and easy. Groups that work more within state processes often face, as one advocate put it, ‘the challenge of balancing ideology with strategic political positioning’.<sup>66</sup> Their group may be ideologically opposed to a certain pro-industrial agriculture state policy, but they don’t always take a straightforward hard-oppose position, because ‘strategically, we are positioning ourselves to have influence where

we think it can make a difference when facing well-funded ag lobby groups and government agencies that are typically conservative and slow to transition from the status quo.’ As one example where advocates have felt they could ‘make a difference’, the CFJC’s advocacy and successful Farmer Equity Act pushed the state to recognize disparities in access, and remedy these through ‘technical assistance’ programmes. Still, these programmes cannot be expected to deal with underlying philosophical differences in what kinds of work food movement groups want to do. Principles of grassroots organization, self-empowerment, or Indigenous resurgence through autonomous and sovereign production do not comfortably fit with investing in relationships with the state and its processes, especially in so far as sacrifices or compromises are necessary in order to pursue its funding.

Similarly, although groups almost always end up engaging policy and government in some way, that engagement cannot resolve harms inherent to capitalist-colonial reality, and the constraints that continued reality places upon achieving justice. I provide two examples here. First is the limited ability of organic farming (or organic advocates organized to affect state policy) to transform the food system under capitalism, recognized in much California-focused scholarship (Guthman 2004, 2004a). Organizations premised on working within capitalism to push the system, like CCOF, are unlikely to ‘call out’ capitalism, or to seek changes in policy or practice that actively work against capitalist modes of production.<sup>67</sup> Nor can they meaningfully navigate by a priori principle the bifurcated market their work represents, even though there are values and class contradictions between large and small growers who address different but interrelated markets. Capitalism continues to structure farm possibilities, while most organizations and policy-makers continue to work at shaping those possibilities without being able to confront capitalism head-on. One national level organization publicly tends to describe its enemies as corporate control and racism in the food system, even while many of its members and participants are vocally anticapitalist in their values and worldview, and many see capitalism and racism as deeply connected. I was told that the organization at times and in certain venues shies away from explicitly talking about capitalism for two overarching reasons. One is simply to retain funding (since most funders recoil at radical anticapitalist rhetoric). The other is based on a communications strategy, which holds that it is easier to mobilize people, funders, and policy-makers by naming particular

enemies (corporations) rather than systemic/immaterial ones (capitalism).<sup>68</sup> Food movement groups struggle to reconcile personal philosophies with the ‘realpolitik’ of engaging for change under dynamics where those philosophies have little purchase and would potentially cause alienation or further personal/organizational marginalization. Paul Towers, director of CAFF, spoke to the tension of representing farmers and being more radical:

[W]e’re not as radical as environmental justice groups. We’re not as conservative as the Farm Bureau. I think we’re navigating that weird landscape basically, and trying to both move a little bit more radical along the political spectrum, but also be tied to folks that are just trying to make a living from farming. That can sometimes be a challenge for us, or has been a challenge for CAFF and the landscape of other organizations where people are asking “why aren’t you more radical?”. And it turns out that’s maybe not where our base is at yet. I think that’s been challenging, but I think it also raises the question of redefining who our base is.<sup>69</sup>

Another challenge of realpolitik regards decolonization and how it can be pursued or reached. I have been privy to critiques (by Indigenous women organizers) of ‘land trusts’ as a mechanism to challenge capitalist private property, along with critiques of (more broadly) the limited efforts of supposedly Indigenous-allied groups to tangibly rematriate (that is, return) land back to Native stewardship. Reflecting the earlier concern about ‘performativity’, such critics argue that existing reform efforts rarely if ever result in true change in land relations. Yet, at the same time, land trusts have been leveraged by other Indigenous groups as a valued strategy to regain access to land and to remove land from capitalist speculation. Sogorea Te’ cofounder Corrina Gould says ‘We see land trusts as a tool to reach our goal: land access without interference. To assert our rights to have a place to return to our traditional ways with the land. We don’t believe in ownership, it’s about relationships with the land and all creation’.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, we saw in responses to the ‘Justice for Black Farmers Act’ (Booker 2020) that Indigenous views are not monolithic when it comes to how to engage in solidarity via US federal policy. And, as for the ecofarming sector, desires to be radical don’t always match tactics at hand: A-dae from FNDI spoke of ‘not throwing the baby out with the bathwater’ in the case of using the language of ‘rights’ to advance Indigenous interests (which she characterized as ‘problematic in modernity’), because legal

rights have been struggled for over hundreds of years and so are still ‘important to support’.<sup>71</sup>

Since BIPOCs’ views and strategies are not monolithic or a political given (just like any other given grouped identity), researchers should attend to the underlying philosophical differences between positions, the differences in structural-organizational needs that influence positions, and the interpersonal dynamics that shape (and are shaped by) the particular positions of groups in particular moments. Although critical scholars seem to well understand the non-monolithic nature of BIPOC politics, assumptions about the political views of specific BIPOC are exhibited regularly enough in social movement discourses that it seems relevant to emphasize in any research on BIPOC-based social movements the non-homogeneity and non-linearity of relations of identity to political views and acts. For instance, a statement that ‘[i]t has always been the case that Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other immigrant groups of color have been fighting for food systems and agricultural practices that are ecological and equitable’ might be unproblematic on its face, but such blanket statements do not reckon with more complex histories of internal-to-BIPOC inconsistencies and contradictions, and the challenges they present.<sup>72</sup>

Another philosophical tension, alongside funding, policy, and decolonization dynamics, is the issue of revolution. (I will cover this tension more fully in the next chapter.) Historically facing ups and downs in popularity, motivations to completely transform society’s political-economic structure may remain in circulation, but the popularity of ‘revolution’ as a stated goal or purpose seems to have waned among most US civil society groups. This includes food movements. It is not so much that individuals and groups are okay with capitalism, so much as the goal of overcoming capitalism (or the state that promotes it) is rarely on the agenda. At least, not in any immediate sense, or as something vocalized and aspired to in most spaces of ecological agriculture, policy, and practice. In my research, such interest did appear in one-on-one conversations, and in internal processes (like HEAL’s internal member summit), but rarely in more public fora.

One young Afro-Latinx member of a BIPOC farming collective spoke on their personal beliefs about revolutionary change, which was akin to views described by a handful of other interviewees:

All revolution is based on land, and when we talk about revolution that doesn’t mean necessarily taking up arms and waging guerrilla warfare against

the state, [but] we need to really come together and take this shit seriously because it's not like we're going to just have these meetings and produce paperwork or documents that's going to all of a sudden radically transform the lives of people that are living out this nightmare every day.<sup>73</sup>

The revolution question ties to a tension in peoples' sense of urgency. At one *encuentro* in 2019, this participant expressed deep concern for the seeming nonchalance of those in attendance. 'People are dying' he insisted, and we should not (he indicated) spend so much time simply talking about what to do. Indeed, racial capitalism might need to be overcome in order to reach a world with people like this young farmer are not expendable – yet capitalism is unlikely to be overcome quickly, or quickly enough. And radical change-making traditions often entail at least some element of regular and commonplace discussion, or 'study' (Moten & Harney 2013). Urgency as a source of tension can fall along an age gap, with youth more eager to see rapid change, and elders expressing deeper patience – or perhaps resignation – at the process of social change. One younger Indigenous organizer from a federally-unrecognized tribe waited ten years deferring to elder leadership, only to begin land and language projects independently when he felt that his tribe would continue to lose out in inaction.<sup>74</sup> Differences in urgency can also be seen as cultural; A-dae from FNDI contrasted the US focus on 'immediate gratification' (even for healing from colonization and ancestral trauma) with 'our [Indigenous] concept of time [that] is much longer.'<sup>75</sup> Urgency is an issue that is emotional, and must be addressed directly if movements seek to generate greater alignment of goals, strategies, and ways of operating in the larger movement ecology.

Urgency also cuts both ways: towards revolutionary fervor *and* towards compromising reformism. Another interviewee reflected on the contradictions and tensions of urgency discourses:

There is an argument out there that I hear of well, 'the urgency of the moment requires the scale and the power of the existing systems and its organizations'. And I'll confess, the thing that keeps me up at night more than anything else is urgency. There's two billion people who are suffering enormously today, every day. There is urgency and I see that, but if we let urgency drive this fatuous notion that the only way to address, redress the problems is at this kind of large-scale interaction, I think that's a dead end. And I'm really concerned about the kind of over-infatuation with 'it has to scale, so we have to work with the big players'.<sup>76</sup>

In this quote, we see how urgency as philosophical claim can intersect with potentially more reformist inclinations, yet urgency can also be a motivator for more radical demands, as in the case of the young farmer mentioned earlier. These are not easy tensions to resolve simply. Although philosophical tensions overlap with considerations we saw in interpersonal and interorganizational levels (for example, funding and capitalism; urgency vis-à-vis varying positions of privilege, marginalization, and age), they are less discussed, and therefore less addressed, by movements. Because the integral US state has historically preserved capitalist and white supremacist hegemony by effectively presenting its racialized political-economy, governance model, and continued coloniality as inevitable, inviolable, or unavoidable, it may not come as a surprise that explicitly tackling these subjects is uncommon. Still, if convergence is a goal, this is an essential process for food movements to pursue.

#### 5.4. Strategies towards (understanding) convergence

The theories described in the earlier part of this chapter are wide ranging, but such a wide range is essential in looking at a diversity of social movements. Thinking through these theories alongside the diverse dynamics seen in California's food movements, I close this chapter with some normative principles to guide research inquiry into contemporary US food movement convergence, and to suggest as approaches that movements can take up in order to more reliably move towards convergence. I claim that: (1) the unpredictability of convergence itself demands an openness and humility from movement participants who seek it; (2) in this humility, action is rooted in relational (individual and interpersonal) work but must move 'up' from there, recognizing that social structures always weigh upon us; (3) it is essential to pursue explicit dialogue to surface beliefs, values, tensions, and alignments – particularly with regards to various axes of Othering and capitalism; (4) discourses to counter Othering must be accompanied by actions that redistribute resources, including action that works against unequal existing relations within and between movement sectors, and that prefiguratively builds collective agency and community resilience; and (5) both dialogues and redistributive action can elicit conflict, discomfort, and negative reactions, necessary elements to transformative change (especially for the relatively privileged). In short, these principles can be thought of as the importance of: (1) humility, (2) the relational *and* the

structural, (3) *explicit* dialogue on capitalism and Othering, (4) accompanying redistributive discourse with redistributive action, and (5) the generative nature of conflict.

#### 5.4.1. Principle 1: Humility

Movement convergence is unpredictable in part because it is built upon a multitude of distributed agencies. Diverse individuals form diverse organizations which compose the subjective and objective alliances we call ‘movements’.

On the basis of this epistemic diversity there are various anticapitalist, anti-patriarchal, anti-colonial and anti-imperialist proposals that offer different ways of confronting and resolving the problems produced by the sexual, racial, spiritual, linguistic, gender, and class power-relations within the current “modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system” (Grosfoguel 2012: 85, quoting from Grosfoguel 2008).

Also, discussions of social change tend to emphasize organized, visible actors rather than the emergent effects caused by ‘nonmovement’ actors, that is, everyday people who are not necessarily organized in formal groups, even though the latter emergent effects no doubt shape the contours of the integral state – as discussed by Asef Bayat (2013) in his book on the ‘life as politics’ that shaped the Arab Spring, and James Scott’s (1992) notion of the ‘infrapolitics’ that shaped the political-economies of agriculture (and state action) in Southeast Asia. Although I did not focus on ‘nonmovements’ or emergent effects in this study, in discussing this first principle of humility, such consideration (even in the back of our minds) is key, as it reminds us that broad social change is rarely the result of a single group, organization, or movement, or of its conscious plans coming to fruition.

In the course of fieldwork, some interviewees positively assessed certain qualities that they saw in their favourite spaces of organizing and in individual organizers: humility, uncertainty, openness, deliberate unhurriedness. At times, these descriptions took on gendered tones, describing a ‘feminine’ approach to activism. I reflected this back to later interviewees, which confirmed my suspicion that this quality’s uneven occurrence is a source of tension. Some groups (and/or individuals within them) act convinced of their own approach or unconcerned with changing it in re-



sponse to criticism; these groups may push ahead with campaigns that alienate core allies, or that marginalize the already-marginalized. Other groups, in contrast, move slowly, with greater attention to feedback and input, and with concerted capacity to pivot. These are differences that influence the possibilities of convergence, and are 'gendered' insofar as they track conventionally-defined differences between masculine and feminine attributes (though, certainly, these attributions are questionable, and interviewees acknowledged that acting along a scale from humble to arrogant had little to do with the actor's socially-assigned gender). One policy advocate agreed that 'a more feminine approach [to activism] would be long, long, long overdue, that's saying the obvious'.<sup>77</sup>

Even if it remains impossible to predict convergence upon identified causal factors, or to bring about convergence from within movements with any sort of guarantees, it is possible to first establish humility in understanding convergence dynamics (for either researcher or movement participant), and to move towards convergence from a dignified place of unknowing. Research on food movement convergence can take up more anthropological commitments, akin to Anna Tsing's (2015) work, and move with humility and openness amidst the diversity and enmeshedness of the world. In this, scholarship could parallel the 'feminine' values mentioned as valued in movement-building itself. Recognizing enmeshed diversity means it comes as no surprise when no silver bullet solutions to engendering convergence are found. My interviewees often reminded me of this, like Maya Harjo of the Cultural Conservancy who expressed a lack of definitive answers to 'how' questions, beyond working in relationship and with integrity, and balancing 'the urgency for big structural change' and the need to 'slow down to re-root ourselves in sustainable ways'.<sup>78</sup> Humility can ground movements while they work towards convergence, and it can encourage research on convergence to not subsume movement/social change complexity to its normative recommendations.

#### 5.4.2. Principle 2: The relational and the structural

Emergent processes occur at multiple levels, from personal upwards (Alfred & Cornthassel 2005). By focusing on grounded, interpersonal, relational processes, but always framing and rethinking these within an understanding of systems, food movements can simultaneously valorize people's specificities *and* attend to structurally-derived differences and

tensions that arise between people. This combined focus allows movements, for instance, to interact with CDFA staff as human beings and potential allies, but with awareness of how professionalism and state power dynamics may influence those staff. It also encourages movement participants to connect with each other *from their valorized selves*, but with openness to potential negative effects of their own structural positions. This is what we've seen in the relative uptake of self-aware attention to 'whiteness' among white-led organizations. Moving from relational to structural (and back) can also help parochial movements expand outward.<sup>79</sup>

Jamil Burns, a Black farmer, believes that his success – and larger social change – relies on developing personal relationships first:

I don't want to disparage the role the government plays ... [some changes] absolutely need to happen on a government level. But as far as what we can all do as individuals is foster personal connections and then...when government action does happen, you won't have as much resistance to it.<sup>80</sup>

Jamil's relationship-based approach – as an urban person working with rural allies, a Black man in the white world of farming – shows that movement work can indeed begin with simple individual efforts to work across difference. Yet while effective movement action begins at the most intimate level – me, you, us – it need not stay there. Indeed, learning to think and act in terms of 'systems' *beyond our individual and interpersonal senses* is a crucial step in moving towards convergence (and the theories covered earlier in this chapter all encourage movement in that direction). Addressing racism, for instance, cannot ignore the absolute imperative for personal change (a la Robin DiAngelo's bestselling 2018 book 'White Fragility'), but it likewise cannot stay at that interpersonal level and transform racialization processes themselves. Janaki Anagha, an environmental justice and food justice organizer who helped to found CAFA, spoke about how she grew her structural awareness up from her grounded-ness in food and farming movement work. This growth occurred through her experience working on a family farm, learning through university classes, and later encountering experiences in Central Valley farmworker communities that challenged her preconceived notions about making change through ecological farming itself: 'It took me a long time to arrive at the realization that no small or isolated farming experience can allow a person to see the larger tapestry that upholds agriculture in our state'.<sup>81</sup> The relational and

intimate is key, but it must work alongside the structural in order to reach towards movement self-knowledge, and thus convergence.

#### 5.4.3. Principle 3: Explicit dialogue on capitalism and Othering

Building out from the individual, and from particular subject positions into greater shared senses of ‘We’ (differencing), involves personal (and organizational) humility, and reflection and learning on structures of power and inequity. One means towards such reflection and learning is through intentional dialogue across difference; between settlers and Natives, people of poor and middle classes, different ethnic and racial groups, and across movement sectors. People come to see their own positions – and collective possibilities – only through authentic, risky, vulnerable, courageous dialogue. The ‘agroecology encuentros’ model of political education, farmer knowledge exchange, and relationship development offers one form in which to organize such dialogue. Multiple interviewees and encuentro attendees reported such processes as valuable, even if attending and organizing such dialogues was difficult to prioritize in their existing work (and with the limitations of existing sources of funding). This interest was reflected in the example of environmental justice leaders wanting time and funding for relationship-building dialogue, and the earlier farmer quote about the benefits of being provided ‘space for people to voice their true opinions’. All food movement sectors must contend with differences in opinion regarding whether and what policies are transformative or not, and whether advancing the agenda of one group (especially in policy) entails a step forward for all, or a step back for others. To address these tensions, movements need to pursue often difficult conversations to unearth, describe, and debate their politics, and to remain open to rethinking those politics given ongoing debate and practice. And these dialogues by nature must take place at various scales: between individuals, within groups and organizations, between groups and organizations, and in multi-sectoral fora like the EcoFarm Conference and HEAL Food Alliance.

Thoughtful reflection and dialogue are crucial tools towards reconciling the difficult contradictions this chapter has showcased, namely between the radical aspirations of movements and the tools and processes at hand. Between radical theories and the not-so-radical actions of movements lays capitalism. Like convergence, it is not obvious or predictable how to bring about the end of capitalism.<sup>82</sup> It is unlikely to be overcome quickly, easily, or in some foretold fashion. But what capitalism is, what it might become,

and what can be done about it *can* be addressed explicitly by movement sectors. Asking such questions also unearths how sectors are differentially impacted by capitalism. Dialogues between and among movements must consider the relations between existing differences and impacts, dynamics of capitalist exploitation, and capitalism's undemocratic tendencies (Holt-Giménez & Shattuck 2011). Like the effects of generations of explicit movement attention to racism upon contemporary movement dynamics, explicit attention to capitalism may push more powerful movement sectors (such as funders) to have to contend with their own complicity in systems of capitalism. Indeed, the Agroecology Center project has organized webinars to push funders to both embrace the project's relationship-focused approach, and to 'reframe how we discuss, think about, and move towards land "ownership"' (as the project has been clear to question the private property regime that sustains industrial agriculture in the Central Valley).<sup>83</sup>

This research has posited that attention to Othered groups in their theories and movement actions can illuminate important food movement tensions, areas of alignment, and potential convergence. Alongside discussions of capitalism a focus in movement dialogues must therefore be on concrete, specific forms of Othering and marginalization, such as anti-Blackness. Discussion can thus uncover class and racial projects, call them by name, and seek informed actions towards opposing racial-class projects. Ongoing debates about sustainable agriculture's conventionalization, for instance, can include inquiry into differential race-class impacts. When movements discuss Othering overtly – whether about between group Othering (for example, racism), within group Othering (for example, internalized hatred), or Othering of distant others (for example, anti-poor-Southern-white classism) – they bolster healing and lay the groundwork for larger We's. Dialogues along these lines (combined with action) can move towards generating 'class projects' that are most likely to be multi-class in composition, requiring that participants be self-aware and open about their class positions to begin with (hence the need for simultaneous attention to Othering *and* capitalism). Effective interventions to reach towards convergence need to be conscious at the individual, group, and sectoral levels of how race and class intersect in constructing counter-hegemonic 'race-class projects'. Without this transparency and awareness, efforts to counter Othering can fall into various forms of identity essentialism, and efforts to overcome capitalism can reproduce various existing

modalities of stratification. For instance, BIPOC-led farming and food enterprises might brainstorm ways to avoid their own co-optation into capitalist values and circuits.

#### 5.4.4. Principle 4: Accompanying redistributive discourse with redistributive action

Dialogue is important, but many of this research's subjects emphasized acts beyond words, especially tangible support and support which is grounded in mutual reciprocity and humanization. Multiple Indigenous interviewees and leaders who I encountered in fieldwork, such as A-dae Romero-Briones of FNDI, Corrina Gould of the Sogorea Te' land trust, Maya Harjo of Cultural Conservancy, and Valentin Lopez of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, expressed that solidarity with Indigenous peoples cannot be merely symbolic, or performative, and must be tangible. Each provided a critique of 'land acknowledgments'<sup>84</sup> when they are conducted as 'just a check-box', a perfunctory exercise, engaged without any accompanying action. For example, to take on this principle, land acknowledgments could point those assembled to ongoing, place-based Indigenous struggles to support and engage with. 'Redistributive' discourse (talk that, like land acknowledgments, valorizes Others or redirects attention and/or resources to them) must be accompanied by redistributive *acts*.

Transformative work also involves challenging oneself and others, in order to act in solidarity. Daniel O'Connell, director of the Central Valley Partnership, said that he moved to the Valley precisely to use his white-male-educated privilege to 'go inside the power structure and hemorrhage it, causing little fissures that could be opened later'. Daniel insists that to do this

You need to have this odd juxtaposition of humility and getting out of the way. At the same time, sometimes, particularly when the attacks are coming on communities, you need to step forward. Step back when things are good, step forward when the trouble and the shit's happening, the exact opposite of what most white people do.<sup>85</sup>

As Daniel's example (and the example from EcoFarm's DAG earlier) indicate, white allyship is not simply a matter of avoiding 'white fragility', or of discussing one's own complicity in white supremacist power structures. It is composed of *active* efforts and tangible changes that may involve personal risk and discomfort. White and otherwise advantaged people

should step out of their comfort zones, and take the brunt of recalcitrant pushback. But they must also work at self-awareness, such that such interventions are authentic rather than performative. Solidarity does not emerge simply or easily (Roediger 2016), but if we take seriously the aforementioned desires and appreciation of some movement actors for more feminine, humble ways of working in movement, solidarity appears more likely to emerge out of patient relationship building and dialogue that builds commitment to others, which generate the impetus to act boldly in personal interactions and in seeking institutional and organizational change. This is work of active counter-Othering.

Just as individuals can begin to address structural power imbalances, such as in race, through self-aware action at the individual level, groups (informal and organized alike) can address power imbalances that manifest and reflect divisions and inequities between sectors and organizations. This can look like the ethnically and culturally diverse Central Valley organizers who following Covid-19 rallied a mutual aid effort to raise millions of dollars in funds and distribute these directly to undocumented community members (who were ineligible for most state assistance).<sup>86</sup> It can look like the established, mostly-white nonprofit California FarmLink committing its grants and loan programmes to serve a minimum 50 per cent of BIPOC food producers (along with a much broader internal DEI campaign that seeks to shift structures of hiring, work culture, and more, towards racial justice as part of every aspect of its operation; see FarmLink 2021a). It includes remaking the white dominant culture in organizations, such that DEI initiatives do not simply replicate problematic dynamics but with more diverse staff. It also can mean redistributing capital – acknowledging the political-economy of capitalism is here today, even while you may seek to overcome it. A ‘green economy’ organizer and consultant whose firm organized and raised \$1.1 million for the ‘Force for Good’ fund to capitalize women- and BIPOC-run green businesses<sup>87</sup> recognized that

the problem [of capital for values-driven food and farm businesses] is compounded for women entrepreneurs and person of color entrepreneurs or teams or communities or co-ops because structural racism, structural sexism, and the categorical exclusion of marginalized populations from the capital stack.<sup>88</sup>

These are forms of what we might consider redistribution, moving resources from those who have it to those frontline communities who have been historically, systematically robbed. These direct forms are complemented by policy interventions that follow what has been described as ‘targeted universalism’ (powell et al. 2019), following Blackwell’s (2017) description of the ‘curb cut effect’, wherein policies targeted at marginalized groups end up benefiting other groups as well.

From Chapter 4’s historical examples to today’s efforts to build a land base for various Other-led food production efforts, we see another realm of needed action (beyond dialogue): prefigurative action that builds resources for collective agency and community resilience in a diversity of communities at the base of the food systems (and facing the brunt of its injustices). Both the relatively privileged and the Othered can contribute to these resources through redistributive and prefigurative action. To be truly ‘decolonial’, settler-led food movements must operate in dialogue with specific Indigenous peoples in place, show dedication in action to returning land and providing support to Indigenous groups, and recognize the discomfort of ‘uncertain settler futurities’ (Kepkiewicz 2019: 260). Yet, I encountered not one Indigenous organizer for whom ‘land back’ meant uncertainty as to whether settlers would continue to live on Indigenous land. As Corrina Gould said, their efforts are ‘not about ownership, it’s about co-creating [with non-Indigenous people] a world that’s different than what we have now.’ In co-creating that other world, collective agency and community resilience are invaluable, themselves strengthened and made more likely by dialogue based in humility and openness to discomfort, and redistributions of resources within and between unequal social groups. These are the preconditions for convergence, and some of the essential tasks of contemporary food movements.

#### 5.4.5. Principle 5: The generative nature of conflict

As we saw in the section on interpersonal tensions, ‘difficult’ conversations can be generative of organizational change towards inclusivity, and even if some movement members (particularly the privileged) see the conflicts that emerge as negative, this is not necessarily the case if we are looking towards convergence. Challenges to the status quo are necessary for convergence that includes the marginalized, even if conflictual, and even when taking place as part of dialogues. Acknowledging and addressing issues of Othering is one way in which conflicts are surfaced. Hence, people

need boldness to bring up (continued) Othering. To do so takes willingness to have uncomfortable moments and for many, to risk money, social status, and professional positions. As Orta-Martínez et al. (2018: 1) argue, scholars should move beyond ‘the dominant approach in the [socio-environmental conflict] literature, which sees dialogue as inherently desirable and conflict as necessarily unwelcome’. Furthermore, they argue that ‘the overcoming of environmental injustice in certain circumstances ... cannot be possible through a process of dialogue and negotiation and also requires various forms of direct action that take grievance and complaint to the level of open conflict’ (ibid). This acceptance of conflict also resonates with the chapter’s opening theoretical discussion, where such theories see conflict as inherent to processes that move settler-colonial societies towards decolonization and the revolutionary overcoming of capitalism and other (associated) forms of domination. Last, we might recognize that efforts to redistribute resources and attention can be construed as threats and responded to as such; such efforts are more likely to *generate* than *avoid* intra-movement tensions, yet they are crucial steps towards convergence, and so (certain) conflicts must be embraced not avoided.

#### 5.4.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, we saw how tensions emerge at three registers – interpersonal, inter-organizational/inter-sectoral, and philosophical – as movements work towards their emancipatory goals of recognition, representation, redistribution, and regeneration. That is, this chapter helped us get at how different Californian food movement sectors conceive of and manifest emancipatory politics – and what happens when they do this. Informed by insights from intersectional Marxism, Black radical traditions, Indigenous resurgence theory, and anarchism, we saw how many of these tensions are rooted in preexisting forms of hegemonic power in the ‘integral state’ (for example, the continued power of capitalist- and political-class dominated funding bodies over the more multi-class, multi-ethnic and worker-oriented recipients of funding, that is, nonprofits). Yet not all tensions were clear cases of hegemony in which one dominant class (capitalists) or identity group (whites) oppresses the non-dominant opposing sector. At times, internal-to-group domination compromises movement group functioning; at other times, members of dominant groups leverage their positionality to act in solidarity with Othered groups; the changing



demands of professionalizing activism can create tensions within objectively-considered identity and class groups.

Regarding the overall concern with convergence, based on the evidence from contemporary Californian emancipatory food movements, and in dialogue with movement theory lineages discussed at the start of the chapter, I have proposed five normative principles to guide both the study of US food movements and their pursuit of convergence towards radical, emancipatory change. These principles form vital considerations as research attentions and movement approaches in studying and pursuing convergence, and they can be considered across the (inter)personal, (inter)organizational/sectoral, and philosophical registers. They are: (1) humility, (2) recognition that action begins in relationships, *combined with* attention to structures that shape these relationships/possibilities, (3) *explicit* dialogue on capitalism and Othering as primary structures shaping movement work, (4) accompanying redistributive (that is, Other-valorizing) discourse with redistributive action, and (5) recognition that conflict is necessary, and often generative, towards emancipatory change and convergence.

Theoretically, the chapter solidified the need to advance an *intersectional* Marxism, which does not a priori prioritize economic class above other co-constitutive dynamics of group belonging (whether objective, described by the analyst, or subjective, described by the individual or group in question). Our discussion of the BRT's analysis of race and class strengthens the notion that one cannot analyze relations between food movement groups (or between movements and the state apparatuses they must deal with) without considering the ways in which economic class has interpenetrated with racial formation, racial projects, and racialized self-identity that moves towards constructing 'identities-for-themselves'. At the very least this suggestion holds for the US and places culturally structured upon racialized economies. BRT simultaneously gave us a view towards some of the prefigurative strategies of Black people in opposing their chronic Othering, particularly the escape-and-build strategy of marronage, and collective agency and community resilience's focus on constructive projects that build assimilative resources (such as property ownership and wealth generation), but also valorize those involved and their specific (rather than abstracted, generalized 'worker') contributions. It is worth noting that while marronage has a clearly antagonistic relationship to the state – an aspect shared with anarchism, alongside anarchism's bias

towards prefigurative politics – the collective agency and community resilience approach (as developed by White 2018) is more so focused on the prefigurative rather than the oppositional. This, we will see in the next chapter, becomes more important once we turn to dealing more directly with the role of the state in emancipatory visions and strategies.

What the chapter did not address deeply, even if it alluded to it, was the central role of the state apparatus in the ‘integral state’, and how the historic conditions of this apparatus vis-à-vis emancipation for different classes and groups influence how today’s social movements conceive of the state apparatus, its prospects in contributing to emancipation, and their approaches to making change through, outside, and/or against it. Without a deeper examination of this factor of difference – differences between sectors and groups in their ‘theories of change’ regarding the state – we cannot satisfactorily answer the research’s central research question. In particular, to understand how such movement efforts affect the progress and development of rightwing politics, we must unpack further the tripartite relationship among rightwing politics, emancipatory movements, and the state apparatus (via a continued lens of intersectional-class dynamics within an integral state). And so, it is to those considerations that I turn in Chapter 6.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Beyond the basic consideration of which theories best help me answer my research questions, I have selected theories based on three factors. One, that these are key to my empirical site of the United States, a capitalist settler-colony with an economic history rooted in racialized chattel slavery. Two, my research focus on ‘others’ includes constituent groups who have generated some of these theoretical traditions: Black radicals, women, queers, and Indigenous ‘North Americans’. As such, these allow views to certain solidarities and Otherings crucial to US history and to their operations within today’s integral state. Third, these traditions are generating particularly vibrant debates in recent years on, for example, the relation of racism to colonialism; or of Black experiential overlaps with indigeneity (Simpson et al. 2018); of queering Black liberation movements (Carruthers 2018); all of which offer stimulating considerations and analysis useful to future research following this line of approach.

<sup>2</sup> Liberal versions of intersectionality theory *do* often support such a politics of inclusion-as-transformation; perhaps due to their distance from a critique of capitalism. Derided by Fraser (2016: 282) as ‘progressive neoliberalism’: ‘liberal-individualist understandings of “emancipation” [that] had gradually replaced the more expansive, anti-hierarchical, egalitarian, class-sensitive, anti-capitalist understandings that had flourished in the 1960s and 1970s’. See also Brenner and Fraser (2017).

<sup>3</sup> See Wolf 1969 for historical research showing that peasants rather than waged workers were the main protagonists in the notable revolutions of the twentieth century, against orthodox Marxist prescriptions.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Since the 1970s there has been a tendency – an increasing tendency – to see the Left essentially as a coalition of minority groups and interests: of race, gender, sexual or other cultural preferences and lifestyles, even of economic minorities such as the old getting-your-hands-dirty, industrial working class have now become. This is understandable enough, but it is dangerous, not least because winning majorities is not the same as adding up minorities’ (Hobsbawm 1996: 44).

<sup>5</sup> There are debates about the relative weights given race and class, theoretically and in specific places/examples (Burden-Stelly 2020, Ralph & Singhal 2019). But importantly, if we accept a racial capitalism framing, this means that all ‘class projects’ are also racial projects, and racial projects as introduced in Chapter 2 (including counter-hegemonic ones) have class impacts. Regardless of the exact proportioning, I believe that for this research it is adequate to simply keep in mind their linked nature, and to expect the exact division to evolve historically and according to situated context.

<sup>6</sup> My video interview with Maya Harjo, December 2020, was particularly helpful to clarifying my understanding here.

<sup>7</sup> I interviewed four Indigenous activists formally, as well as interacted and had conversations with another dozen or so Indigenous people from across North America throughout fieldwork. This relational view was consistently reflected, and also appears prominently in the words of the Indigenous food activists featured in the 2020 documentary film *Gather*.

<sup>8</sup> In turn, these processes and concepts of belonging can underpin Indigenous alliances with non-Natives, as shown in Grossman 2017. Indeed, if all things are considered as ‘relations’ – including plants, animals, waters, landscapes – the non-Indigenous, including humans, are relevant to Indigenous theories of liberation. The expansion of ‘belonging’ and ‘relations’ to encompass settlers may (at times, not inherently) engender emancipatory politics that benefit Indigenous people, and the land itself.

<sup>9</sup> Alongside Tuck and Yang (2012), North American theory on Indigenous-and-food issues (e.g. Kepkiewicz & Dale 2018; Lewis 2017) seems to emphasize the

tangible if compared with the lineage of ‘decoloniality’ scholarship, which seems to focus on epistemic and discursive dimensions as central fronts of decolonization (e.g. Grosfoguel 2007).

<sup>10</sup> See <https://sierraseeds.org/rowens-story/>.

<sup>11</sup> Previous research has noted how white-led organizations of urban agriculture tend to receive more press coverage – and funding – than people of colour-led counterparts (Reynolds & Cohen 2016). I do acknowledge, as mentioned in Chapter 3, an oversight in data sources, in that food sector workers (for example, restaurant servers and cooks, workers in the food chain beyond farm production) are one of the most marginalized sectors of society, as well as being composed largely of POC and in many cases migrants. However, I did not include these sectors in my research, largely due to my existing relationships with movements not including so many of the organizations and organizers in this sector.

<sup>12</sup> This includes recently the high-profile upheavals led by BIPOC movements, particularly the Black-led uprisings against racist police killings and the water protector movement of Indigenous peoples acting directly against fossil fuel infrastructure development, which achieved greater visibility following 2016’s Standing Rock action. Historically, examples such as when ‘in 1990, a broad coalition of multiracial grassroots environmental justice activists, led by the SouthWest Organizing Project (SWOP) of New Mexico, sent a searing 12-page letter to the then-largest ten environmental nonprofits in the U.S. (including, *e.g.*, the Sierra Club, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund (now Earthjustice)). That missive called out these organizations for (among other faults) failing to diversity their staffs, failing to engage indigenous peoples and people of color in decision-making, and failing to consult and involve communities in NGO program planning that directly affected them’ (Polsky 2020, para. 2).

<sup>13</sup> One ecofarming advocate (phone interview, July 2019) says ‘we’ve reached the farmer’s market plateau and market saturation generally speaking [for small, locally-focused ecological farmers]’.

<sup>14</sup> For instance, the decades-old Cornucopia Institute (<https://www.cornucopia.org/>) and 2017-founded Real Organic Project (<https://www.realorganicproject.org/>).

<sup>15</sup> Phone interview, May 2021.

<sup>16</sup> Phone interview, May 2021.

<sup>17</sup> This quote is from a white NGO worker, phone interview, August 2020.

<sup>18</sup> Some examples include: California FarmLink (2021, 2021a); CAFF (2021); CUESA (2020); KTA (2020).

<sup>19</sup> See <https://www.farmersoftheglobalmajority.com/>.

<sup>20</sup> This data from interviews and informal conversation at EcoFarm 2019, 2020, follow up conversations with three attendees after EcoFarm 2021, and personal communication, May 2021.

<sup>21</sup> Phone interview, July 2020.

<sup>22</sup> Phone interview, July 2019.

<sup>23</sup> CFJC is POC-founded and driven, but has seen the participation and support of white members.

<sup>24</sup> In-person interview, October 2019.

<sup>25</sup> In-person interview with a farmer-activist, Sebastopol, October 2019.

<sup>26</sup> Video interview, November 2019.

<sup>27</sup> Video interview, October 2020.

<sup>28</sup> A simple search of their website for the terms 'Indigenous food sovereignty' shows dozens of results from 2019 to 2021, and only a handful from before 2018.

<sup>29</sup> Personal communication, December 2016.

<sup>30</sup> These include Líderes Campesinas, the Border Agricultural Workers Project, Community 2 Community Development, and Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño.

<sup>31</sup> Examples include DC-based advocacy NGO Farmworker Justice, the union-like Coalition of Immokalee Workers that works on pressuring corporate buyers of farm goods, and the worker-friendly certification-focused Agricultural Justice Project.

<sup>32</sup> Video interview with FoodLink for Tulare's Executive Director, September 2020.

<sup>33</sup> In the US, the role of Black people as radical vanguards is a recurring theme and debate, as described in Laura Pulido's (2006) book on multi-ethnic revolutionary organizations in the 1960s Los Angeles.

<sup>34</sup> See NYFC (2016, para. 3).

<sup>35</sup> The Partnership's Director, Daniel O'Connell, described Central Valley Partnership (in-person interview, February 2020) as originally a 'coalition of labour unions and environment conservation groups, that after Trump, I expanded into LGBTQ advocacy, immigrant defense, increased integration of women, and moved to a regional posture, with labour unions being a continuing substantial force.'

<sup>36</sup> Personal communication with Kassandra Hishida (CAFA), June 2021.

<sup>37</sup> This emphasis on political education can also be seen elsewhere in my fieldwork: the HEAL Food Alliance's 2019 summit included debates on (among other topics)

what ‘reparations’ would entail for Black people in the US; the USFSA has a ‘political education collective’ which among other activities organized an in-person gathering for around 40 USFSA members and allies in Florida in March 2020. The People’s Agroecology Process has centred political education in its organizing model, conducted through agroecology encounters in BIPOC communities across North America.

<sup>38</sup> Data from Swift Foundation-hosted webinar, November 16, 2020, material written by 11<sup>th</sup> Hour staff (Roberts 2018), and personal communications with funders (March 2019).

<sup>39</sup> These coopting and demobilizing effects will be discussed further later in this chapter and in Chapter 6.

<sup>40</sup> In keeping with discussion informed by Marxism, I should note that (economic) class tensions appear in each of these registers, as in the salience of differences between class positions of individuals in interpersonal conflict, or between wealthy philanthropist institutions and the organizations they fund.

<sup>41</sup> Peter Ruddock, video interview, December, 2020.

<sup>42</sup> Phone interview, December 2019.

<sup>43</sup> Personal communication, June 2020.

<sup>44</sup> ‘[M]any of the call outs burning through our movements today don’t feel aligned with the lineage of this tactic. Right now, call outs are being used not just as a necessary consequence for those wielding power to cause harm or enact abuse, but to shame and humiliate people in the wake of misunderstandings, contradictions, conflicts, and mistakes’ (brown 2020: 41).

<sup>45</sup> In-person interview, October 2019.

<sup>46</sup> See NBFJA commentary on the bill: <https://www.blackfoodjustice.org/nbfjab-lackfoodblog/2020/12/7/the-justice-for-black-farmers-act>

<sup>47</sup> The data for this example comes from personal communications with multiple impacted parties, participant observation in activist and academic spaces involving this scholar, my own interactions with him since 2010, and listserv discussions following his ‘outing’.

<sup>48</sup> The fact that so many of the contradictions I encountered involved men acting patriarchally indicates that perhaps food movements need to engage more and further with feminism – a suggestion I myself intend to take more seriously in future research. This would entail not just women’s critiques of ‘men behaving badly’, but the plethora of insights that feminist lenses have brought to critical research; among others, for example, ecofeminism (Merchant 1980; Mies 1986), social reproduction theory (Dalla Costa 1972), and critiques of problematic forms of social movement leadership and organization (Freeman 1971).

<sup>49</sup> Personal communication, May 2021.

<sup>50</sup> However, it is important to note that CAFF based its decision to oppose proposed overtime legislation not only on the wishes of its small farmer members, but also interviews with farmworkers on those farms. Many farmworkers, they were told directly, believed the legislation would cause farmers to simply cut hours to eight per day, undermining their ability to work intensively and thus earn more in shorter periods when intensive work is needed (personal communication with CAFF Director Paul Towers, July 2021).

<sup>51</sup> This information comes from personal observation and communications with this funder and some of its funding recipients throughout 2017-2020.

<sup>52</sup> See HEAL 2020a para. 4.

<sup>53</sup> Swift Foundation webinar, November 16, 2020.

<sup>54</sup> Phone interview, November 2019.

<sup>55</sup> Personal communication, May 2021.

<sup>56</sup> Participant observation (March 2019) and personal communication, April 2019.

<sup>57</sup> However, two interviewees (Peter Ruddock, video interview and written notes, December 2020; Katy Mamen, personal communications, October 2020) with experience with funding and food policy councils insisted that policy is *not* the food movement activity most commonly supported by private philanthropy. I was unable to find a synthetic review (for either California or the US as a whole) that assessed how much funding goes to food movement groups, and to what kinds of activities. This seems an important research gap to fill. The idea that work on policy is more fundable is supported by experiences such as the aforementioned ‘progressive’ funder’s asking diverse groups to make their collective work more rationalizable as ‘policy-applicable’. Paul Towers, director of CAFF (phone interview, July 2019), says they have a harder time raising funds for farmer organizing and policy advocacy than for ‘direct service work’.

<sup>58</sup> See Ag Innovations’ website: <https://aginnovations.org/about-us/approach/>

<sup>59</sup> In-person interview, Sebastopol, October 2019.

<sup>60</sup> This data comes from informal conversations over the past ten years, since I began working as a facilitator in some of these kinds of processes in California, and was told by some activists why they would not participate in these processes. Others critiqued them in a less-politicized fashion, simply finding them unproductive and not useful to their immediate work concerns (compared with other uses of their time). I also experienced firsthand how more marginalized constituencies regularly were prevented from participating due to myriad other demands on their time (for example, emergency farming matters, dealing with sudden crises in their home community).

<sup>61</sup> Personal communication, May 2021.

<sup>62</sup> Personal communication with Katy Mamen, May 2021.

<sup>63</sup> Personal communication, May 2021.

<sup>64</sup> In-person interview, July 2019.

<sup>65</sup> Personal communication with CFJC activists, January 2021.

<sup>66</sup> Personal communication, May 2021.

<sup>67</sup> As a farmer-member led organization, CCOF is also foundationally composed of active capitalists, and beneficiaries of colonial dispossession, even if the large majority of these are in actuality ‘small-scale’, and would be perhaps termed ‘petty commodity producers’ (Bernstein 2010) or ‘peasant-like’ in values and operation (van der Ploeg 2009).

<sup>68</sup> This data comes from interviews with staff from this organization (February 2019) and participant observation in a related webinar in 2020. For more on the communications strategy, see <https://raceclassnarrativeaction.com/>. Uprooted and Rising <https://www.uprootedandrising.org/> is another example where ‘Big Food’ rather than ‘capitalism’ forms the opposition – even though my fieldwork found the organization’s organizers personally committed to anticapitalism.

<sup>69</sup> Phone interview, July 2019.

<sup>70</sup> From notes taken attending UC Berkeley Webinar, April 2021.

<sup>71</sup> Swift Foundation Webinar, November 16, 2020.

<sup>72</sup> This statement is from the aforementioned HEAL (2020a, para. 6) letter to funders regarding unequal funding for POC leadership – what they described as ‘just the latest flare up of an issue that has plagued the practices of way too many foundations for way too long’ (ibid: para. 18).

<sup>73</sup> In-person interview, Sacramento, July 2019.

<sup>74</sup> Personal communication, March 2021.

<sup>75</sup> Video interview, October 2020.

<sup>76</sup> Phone interview, December 2019. The interviewee went on: ‘I think it’s okay if people say “I’m going to work with the big players completely reluctantly and see them and see their transformation as part of the transformation, part of the effort”. But ultimately, they need to be dismantled and if that means that they die, if the corporate form dies as we know it, the multinational corporations, that would be acceptable and great. If it has to transform fundamentally that’s, to me, it’s the same thing as it would have to be so structurally different that we wouldn’t recognize it.’

<sup>77</sup> Phone interview, July 2020. Although it did not form the central line of inquiry here, my fieldwork data suggests that gendered aspects to movement convergence deserve greater consideration in further research.



<sup>78</sup> Video interview, December 2020.

<sup>79</sup> In comparing environmental justice and degrowth paradigms, Gerber (2020: 253) points to the need ‘to transform NIMBY movements (not in my backyard) into NIABY movements (not in anyone’s backyard) actively seeking broader transformations.’

<sup>80</sup> Phone interview, December 2019.

<sup>81</sup> Video interview, February 2021.

<sup>82</sup> Even if it is difficult if not impossible to answer the question of whether capitalism is truly surmountable (and if so, *how*), it is a question that needs to continually be asked. Seeking ‘radical’ horizons of emancipation means dealing with long term considerations and goals. In maintaining visions beyond a world defined by capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy, and governance by way of the (capitalist) nation-state, self-perceived radical food movements must grapple with the ways urgency sometimes contradicts with holding to such radical horizons.

<sup>83</sup> This quote is taken from a slide from the ‘Naming What We Want: Central Valley Agroecology Virtual Funder Convening’ webinar from April 2021: <https://zoom.us/rec/play/fCWGlo14a8LB1ID-1ACHTr8eGYXDOA4EILqi5AV0I2moQZ5on08s-hHidXMUO9gS1eG9Wr5rlbP9j9ld.kChGNH-gUu41wZxz?start-Time=1619716121000>.

<sup>84</sup> A land acknowledgment is an increasingly common practice wherein a speaker at an event mentions or recognizes the Indigenous tribes or nations on whose land the event takes place, as a recognition that the ‘original peoples’ of the land had their land stolen or ill-gotten through colonization. (The data for this paragraph came from video interviews in October and December, 2020, and webinar participant observation, March 2, 2021.)

<sup>85</sup> Both this and the previous quote are from an in-person interview, Fresno, February 2020.

<sup>86</sup> See <https://centralvalleymutualaid.org/>

<sup>87</sup> See <https://www.lifteconomy.com/forceforgood>.

<sup>88</sup> Phone interview, December 2019.

## 6

## Radical convergence part 2: theories of change, the state, and food movement strategy towards emancipatory politics

### 6.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on social movement convergence by way focusing on state-related elements of movement dynamics and ideas, around which tactics, tensions, prospects for convergence circulate.<sup>1</sup> This is not an ontological claim (that is, that the state is the centre of political reality around which all other politics exist only in relation), but rather is only a methodological approach: to look at axes of difference (as Chapter 5 did) via one important factor – how movement actors, groups, and sectors engage and relate to state structures. *How do contemporary Californian food movement sectors conceive of problems, solutions, and trajectories for social change with regards to the state?* I consider movement conceptions to constitute the ‘theories of change’ (ToCs) in which movement sectors’ (state-related) strategies fit. From this question, I ask furthermore how ToCs and strategies relate to one another, shaping emancipatory politics within and between sectors, and (thus) the prospects for convergence. How food movements understand the state, and how they address it, are consequential as well to their effects on rightwing politics.

In this, it is important to not treat ‘the state’ in complete abstraction. All states operate differentially, according to domestic and international/transnational class forces, culture and narratives, constitutions and laws, ideology and material conditions (Jessop 2007). As theoretically introduced in Chapter 1, supplemented by engagement with various theoretical traditions in Chapter 5, and illustrated throughout the text, I approach the US state apparatus as generally pro-capital(ist), colonial, anti-ecological, and suppressive of counter-hegemonic social forces through

(chronic and acute) forms of coercion and the generation of consent, set within an integral state and its historical and geographic enmeshed-ness.<sup>2</sup> I build in this chapter on the typological approach to food movements and movement strategy, as in the work of Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011) and E. O. Wright (2013), with a new typology that views food movements' different ToCs in terms of tensions. Particularly, two main tensions are outlined: of seeking revolutionary change versus reforms (with regards to capitalism), and of statist approaches versus nonstate and anti-state approaches. Taking off from theories covered in Chapter 5, I start from the assumption that capitalist relations of production must be overcome in order for a 'revolution' to have definitively taken place: 'revolutionary' must mean anticapitalist. As Wright (2013: 20) puts it: 'radical anti-capitalists have often believed that decisively breaking the power of capital [i.e. revolution] is a precondition for significant movement toward socialism rather than mainly a consequence of such movement'.<sup>3</sup>

Building on previous similar typologies, I bring additional attention to how movements' ToCs interact, to identify what prevents the more radical, more socialist, more revolutionary aspects of movements from gaining prominence, adherents, and force. That is, I seek to understand dynamics towards a *specifically radical* food movement convergence. Looking at food movements through the lens of more large-scale socialist or radical change aspirations, within which alternatives interact, is helpful to emancipation-oriented research in crystalizing how different ToCs vis-à-vis state power relate dialectically and historically to US settler-colonial state dynamics.

The chapter finds that movement sectors in their rhetoric and action continue legacies of various radical (that is, anticapitalist and nonstate) traditions, combined with more reformist and statist traditions. As BIPOC formations have become more prominent, radical ToCs have also become more prominent. Food movements involving Others *do* use both capital and state to reach towards emancipation, but they also oppose these forces in rhetoric and practice, challenging the status quo of how each operates. The chapter also finds that BIPOC food movements' use of non-state strategies is practical, if we take seriously the normative Black radical, Indigenous resurgence, and anarchist emphases on prefiguration. Throughout the chapter, I try to recognize the diversity and interpenetration of movement sectors, their dynamism and the not-straightforward relationship between beliefs, aspirations, options, and actions – particularly re-

garding the (disaggregated) state. I bring state theory together with a variegated and critical yet sympathetic understanding of food movements' approaches to making change, and describe ToC differences among movements in terms of tensions rather than as describing exclusive categories. The chapter's theoretical conclusion is that scholarship that approaches food movement theories of change in terms of *tensions* rather than dichotomies, with reference to radical change as a 'north star', can better understand both the historic lineages to contemporary action and the potential effects of the particular constellation of actions today on future political developments.

The chapter will develop as follows. I introduce the chapter's lens of ToCs, along with a discussion of the major tensions within these of revolutionary anticapitalism versus reformism, and of statist approaches versus nonstate and anti-state approaches. After introducing this heuristic and how it can help scholars address the true diversity and interpenetrating nature of complex social movements, I then describe the sectors in this study, focusing on how their ToCs fit (and do not) this heuristic typology, and how these relate to Othering/solidarity dynamics. Finally, I offer reflections on how theories of food movement action might be improved via greater and more nuanced attention to the state (and ToCs about it), and on practical moves that may help food movements work across inevitable differences in ToCs, reaching towards effective convergence that advances a radical emancipatory politics.

### 6.1.1. A typology of Theories of Change (ToCs) and their major tensions

ToCs denote the mental models that humans operate on, in seeking to adjust their conditions of life: how do we think change happens, and how might we act in order to generate the change we seek? ToCs are inherently spatial understandings, as well, as they describe where action must occur to shape territorial policies, territorial resource use, and so on (see for example Bledsoe and Wright [2018] on Black geographies). ToCs are not always overt or known to the persons who hold them, and are plentiful, wide-ranging, and often held inconsistently. That is, it is largely an artifice of 'theory' and political analysis that sees more cohesion and consistency in ToCs among actors than is evident. As we shall see, groups (joined together politically, socially, or according to group identity) are internally inconsistent in how they express ToCs, may change ToCs over time, and

may state one ToC and act out another. Individuals are no less dynamic. Hence, ToCs should be taken as insightful not as some analytical schema that seeks to freeze people and groups into position, but insofar as it helps us see why certain people take particular actions, and how such actions at a wider scale interact, influencing each other and influencing the overall context. Specifically, we can see how peoples' ToC-informed actions shape the state's actions and decisions, as in the rare occurrence of George Floyd's police officer murderer being prosecuted and receiving a guilty verdict in 2021. This anomalous verdict was precipitated by the largest protests in US history, inclusive of rebellious actions that burned down police stations, looted corporate chain stores, and struck fear in elites of larger, wider, sustained disruption. Those disruptive actions – the purview largely of a youthful base of BIPOC and allies and accompanied by revolutionary calls to 'abolish the police' – denote a very different ToC than those advanced by traditional racial justice nonprofits and clergy leaders, who regularly call for 'peace' and 'nonviolent' protest, in support of 'reforms' to policing institutions.

Most social science provides a nuanced, some might say noncommittal, response to questions of how different ToCs conflict and interact. That is, there is normative social science that promotes certain ToCs over others, but generally studies conclude analyses with non-recommendations like 'we must acknowledge that envisioning and enacting possibilities beyond capitalism is a process, it involves experimentation and exploration. Like all forms of experimentation and exploration, they take time and their outcomes will be incomplete' (Wilson 2013: 734). In responding to Allen and Guthman's (2006) critiques of the farm to school programmes in which they are involved, Kloppenborg and Hassanein (2006: 420) responded by noting Allen and Guthman's lack of

concrete proposals for what might be done to change things. They end their essay with a formulaic paragraph calling for realization of the usual range of decontextualized abstractions: "resistance," "critical thinking," "political action," "equity," "public funding," and "state support".

But hiding behind much of this scholarship, and taking front seats at times of social upheaval and in many movement spaces, are two longstanding lines of tension that scholars should be willing to say more about. One regards capitalism and its overcoming (or, 'revolution'): can capitalism be overcome, or not? Shall we seek that end, or just make do

with better conditions now, within capitalism? The other regards statism and nonstate tactics. Should movements use the state apparatus in pursuing emancipation, or not? Is using the state helpful to anticapitalist goals? If so, how? If not, why not? The tensions these questions reflect are real, but of course stating them as dichotomies – one answer or the other – oversimplifies the complex reality of how these tensions appear in movements, and in history. Histories may show how: reformism can influence the ways capitalism works, direct (and disruptive) challenges to the state can elicit reforms that were impossible in the absence of those challenges, the state may absorb revolutionary opposition, in the process changing its disposition, state-based reforms can influence the conditions and motivation for revolutionary change and nonstate action, while revolutions and revolutionary insurrections often morph into (or regress back to?) more limited reforms to the previous status quo. Statist reforms can influence the politics of Others and Othering, as in the example of representational politics that opens up space for Others' movement aspirations and (potentially) for more profound change. At the same time, the nature of political revolutionary actors can change in the process of their interactions with and entering into the state, and revolutionary energies can be demobilized by state processes. In sum, these two lines of tensions should be seen as heuristics to the more complex and realistic processes wherein anticapitalist, reformist, statist, and nonstate ToCs interact and change over time.

The anticapitalist revolution versus within-capitalism-reformism dichotomy is real, however, insofar as people operate from and promote ToCs that pit reform against revolution, and vice-versa. Certainly, there are strains of food movements that seek (somehow) to overcome capitalism, while there are others that find such a goal unrealistic or unnecessary. The same goes for statism versus nonstatism. As far as social movements in the US go, statism enjoys hegemonic status as does reformism. 'Politics' in common parlance is most often equated to what happens in the state apparatus. This status quo also now spans the globe, as nation-states have become the centre of political gravity ever since the consolidation of European global hegemony. Statism's opposite can be either vehemently anti-state (against any state or states in general), anti-(particular)state (often in reaction to some colonial imposition or regressive government), or non-state (merely interested in avoiding and nonparticipation in the state). For

ease I have collapsed these into one category of ‘nonstate’ (see also Ashwood 2018 for a related analytical approach).

The reform/revolution tension does not simply overlap with the statist/non-state tension. Conceivable positions include (1) reformist, statist; (2) reformist, non-statist; (3) revolutionary statist; (4) revolutionary non-statist. I have placed these four positions into quadrants in Figure 1 below. In position (1), the upper right-hand quadrant of Figure 1, we see examples of ‘mainstream’, or widely accepted, forms of politics: involving attempts to either directly gain state power (as in running for office), to influence elections, or to advocate for policy changes. In position (2), the upper left-hand quadrant, we see forms attempting to ‘change the world without taking power’ (Holloway 2002) that are not premised on fundamental antagonisms with capitalism or the general conditions of social order. Some projects of alternative local food economies (such as farmers markets and Community Supported Agriculture) fit here, insofar as they create solutions without ‘fighting the existing reality’ (as indicated in the oft-cited quote from US sustainable design luminary Buckminster Fuller). In position (3), the lower right-hand quadrant, we find theories of change that prioritize taking and utilizing state power *in order to transform or overcome capitalism in a revolutionary way*. This position is often counterpoised with position (4), the lower left-hand quadrant, in which we find anarchist and state-skeptical autonomist ideas, and actions that are directly opposed to both state and capital. As indicated in Figure 1 (below), projects and efforts in local economic institution and network development might be included in this fourth quadrant, insofar as they also contain oppositional, revolutionary content. There is, of course, slipperiness between each quadrant, but this is especially pronounced if one is trying to pin down projects between *nonstate-reformist* and *nonstate-revolutionary*, because this difference often comes down to rhetorical alignment and affiliation rather than the projects’ actual practices.

Figure 1: Typologies of ToCs

	Anti-State / Non-state	Statist
Reformist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Alternative local economies</li> <li>● Permaculture and ‘solutionary’ projects</li> <li>● ‘You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.’ — Buckminster Fuller</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ‘Liberal’ (aka progressive or social democratic) electoral politics</li> <li>● Running for office</li> <li>● Nonprofit policy advocacy campaigning</li> <li>● ‘Get out the vote’ campaigns</li> </ul>
Revolutionary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Insurrectionist anarchism</li> <li>● Direct action against capital/state</li> <li>● Social anarchist mutual aid economies</li> <li>● ‘Dual power’ initiatives (may be reformist also!)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Armed insurrection to capture state power</li> <li>● Socialist/Communist party efforts to capture state power</li> <li>● Self-described revolutionary state governing</li> </ul>



In outlining these four possibilities, useful analysis of contemporary social movements can begin from assessing how social change formations are arrayed within such a typology. Furthermore, it would want to pay attention to how movements move across and between quadrants, how they connect or are contrasted, and the ways and conditions in which they are pitted against each other (at levels of the individual, group, or sector). Finally, analysis could acknowledge how different traditions/ToCs/strategies are rooted in differential (historic and contemporary) group relations to the state, while still acknowledging historical change, convergence, and conditional unity among this difference. For example, the previous history of failed liberal reformist-statism in the Mexican state's treatment of poor Indigenous people in Chiapas, led to the revolutionary Marxism-Maoism of the early founders of the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (EZLN), who moved to the Chiapas jungle to 'organize' the Indigenous against their ill treatment (Gunderson 2018). But the encounter of these 'leaders' with the non-state indigenism of the communities in Chiapas led to the particular politics of the EZLN, which appears resolutely non-state and revolutionary, and combines elements of vertical, militaristic organization (of the type associated with revolutionary statism) and horizontal, prefigurative organization (of the type associated with the left side of Fig. 1). The resulting picture gives a better sense of how multiple, contemporaneous (extending from the past), interacting ToCs may converge, and what challenges and shapes that convergence. In light of the 'north star' of radicalism, the typology can further help us assess how interactions among quadrants make possible or not convergence that maintains a radical horizon.

## 6.2. E. O. Wright's alternative typology and the problems of the Non-Profit Industrial Complex

Wright (2013) described socialist strategies as ruptural, interstitial, and symbiotic. We can think of these (roughly) as state/revolution, non-state/revolution (and nonstate/reformism), and state/reformism, respectively. It is worth quoting Wright (2013: 20) at length:

*Ruptural* transformations envision creating new emancipatory institutions through a sharp break with existing institutions and social structures. The central image is a war in which victory ultimately depends on decisive defeat

of the enemy in a direct confrontation. Victory results in a radical disjuncture in which existing institutions are destroyed and new ones are built fairly rapidly. In most versions, this revolutionary scenario involves seizing state power, rapidly transforming state structures, and then using these new apparatuses of state power to destroy the power of the dominant class within the economy.

*Interstitial* transformations seek to build new forms of social empowerment in capitalist society's niches and margins, often where they do not seem to pose any immediate threat to dominant classes and elites. [The nineteenth century anarchist] Proudhon's vision of building a cooperative alternative to capitalism within capitalism itself is a nineteenth-century version of this perspective. The many experiments in the social economy today are also examples. The central theoretical idea is that building alternatives on the ground in whatever spaces are possible both serves a critical ideological function by showing that alternative ways of working and living are possible, and potentially erodes constraints on the spaces themselves.

*Symbiotic* transformations involve strategies in which extending and deepening institutional forms of social empowerment involving the state and civil society simultaneously help to solve practical problems faced by dominant classes and elites. In the 1970s, this was called "nonreformist reforms" – reforms that simultaneously make life better within the existing economic system and expand the potential for future advances of democratic power. It is also reflected in a variety of forms of civic activism in which social movements, local leaders, and city governments collaborate in ways that both enhance democracy and solve practical problems. (20)

But as even Wright (*ibid*) admits, capitalism has 'enormous capacity to effectively block alternatives'. And the historical record for any one of these strategies alone doesn't bode well:

It is easy to raise objections to each of them. Ruptural strategies have a grandiose, romantic appeal to critics of capitalism, but the historical record is pretty dismal. There are no cases in which socialism as defined here—a deeply democratic and egalitarian organization of power relations within an economy—has been the result of a ruptural strategy of transformation of capitalism. In practice, ruptural strategies seem more prone to result in authoritarian statism than in democratic socialism. Interstitial strategies may produce improvements in people's lives and pockets of more democratic

egalitarian practices, but nowhere have they succeeded in significantly eroding capitalist power relations. As for symbiotic strategies, in the most successful instances of social democracy they have certainly resulted in a more humane capitalism, with less poverty, less inequality, and less insecurity, but they have done so in ways that stabilize capitalism and leave intact the core powers of capital. Historically, any advance of symbiotic strategies that appeared to potentially threaten those core powers was massively resisted by capital. ... These are all reasonable objections. (ibid: 21)

Wright (2013: 20) proposes that movements focus on interstitial and symbiotic strategies, with occasions for ruptural ‘confrontations between opposing organized social forces in which there are winners and losers’, which is ‘part of any plausible trajectory of sustainable social empowerment’. What Wright does not develop in this particular analysis are the ways that certain strategies can work against each other, that is, tensions between strategies can have real, and counter-emancipatory, effects. Some symbiotic (that is, statist) efforts undermine the anticapitalist politics and the broad multifaceted working-class solidarity needed to build social forces towards interstitial and ruptural efforts. Some nonstate/reformist strategies (which Wright lumps in with nonstate/revolutionary efforts) may prevent anticapitalist commitments from expanding (especially insofar as they reshape social-change-making subjectivities into ones rooted in an economic identity within capitalism, that is, the subtle conventionalization of alternative economies), which would seem in turn to undermine the potential that future communities would contribute support to ruptural energies. Symbiotic strategies are constrained by the limits of liberal social democracy, as we’ve seen especially in Chapter 4’s discussion of the New Deal.

In looking at Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011: 115, 116, *emphasis added*) once more, two differences between their approach and conclusions and mine might be pointed out. The first, in approach, is that their typology considers the ‘radical’ food movement trend as that which

calls for food systems change on the basis of rights, but focuses much more on *entitlements, structural reforms to markets and property regimes*, and class-based, *redistributive demands* for land, water and resources, as captured in the notion of food sovereignty ... [and] not only introduce practical innovations for equity and sustainability to the food system, but also seek to change the structural conditions in which these innovations operate.

These descriptions indicate that radical movements *must seek entitlements from the state and petition the state for (redistributive) demands*, and are not looking (necessarily) beyond the state in visions of emancipation. In contrast, I consider ‘radical’ to mean both anticapitalist *and oriented towards generating a future beyond the alienating force and limitations of the capitalist nation-state*, as recognized as a necessity for socialism by Marx (1959 [1875]: 126) himself:

Freedom consists in converting the state from an organ superimposed upon society into one completely subordinate to it, and today, too, the forms of state are more free or less free to the extent that they restrict the “freedom of the state”.

This is not to disparage movement sectors that utilize state processes, but to recognize that for hundreds of years the horizon of emancipation has not been limited to the ‘politics of demand’ on the capitalist state (Day 2005), and that if we are interested in moving beyond capitalism, the role of the problematic state must be seriously, strategically considered. This calls into question Holt-Giménez and Shattuck’s (2011: 136) conclusion that ‘In order to influence the political nature of reform, the food movement will not only need to apply concerted social pressure, it will need to advance clear political proposals.’ Rather than call for convergence in order to rationalize and unify behind ‘clear political demands’ (ibid), which is an unstated statist assumption about emancipatory politics, this research reframes convergence *with a longer and wider view of emancipatory politics*, which may accept that state action is a necessary endeavor for social (including food) movements, but that is open to other options, processes, and horizons, and assumes that tensions between statism and nonstatism are just as much a factor in food movement convergence as tensions between anticapitalism and reformism.

### 6.2.1. The state of these tensions today

For the most part in contemporary US society, the idea of revolution is illegitimate, considered either unnecessary or unrealistic. Revolutionary social formations are small, considered marginal, and absent in most spaces of political discussion. Reform – via the state and its administrations, agencies, and laws, via consumer-driven changes to the practices of capitalist entities, and via grassroots ‘interstitial’ action – is the default form of making change, and thus the default ToC. Some trace this to the

rise of the ‘Non-Profit Industrial Complex’ (NPIC) and efforts of mainstream white institutions to regain control following revolutionary and racialized upheavals of the 1960s (Rodriguez 2007: 25). Rodriguez describes the NPIC as ‘the industrialized incorporation of pro-state liberal and progressive campaigns and movements into a spectrum of government-proctored non-profit organizations’ which has linked together the ‘political and financial technologies of state and owning-class proctorship and surveillance over public political intercourse, including and especially emergent progressive and leftist social movements, since about the mid-1970s’ (ibid: 21-23). Why be so concerned for the NPIC? Rodriguez (ibid) argues:

The Left’s investment in the essential political logic of civil society – specifically, the inherent legitimacy of racist state violence in upholding a white freedom, social “peace,” and “law and order” that is fundamentally designed to maintain brutal inequalities in the putative free world – is symbiotic with (and not oppositional to) the policing and incarceration of marginalized, racially pathologized communities, as well as the state’s ongoing absorption of organized dissent through the non-profit structure. While this alleged Left frequently considers its array of incorporated, “legitimate” organizations and institutions as the fortified bulwark of a progressive “social justice” orientation in civil society, I am concerned with the ways in which the broad assimilation of such organizations into a non-profit industrial complex actually enables more vicious forms of state repression [of radical social movements].

The NPIC critique describes a dynamic wherein reformism *is* opposed to revolution, the former undermining the latter. Rodriguez and other critics of the NPIC have developed these critiques in reference to the kind of racialized dynamics of policing and prisons that have resulted in 2020’s wave of protest and renewed debate (e.g. Mariame Kaba 2020, Angela Davis 2016). Still, the NPIC is not conceptually or empirically limited to those topics (for example, on trans issues, see Mananzala and Spade 2008, on social justice nonprofit workers, see Samimi and DeHerrera 2020). Most visibly as regards ideas of abolishing capitalism and policing, but also in any issue where substantial change is demanded by a marginalized sector of society, the NPIC is one way in which reformism at large operates as a form of ‘counterinsurgency’ (Rodriguez 2020). Smith (2007: 3) describes aspects of this counterinsurgency as

the way in which capitalist interests and the state use non-profits to: monitor and control social justice movements; divert public monies into private hands through foundations; manage and control dissent in order to make the world safe for capitalism; redirect activist energies into career-based modes of organizing instead of mass-based organizing capable of actually transforming society; allow corporations to mask their exploitative and colonial work practices through “philanthropic” work; encourage social movements to model themselves after capitalist structures rather than to challenge them.

Reformism’s current dominance in the imaginaries of social change-making, which ‘collapse[s] various sites of potential political radicalism into nonantagonistic social service and pro-state reformist initiatives’ (Rodriguez 2007: 26), also relates to longer legacies of anticommunism (e.g. Burden-Stelly 2017); indeed, reformists of many stripes have spent centuries belittling the rhetoric and ambitions of the revolutionary-minded. This was important rightwing political work in the context of the existence of national liberation and communist alternatives during the middle of the twentieth century and the explosion of revolutionary ToCs and action in the US they helped inspire. Since the late 1960s upheavals, the reform-minded have even managed to absorb some of the rhetorical power of ‘revolution’ into reformist processes, as evidenced by ‘political revolutions’ of democratic socialist candidates like Bernie Sanders and ‘revolutions’ in consumer product development and greenwashing. The result is that today, even the most well-known revolutionary political tradition (socialism) is characterized in the US by social democratic/democratic socialist (that is to say reformist-statist) theories, media, practices, and organizations (notably, the Democratic Socialist of America; see Manski et al. 2020). These notably lack the internationalism of the 1960s left, even on questions of obvious global importance like a ‘Green New Deal’ to tackle climate change (Ajl 2021).

Still, as described in the previous chapter, many (Leftist) revolutionaries do continue to theorize and promote revolution proper – a total change in social order, and one that challenges the capitalist nation-state, as I posited in Chapter 2 as the ‘north star’ of radicalism. Mainly, these advocates take up communist/socialist and anti-colonial traditions of Marxist, Marxist-Leninist, anarchist/libertarian socialist, anti-imperialist/nationalist, ‘Third-Worldist’, and Indigenous varieties. Revolutionaries are linked by common anti-capitalist commitments, with great variety in specific ToCs

as to how to overcome capitalism. Fundamentally, they are convinced that changes (reforms) *within* capitalism are inadequate, and this is what distinguishes them from reformists. Keeping in mind that such formations *have a lineage in the US*, and *do exist within food movements*, we now turn to various sectors of the food movement, to see where they tend to fall within our typological understanding of ToCs, and how these interact in order to prevent or enable radical convergence to take place.

### 6.3. Theories of change in various sectors

In this section, I cover a variety of examples from my fieldwork that illustrate how ToCs are reflected in how movements conceptualize, describe, and work on both societal problems and their solution. By nature describing a diverse subset of activity in broadly-construed ‘food/farm movements’, the section does not delve in too much depth to any one particular story. It seeks to highlight the parallels, differences, and discomforts that emerge when considering existing ToCs with regards to the role of the state among different sectors. I take different sectors one by one – moving through (1) farmworker organizing, (2) ecological farming advocacy and networks, (3) farmers of color, (4) environmental and food justice efforts, and (5) Indigenous organizing – although not all the work or individuals I encounter fit neatly into only one category. I tie in relevant historical-theoretical insights in order to frame each sector, building on previous chapters’ exposition and analysis, and pay attention to the counter-Othering (solidarity) dynamics involved in the work of each sector.

#### 6.3.1. Farmworkers

Unauthorized entry, the most common form of illegal immigration since the 1920s, remains vexing for both state and society. Undocumented immigrants are at once welcome and unwelcome; they are woven into the economic fabric of the nation, but as labor that is cheap and disposable. Employed in western and southwestern agriculture during the middle decades of the twentieth century, today illegal immigrants work in every region of the United States, and not only as farmworkers. They also work in poultry factories, in the kitchens of restaurants, on urban and suburban construction crews, and in the homes of middle-class Americans. Marginalized by their position in the lower strata of the workforce and even more so by their exclusion from the polity, illegal aliens might be understood as

a caste, unambiguously situated out the boundaries of formal membership and social legitimacy. (Ngai 2004: 2)

As outlined in so many Californian agrarian histories (Mitchell 1996, Walker 2004, Daniel 1982), agricultural workers have been systemically excluded, racially Othered, and undermined by the state and capital when seeking collective power and solidarity (although how different groups of workers have been treated has varied, this treatment has followed a consistent underlying logic). The state's active role in Othering migrants (Mexicans in particular), maintaining a cyclical process whereby new groups of more-exploitable migrants replace previous groups before the latter manage to achieve advances in dignified labour conditions, leads to no surprises about the state of agribusiness labour practices in California today. Given the history, it makes sense that farmworkers and families of farmworkers would be suspicious that the state would come through on their behalf. Still, farmworkers and their supporters *do* work today to benefit migrant workers and their families by appealing to the state, exposing its failure to protect workers, and challenging it with lawsuits. From generation to generation of farmworkers, change has more often resulted as descendants of farmworkers *leave* agricultural work and enter the 'melting pot' and meritocratic world of the American Dream, than it has from achieving truly transformative structural change via state policy or regulation of agribusiness. Aside from some individual stories of better economic success (or escape from farmwork for farmworkers' children), the racial structure of farm labour and political-economic expectations of growers for cheap labour available when needed remains largely untouched.

Several farmworker activists and advocates I encountered exhibited state skepticism, based on their own or familial relations of exploitation and exclusion vis-a-vis the state. To some advocates and farmworkers themselves, the extent of expectation – in some ways, a limited horizon of emancipation – is that migrant workers simply be given enough economic compensation and human treatment to survive with dignity (e.g. Leon 1975). Some seek to protect or support migrants via advocacy and direct support.<sup>4</sup> Some work to help farmworkers become 'their own boss' by becoming farm owners. Some descendants of migrant farmworkers have pursued (assimilation-oriented) education and credentials, leveraging these to gain greater access to power through institutions of education, research, NGOs, and government.



Ernesto Meza, a California-focused organizer formerly with the National Young Farmers Coalition (NYFC), is a movement participant raised by farmworkers who has worked on state policy for his day job, and has worked on some part of each of the aforementioned strategies, yet who also expresses skepticism of the state's willingness to serve migrant workers. Ernesto felt that 'even from a young age, sticking up for the little guy was always something I cared about', and knowing that BIPOC 'weren't recognized' in government and society, he was motivated to help 'David in those David and Goliath struggles'.<sup>5</sup> The NYFC hired Ernesto as part of its turn towards farmers of colour and elevating BIPOC voices in leadership and grassroots membership.

Beyond the advocacy position – in which one can simultaneously manage skepticism of the state and engagement of it – lays a deeper state engagement, that of seeking elected office and positions in state agencies. It is hard to imagine spending time accommodating to the standards and compromises inherent in state institutions of policy-making and implementation if one is suspicious of their potential of advancing any real and lasting change. Yet, we see examples in California of politicians who come from farmworker families and seek to improve farmworker conditions via policy, including current State Assembly members Robert Rivas and Cecilia Aguiar-Curry, and recently-elected Mayor of the Central Valley town of Madera, Santos Garcia. More broadly, first generation Mexican-Americans have become major actors in politics in states like California, Texas, and New Mexico (e.g. Márquez 2014). Some farmworkers and farmworker advocates certainly believe in the state.

The unfortunate history of farmworker treatment in California indicates the resilience of oppression, even with a decades-long history of various forms of assimilation. Assimilation by well-meaning farmworker-origin folks into the structures of power, as legislators and as farm owners, has not brought about a foundational shift in how workers are treated. Newer farmworkers from Mexico, often Oaxacan Indigenous people who do not necessarily speak Spanish, are as subject to mistreatment as those who formed the UFW's cadre. This is not to say there have been no changes, nor that cycles of policy and political-economic changes are irrelevant or inconsequential. Certainly, for farmworkers who have become successful independent farm operators, assimilation has been useful.<sup>6</sup> Policy to provide undocumented Californians (including but not only farmworkers) with Covid-19 relief funds was helpful to some workers – but

did not alter the conditions of their economic position, generally speaking. Even on its own terms, the funding was woefully inadequate, providing \$500 checks to 150,000 adults out of a population of two million undocumented residents (McConville 2021). As described below, various grassroots efforts to provide aid sprung up to fill the gap directly.

Debates about assimilation among migrant workers, specifically the undocumented, is seen in the debates among the so-called ‘Dreamers’, youth who were brought to the US by their parents and lack legal status. Dreamers assumed public prominence in their organization and advocacy for federal policy to legalize their existence in the US, leading to President Obama’s ‘Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals’ (DACA) programme. Yet, much of the discourse and organizing involved in passing DACA appealed to the ‘righteous or deserving migrant’ image of these youth – as opposed to the ‘criminal’ image of the parents themselves, or the scores of other immigrants who did not necessarily have the language, cultural, or political skills and capacities to defend their right to exist across the border under conditions of ‘imported colonialism’ (Ngai 2004: 13). To some, including leading Dreamers, this internal division of migrants, and necessity of appeal to the racist, colonial, oppressive logic of the border in compromised policy advocacy, was untenable. Instead, these elements have promoted a radical anti-borderism, militant state-skeptical politics, against reformist assimilation (Martinez et al. 2020). This radical positioning acts in overt solidarity with Others who – while socially close – could otherwise be held at a distance in order to seek more narrow personal gains.

Migrants have sought – but also at times rejected – recognition by the state, up to and including demands for citizenship (see Ngai [2004: 175–201] on the Japanese in World War II for diverse Japanese approaches). While some farmworker-serving efforts today focus on such state-oriented strategies, others pursue non-state solutions, such as an autonomously-managed farmworker garden project in Watsonville whose organizers I interviewed for this research, or the aforementioned grassroots efforts to provide ‘mutual aid’ for undocumented people in the Central Valley (founded by both undocumented and US-born people). The choice to pursue non-state solutions is not necessarily ideological. People by necessity pursue grassroots mutual aid when the state is unable or unwilling to protect or provide for them. Farmworkers themselves have also orga-

nized forms of mutual aid, such as the Oxnard-based project ‘De Campesinx a Campesinx (From Farmworkers to Farmworkers): Feeding those who feed us’. This coalitional effort launched in April 2020, spearheaded by farmworkers from Lideres Campesinas and Alianza Nacional de Campesinas, and has provided food, clothing, school supplies, as well as supporting farmworkers in navigating other relief programmes (Cabrera 2020). But mutual aid work *is* also at times informed by critiques of the state, colonialism, capitalism, and/or the NPIC, and reflects more radical ToCs. These critiques were involved in shaping the vision and organization of the Central Valley Mutual Aid effort, as seen in one of the effort’s stated principles (CVMA 2021, para. 5):

*Solidarity, not charity:* Mutual aid is the result of collective love and community-driven power. Mutual aid is not transactional, it is a deep belief in supporting each other with roots in Black and Indigenous tradition. We know our families and our communities have been practicing mutual aid for generations in varying forms to survive under colonization and capitalism.

Surveying the migrant farmworker sector, we see how any one particular sector is characterized by multivalent political tendencies. Some farmworkers seek to assimilate, but not all do, and there are strands of radicality in migrant and farmworker movements in California. Today’s migrant farmworker-focused formations are largely statist-reformist, nonstate reformist, and (in the mutual aid and radical Dreamer examples) nonstate/revolutionary. Additionally, stated beliefs and suspicions (such as state skepticism) do not translate directly to one way of acting. Opportunities are taken as they appear; work is pursued that seems necessary (like mutual aid) with the resources that are available. Conscious ToCs are not the only influence on how sectors pursue change: changed conditions and political opportunities (either opening or foreclosed) alter the ways people work. Frustrating, disempowering processes (such as the ups and downs and compromises involved in state legitimation in DACA struggles) can lead people to abandon statism, and take up more radical nonstate ToCs. Conversely, the limits of grassroots efforts (for example, the limits of autonomously developing successful farm ownership for farmworkers) can lead some to pursue advocacy for state intervention (for example, funding for programmes to incubate new migrant farmworker businesses).

### 6.3.2. Ecofarming

The US ecofarming sector has for decades been critiqued as politically inadequate by scholars, and seen as white and consumer-focused in general public perception. Some scholars see the sector's radical political possibilities as questionable, since its farming is mostly capitalist and maintains widely ranging levels of fidelity to a socially and ecologically beneficial 'agroecology' (Guthman 2004, 2004a). Charles Levkoe (2014, 386, 387) in his examination of 'the role that networks of [agrifood movement initiatives]... play in developing resistance to the corporate-led industrial food system' concludes that to previous scholarship 'the work of [agrifood movement initiatives] has been seen, at best, to have made little contribution to significant systemic change and, at worst, to be counterproductive, in that it ignores the interconnected nature of problems and is complicit in the neoliberalization of the food system.' In this section, my fieldwork re-confirms some of these previous assessments, but with some additions and alterations. Using the typology of Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011), California's ecofarming groups do tend to straddle the 'Reformist' and 'Progressive' trends of food movements (and occasionally lean Radical).<sup>7</sup> Although ecofarming has always included BIPOC, only in recent decades have BIPOC voices become more prominent, or more heard. This shift in the ecofarming sector has created openings for the discussion of more radical ToCs, and it seems that some 'progressive' ecofarming organizations are recently leaning more towards anti-capitalist and state-critical positions. Seen from Wright's (2013) analytical categorization, ecofarming groups (who are clearly not all socialist in the first place) have long tended towards 'interstitial' strategies (that is, creating alternative and local economies) and 'symbiotic' strategies (partnerships with the state, whether in organic certification, local food policy councils, or national policy work, often to bolster those interstitial efforts). 'Ruptural' strategies are essentially off the map in this sector. The sector has largely been state- and capital-friendly, or at least a willing partner with the state in agrarian business development, although at times the sector has pushed against the state's support of bigger capitals (for example, on the issue of pesticides). Certification is a contested space, but is fundamentally about market development, not the decommodification of food, as would be indicated by anticapitalist, socialist ToCs. I return to what we might learn from viewing this sector via my four-part typology, in interaction, after discussion of ecofarming sector dynamics in California (and the US).

In some ways, the ecofarming sector contrasts to the farmworker sector. Indeed, much critical research emphasizes the inherently antagonistic class relationship between workers on farms and farm owners (Gray 2013, Brown & Getz 2008). At the same time, from my fieldwork it appears that neither sector emphasizes anticapitalist critique. In California's case, the ecofarming sector is largely (although not purely) constituted by people with greater and more factors of privilege. More likely to be white, male, older, and to own land (like census-counted 'farmers' as a whole; see Horst & Marion 2019), ecological farmers seem to have less inherent reason for antagonism with the state, or skepticism of its ability to bring about the changes they seek. The history of organic certification – from farmer/owner-led movement of mutual certification to state-regulated labeling – shows this willing entry into state processes. However, this contrast does not completely hold, and there are other ToCs and approaches to the state in ecofarming sectors. Nativist localism, neo-libertarianism, and resistance to regulation – overlapping with political commitments across the spectrum from 'right' to 'left' – are perspectives also found in ecofarming spaces (see Taylor 2019). The wider concern of rightwing 'ecofascism' in ecofarming sectors has some merit when we pay attention to instances where these overlaps are exemplified, as when known white supremacist rancher-settler Cliven Bundy was given a platform to speak at an event organized by the organic seed company Baker Creek (the event was later cancelled), or when widely-promoted grass-fed-chicken farmer luminary Joel Salatin was outed as a patriarchal and racist defender of colonization (Philpott 2020).<sup>8</sup> In terms of California's ecofarming sector and its organized movement formations, however, these are not the dominant elements or values.<sup>9</sup>

Certification of ecological farming for market purposes is tied to the state. Ecofarmers and ecofarming supporters differ on certification; believing it to be good, bad, not enough to bring about substantial change, or flawed but still worth supporting. Some ecofarmers produce organically without organic certification, while others attempt to focus their marketing on alternative means of engendering consumer trust. Reflecting scholarly critiques of organic's conventionalization (its absorption into conventional, industrial, capitalist modes of production and enrollment in circuits of capital), some ecofarming proponents prefer an informal localist, non-state-mediated form of production standard. Some feel the established organic standard doesn't go far enough (towards, for example, supporting

social justice) while others resent organic paperwork as yet more regulatory burden. One long-time Californian ecofarming luminary was the late Amigo Bob Cantisano, founder of the EcoFarm conference and consultant to many industrial-turned-organic farms. Though he worked to spread organic practices, even willing to work with corporate organic growers, towards the end of his life he expressed greater concern that organic had not reached far enough, *and* had been compromised in the process. The initial ecofarmer faith that legitimating and ‘democratizing’ organics through state legislation and market adoption has been shaken by decades of conventionalization and the continued (pre)dominance of agribusiness consolidation, pesticides and chemical agriculture. A staff member from the CCOF Foundation insists, however, that most California organic growers are small still, still worth supporting as values-based businesses, and form real alternatives to the status quo.<sup>10</sup> For the bulk of the ecofarming sector (exempting perhaps the agrarian libertarian holdouts, some direct marketing and non-certified producers, and those blessed with stable land tenure and focused on subsistence rather than market production – combined, a very small portion of this sector), the state (via certification) remains crucial. The state is also crucial as climate-induced forest fires ravage California’s land now on a yearly basis: the state provides both fire-fighting capacity and mitigation and recovery monies which farmers and some farmworkers have been able to access. In 2021, deepening drought conditions have made ecofarmer access to state resources even more imperative.<sup>11</sup>

Ecofarming organizations at the national level often focus on federal law, policy, and politics. This makes some intuitive sense, given that they are set up at the level of the nation-state which is the assumed locus of power in society. The more established organizations in the space, organizing from farmer perspectives or consumer/environmentalist perspectives have tended to be white-led, but this has been shifting somewhat in recent decades.<sup>12</sup> Two grassroots farmer-based networks also operate at the national level, the National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC) and the more BIPOC-focused Rural Coalition (which was involved in earlier lawsuits against racist discrimination at the USDA). These two organizations are members of La Via Campesina-North America, with longstanding ties to international food sovereignty politics, campaigns, and discourses. Although NFFC and Rural Coalition originated with multiple and diverse goals and methods – for example, technical assistance, capacity building,

education, and other non-policy work – they have converged on policy as a key focus. This is not to say they do not work outside policy, but that policy forms a major, sometimes central, component in their work.<sup>13</sup> Many ecofarming groups assume that their goals are tied directly if not closely to changes in state (California) and federal policy.

Sometimes policy work (focusing on federal law and addressing federal regulatory bodies) is a natural outgrowth of the larger and consumer-oriented and environmentally-focused groups' consumer-facing, corporate-targeting campaigns. These corporate campaigns pressure companies to change directly, such as to stop selling certain pesticides or to increase purchases from organic suppliers. These groups work in tandem on market-shifting approaches, such as new or expanded labeling options, like 'Regenerative Organic' (an add-on to the 'baseline' of nationally-regulated certified organic), or simply support efforts to defend or expand eco-labeling (forms of mostly non-state reformism). In my fieldwork, I found less general skepticism among ecofarming organizations and activists of the state as a place to make change, although many groups acknowledge that achieving structural change at the federal level is a big challenge (under both Democratic and Republican administrations). In sum, in addition to being solidly reformist-statist in action, the larger, national, consumer, environmental, and even farmer-composed groups are not very anti-capitalist, even if they are against the monopolies/oligopolies of larger capitalists.

In California, there are some similarities to the national. CalCAN, the 'Climate and Agriculture Network', focuses exclusively on supporting ecofarming via state policy. They work as well with established small/family farm organizations like Community Alliance with Family Farms (CAFF). Like the national groups, these groups have been founded by, run by, and some would say dominated by white, land-owner, and environmentalist (rather than social-justice) perspectives, although this orientation is shifting in recent years (as indicated in Chapter 5). Some of the more mainstream white organizations listed above have in recent years increased their internal processes of DEI, but most have not altered their policy and market focuses. The California-based organizations, as described in Chapter 5, have been taking up critiques of racial injustice, have attempted to include marginalized voices more generally in their operations, and have generally continued to work via direct support (for farmers), education, local market development, and advocacy.

In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, followed immediately by the widespread anti-police-brutality uprisings, came a notable uptick of interest in, rhetorical support for, and even tangible involvement of these (and similar) organizations in work of ‘mutual aid’ (Ricker 2020). Post-Covid-19, a multitude of white-led food movement organizations pivoted towards emergency response work (mobilizing direct aid to farmers and farmworkers) and developing local-regional farm infrastructure.<sup>14</sup> One of my white ecofarming interviewees, Caiti Hachmyer of Red-H Farm provided thousands of organic seedlings to BIPOC-led farm projects throughout the Bay Area in 2020. Some of this post-Covid-19 work has involved collaboration of groups or group members who are both white-led and reformist, *and* BIPOC-led and harbour more ‘revolutionary’ interests or rhetoric. For instance, EcoFarm conference organizers sought in 2020 to support Black farmers in the wake of Black Lives Matter mobilizations<sup>15</sup>, lending support to Black Earth Farms. As Black Earth Farms’ (2021) ‘manifesto’ makes clear, they are radically anti-capitalist and non-state:

Anti-Black racial capitalism, Anti-Indigenous Imperialist Empires, and white supremacist hetero-patriarchal structures, practices, and ongoing projects are the root causes of our wretched conditions and are the obstacles in our ongoing struggles for liberation. Settler colonial parasitic capitalism, militarized imperialist nation states, and Eurocentric ideologies such as pseudo socialism and fascist neoliberalism must all be abolished and replaced with autonomous and sovereign communities centered around indigenous self-determination and Black liberation.

Black Earth Farms also collaborated with Black farmer Jamil Burns’ Raised Root farm to provide food directly to frontline protestors during the George Floyd uprisings (Guerrero 2020). Jamil said of this work, reflecting the anarchistic ethos of mutual aid: ‘I think a lot of people have woken up to not only to the racial injustices but the idea that in order for a community to be truly resilient, we have to start relying on each other’ (ibid: para. 4). It is not clear if the recent shift of ecofarming sectors towards the rhetoric and practice of mutual aid entails sustained, redirected money and energy from state-focused work, or is a temporary strategy and simple reflection that in times of extreme crisis, mutual aid is a key instinctual response. Nor is it clear that elevated BIPOC visibility will translate in a sustained or deep way to more radical rhetoric and practice among



ecofarmers at large in the coming years. Still, the ecofarming sector example shows that while ecofarmers and ecofarming organizations (when based in white, landowning positions) can be a conservative or at least a problematically reformist political force, the sector can also support more radical positions, especially insofar as it is influenced by BIPOC radicalism.

Seeing how nonstate/reformist and nonstate/revolutionary ToCs very much overlap when ecofarming spaces include BIPOC participants and engage different ideas about food and political systems (such as in mutual aid and politicized local economy development work), we can see how the nonstate side of the typology is a crucial region for the interactive development of more radical possibilities of convergence. The influence of revolutionary (anticapitalist) ideas, even if they still are not ‘ruptural’ in the conventional socialist sense – but *do* emphasize the need for a *complete* overcoming of capitalist relations of production *at some point*, is important to the statist side of the typology as well. That is, food movement elements that participate in statist-reformism may be more influenced by anticapitalism, and thus in the process of their reform efforts incorporate more critical analysis of ‘reformist reforms’ that reinforce existing power dynamics. Similarly, the nonstate critiques of state skeptics may become more legible, and influential, to actors who choose more statist-reformist routes to change, even while they continue to work more closely with state powers.

### 6.3.3. Farmers of Colour

The presence of BIPOC within white-majority organizations has been dynamic, as has been the extent to which BIPOC-focused perspectives have been prioritized and BIPOC issues have been taken up in such organizations and the networks they compose. In today’s context BIPOC-farmer led organizations overlap with white organizations, and are receiving more attention and support. BIPOC-led farming organizations overlap with whiter ecofarming organizations in a number of ways; in their mutual interests in policy, in a mutual focus on technical training, and in the tensions that arise over democratic functioning and authentic farmer participation within organizations. Both BIPOC and white formations face tensions with the state (which generally supports big capital and status quo agriculture relations), even if these tensions are not of the same nature or

extent. Farmers of colour hold diverse ToCs, but we find noted differences from the whiter ecofarming sector in their array of focuses. BIPOC farmers do use the state and market as strategies to achieve emancipation. Farmers of colour (and supportive organizations) have worked to allocate and receive state funding to support BIPOC producers, to advance business development and access to capital, and increase access to land (sometimes through ‘incubator’ farm programmes that provide start-up farmers temporary access to land).<sup>16</sup> BIPOC do policy work and share some of the same issues and interest in representation through the state as ecofarming sectors as a whole, but they manifest wider and more radical theories of change and rhetoric, leveraging and standing behind various other ToCs, which are non-state and anti-capitalist. They also focus on provisioning communities directly, sometimes through mutual aid (as just mentioned).

And as shown in the previous chapter, the beyond-food movement context and composition of civil society affects dynamics of cross-racial convergence. As mentioned, some farmer-founded, grassroots formations have always included members from BIPOC, minoritized populations. At the national level, the Rural Coalition (2021) has since its late 1970s founding sought to inclusively represent ‘African-American, American Indian, Asian-American, Euro-American and Latino farmers, farmworkers, and rural communities in the US’ (Rural Coalition 2021). NYFC has been a ‘sister organization’ to Rural Coalition, more based in white farmers, but with a long history of acting alongside minoritized farmer populations in policy advocacy, direct action, and lawsuits. NYFC, conceptualized in 2009 and becoming an independent nonprofit in 2016, was founded by white farmers, and over the years of its growth increasingly focused on recruiting farmers of colour, staff of colour, and emphasizing in rhetoric and practice issues of racial equity (especially after 2014-2016 surge in Black Lives Matter protests; see NYFC’s 2016 [statement](#)). According to Allen et al. (2003: 66),

What is now the Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) began as the California Agrarian Action Project in 1978. Its first activities included demonstrations in support of farm workers and participation in a lawsuit intended to force the University of California to shift research funds from underwriting technologies for industrial agriculture toward improving the circumstances of farm workers and small farmers. In the 1980s the Agrarian Action Project fought pesticide poisonings, organized victims and, with allies such as the UFW, provided the political pressure behind strong new

regulation of pesticides by the state. It helped organize the annual Ecological Farming Conference, and it joined other organizations in a lawsuit against the Federal government to force the redistribution of large landholdings that benefited from government irrigation programs. [This last effort is described in Chapter 4's discussion of National Land for People.]

The case of CAFF – historically and today – shows that broader societal political discussion and waves of contestation taking place outside agriculture proper – the Capital-M 'Movement' dealing with many aspects of society – influences the multi-ethnic convergence of food movements. As Allen et al. (2003: 68) put it, describing CAFF's beginning: 'During a period in which political claims about civil rights for working people of color were supported by a larger social movement, California organizations were able to include these claims for justice in their agendas.' Just as in the 1970s, BIPOC-inclusive movements today have opened up space for greater organization among farmers of colour. Today, new BIPOC-led groups have formed (like the Asian American Farmers Alliance, CASFS's Farmers of the Global Majority, and Black Earth Farms), in addition to ongoing BIPOC participation in white-led organizations, and preexisting BIPOC organizations like Rural Coalition.<sup>17</sup>

In California, a 'California Farmer Justice Collaborative' (CFJC) was formed in 2017, specifically to address issues for farmers of colour. Its mission is 'to ensure that farmers of color are empowered to directly participate and effectively lead in building a fair food and farming system in California. We unite farmers, advocates, and other allies to challenge historic and ongoing racism, and other forms of structural oppression, in order to create the comprehensive change needed to build such a system.' Note that this doesn't speak to a particular vision or analysis of the state. From relationships and interviews for this research with CFJC's organizers<sup>18</sup>, I know that many hold anti-capitalist values and are skeptical of the change-making potential of the state; yet, many of those same organizers are based in NGOs where policy forms a main area of work. As such, the CFJC's first big effort and victory came in policy, when the CA Equity Act was passed in 2017 (Spitler 2018). The Act established specific provisions for the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to support 'Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers' (a policy euphemism for farmers of colour). As mentioned in the previous chapter, CDFA hired a white woman as the mandated 'Equity Advisor', to influence CDFA processes towards supporting farmers of colour.

The CFJC has also faced similar challenges (to those faced by other farmer-focused organizations) of ensuring consistent participation of farmers, who find it difficult to participate in meetings and government policy proceedings. There have also been tensions between the interests of some members/organizers of the CFJC, coming from nonprofits and advocacy jobs, who can afford the time to coordinate much of the work, and those of the farmer base, who may be less interested in policy work. For some farmers of colour, state engagement is more difficult simply because of the language inaccessibility of state processes for non-English speakers. In spaces of farmers of colour (as well as among the environmental justice and food justice sector described further below), there seems to be greater emphasis on beyond-policy ToCs of change like provisioning farmer-to-farmer mutual education and support, building relationships, and hosting exchanges and encounters, and providing direct technical training and infrastructural support.

The story of one Korean-American first-generation farmer illustrates the more multifaceted interests of farmers of colour and their organizations. As an adoptee, Kristyn Leach rediscovered her Korean ancestry, and her place in the world of farming, by diving deeply into relationship of stewarding and learning with the Korean culinary staple Perilla. Kristyn's story of finding healing and belonging through farming contrasts with the more business/livelihood or ecological motivations of many self-described ecofarmers (Leach 2019). This characterizes much more of the farmers of colour I have met, who see farming as livelihood, social and ecological activism, cultural meaning-making, and community-building *altogether*, rather than the latter three subordinated to the first (or the ecological as primary) that is seen more in white-dominated ecofarming sectors. Because of their oppressively racialized histories, farmers of colour formations are also more likely to harbour critiques of capitalism, colonialism, and white supremacy.<sup>19</sup> Farmers of colour share ecofarmers' tensions with the state, but additional layers of historic harm and ongoing trauma can add skepticism to engaging the state for gains. Yet skepticism does not mean avoidance: prominent leaders in California's movements of BIPOC farmers like CFJC co-founder Mai Nguyen also seek 'a voice in state policy-making so that we can advocate for our needs and access resources to meet them' (BFI 2018: 22). Farmers of colour also engage other more nonstate tactics and ToCs. Solidarity strategies are directed towards

strengthening identities and identity-based groups (valorization), and integrating ideological work with practical work at the grassroots level, including mutual aid, and developing relations of solidarity across racial lines (BIPOC to BIPOC). As seen in the CFJC, these focuses are not at all tantamount to ignoring the state, and many farmer-organizers still work towards policy change (which we might see as intended to elevate a broader ‘we’ of BIPOC, as policies pursued by CFJC address the needs of farmers of colour *as a whole*). BIPOC farmer-organizers are simply less focused on policy efforts to the exclusion of other strategies, while more often holding more skeptical views of the state. Research should be able to see food movements in ‘both/and’ ways, and thus see farmers of colour sectors as reflecting many of the same tensions and contradictions in ToCs of the ecofarming sector at large, but with greater tendencies towards state-skepticism and anti-capitalism.

#### 6.3.4. Environmental justice and (urban) food justice

While EJ [environmental justice] activists and leaders have repeatedly demonstrated a willingness to challenge state and corporate policy-making through discourse, tactics and strategies, the movement is ultimately rooted in a state-centric model of social change. That is, activists generally seek to push the state and corporations to embrace some degree of EJ practices, while accepting the fundamental legitimacy of those institutions and systems of governance. (Pellow 2016, 5)

Pellow’s reckoning of BIPOC-focused environmental justice movements seems a bit odd, if one considers my previous discussion of the legacies of state violence and anti-statism among many racialized populations in the US. But it isn’t so odd once we reframe our thinking on theories of change, radicalism, and the state. I argue that we can see radicalism and state action as not mutually exclusive, just like the more radical of ecofarmers’ values and goals of anticapitalism can exist alongside their entrepreneurial efforts. The environmental and food justice groups I studied push on the state, but do not necessarily accept their ‘fundamental legitimacy’. Part of this is a function of their viewing political opportunities from a generally state skeptical, but non-dogmatic, perspective on a disaggregated state. In this section, I show that today’s environmental justice and food justice sectors are increasingly radical, but still engage the state

and capitalist processes in different ways than simply reformism or neoliberalism. Environmental justice and food justice formations operate with flexible ToCs that allow for state strategies but do not elevate or prioritize them. State engagement is complemented by a focus on building positive interpersonal and organizational relationships, integrating political education into all areas of work, working collaboratively across differences, recognizing the limits of statist and capitalist strategies, and maintaining radical horizons and rhetoric, even within spaces where these might be disincentivized. One aspect of this sectors' radicality is the focus on collectivizing, especially in economic efforts, as seen in Chapter 5. Another is a focus on internal inclusivity and democratic process (as I saw also in efforts of CFJC to ensure consistent leadership of its activities by BIPOC farmer-members). After describing some of these aspects, I return to suggest what these radical leanings indicate to researchers of food movement ToCs.

My fieldwork found far more cautious state skepticism among environmental justice and food justice activists than Pellow's previous work indicates. In a BIPOC-focused webinar on 'state violence, youth struggle, and food sovereignty' (June 2020), one of the lead webinar's organizers began the proceedings by stating directly: 'Mutual aid is how we will get through this challenging time, not by asking for state support, because the state is not meant to meet our needs.' Regarding discourses, there has been an uptick in the naming of settler-colonialism, capitalism, and white supremacy as key factors in injustice and as central 'enemies' of environmental and food justice – requiring revolutionary kinds of change. This mirrors an uptick in racially-aware social justice movements at large. Urban focused projects founded before the 2010s often used language of food justice, anti-racism, and commitment to economically-accessible food.<sup>20</sup> More recently, such projects are not discarding previously used frames, but are willing to additionally name settler-colonialism, capitalism, and white supremacy in public discussion, social media, and interviews.<sup>21</sup> Even while environmental justice and food justice organizers address the state, they do so (like farmers of colour) more often within a larger anti-state discourse and complemented by attention to nonstate strategies that are more about relationships, grassroots political education, connecting between sectors, and rooting any state engagement in these. The radical nature of these sectors is evidenced by their visions of politicized food production and distribution, their emphasis on collective (economic)

strategies, their efforts in mutual aid, their ‘funder organizing’ (that is, the conflictual process of shaping funder behaviour, rather than shaping efforts to meet funder desires), and their attention to internal inequalities in funding.<sup>22</sup> The chapter finds that even self-described anarchist views do not equate to a complete disregard of state action among California environmental justice organizers. A lesson of environmental justice and food justice work is that state skepticism and nonstate thinking are strong foundations upon which many tactics are possible.

Like urban agriculture as a whole, Black urban agriculture is multivalent, as is the food justice sector, which involves many ethnic and racial groups. Urban agriculture encompasses reformist policy-making efforts (Roman-Alcalá and Glowa 2020), reinforcement of individualistic and marketized identities and ToCs (Pudup 2008), radical claims for public space and commons (Wilson 2013), the pursuit of self-sufficiency in the interstices of urban space (Galt et al. 2014), and much else. As others have elaborated, the Black radical tradition and its diverse approaches to state politics manifest often in a wider ‘Black agrarian’ tradition (King et al. 2018; White 2018), which are seen specifically in US urban farming initiatives (Fiskio et al. 2016; Figueroa 2015; McCutcheon 2019, Reese 2018). Farm projects (including in California) often build networks of mutual aid, collective agency and community resilience, prefigurative democratic spaces of belonging, and geographic spaces of ‘marronage’ (Wright 2020).<sup>23</sup> Yet, like environmental justice as a whole, food justice efforts rooted in Black peoples’ work and experience have also engaged in states and policy, sometimes seeing it as an avenue for change even while rooting food justice narratives in opposition to the state’s regular anti-Black dispossessions and violence. Looking at Black leadership among urban farming movements indicates similarly a ‘plurality of Black geographies’ (Bledsoe & Wright 2018). If urban farming’s (state) politics are multivalent, its food justice-inflected versions harbour nonstate and revolutionary elements, even while at times engaging state reform processes.

Another of my fieldwork focuses was on the San Joaquin Valley, in the state’s Central Valley, and two organizational centres there. The first organizational centre is the Central Valley Partnership, a coalitional non-profit that brings together labour, environmental, migrant, and other ‘progressive’ concerns (as described in Chapter 5). Its monthly meetings are attended by a wide variety of individuals and organizations, and incorpo-

rates groups working in a variety of ways: advocacy, mutual aid, direct action, labour organizing, voter registration and mobilization, electoral work, and media. Its director, Daniel O'Connell, is a white man with a PhD who moved to the Valley specifically to challenge the 'white power structure' there.<sup>24</sup> He self-identifies as 'a Quaker and an anarchist', *and* actively organizes towards greater involvement in local government by populations (mainly, young, Latinx, migrant and first generation) that have long been excluded from holding state power. In interviewing Daniel and others involved in the coalition, and attending nearly a dozen of these monthly meetings, it was made clear that challenging the established control over local government bodies (city councils, water boards, mayorships of smaller towns) was a major arena of struggle. Part of the theory of change here is that changing demographics of the area, especially the political coming-of-age of many first-generation children of migrant (farm)workers, is providing an opportunity to promote ecological, pro-worker policies for the first time in recent history (see similar analysis in Chandrasekaran 2020). As Chandrasekaran (2020: 9) puts it:

a broader long-term strategy would include voter education and structural interventions to enfranchise new groups, as well as strengthening social networks linking immigrant farmworkers with other community members. In other words, [the Central Valley] helps us to see rural places as political sites of struggle in new ways, at a time when the US is likely to follow in the footsteps of the state of California to become a minority-majority country.

Seeing a disaggregated state means seeing possibilities of achieving change by running for local office, even if – for instance – federal agencies like USDA are unlikely allies, and state-level races are less tenable for less-resourced individuals from low-income communities. To Daniel, the specific initial focus is on local school boards and city councils (entities that control significant budgets), then later to address higher levels of civil authority like boards of supervisors and seats in the state legislature.

The other centre I focused on in fieldwork was a coalition of six environmental justice groups whose work touches what was once called 'sustainable agriculture', two of whom are grassroots-driven and based in farmworker communities. These groups' coalition rebranded formally in 2016, becoming the 'Community Alliance for Agroecology' (CAFA), recognizing in 'agroecology' an articulation of both critiques of the industrial agriculture that dominates the Valley, and proposals for people-centred



alternative food systems attentive to racial justice. Like the Central Valley Partnership, CAFA's work (amongst its six constituent organizational members) involves base building, education, advocacy, and (to a lesser degree) direct action. Much of its work has been to link solutionary alternatives in agroecology to anti-pesticide activism (for example, highlighting ecological farmers of colour in the area). The latter is especially seen in a recent initiative to develop an 'Agroecology Center', spearheaded by the late director of CAFA member El Quinto Sol de America, Isabel Arrollo. Isabel led this vision, based on the interest of many in the mostly farm-worker community of small-town Lindsay to develop local food and farm businesses, and to convert land from health-endangering industrial agriculture production to locally-controlled agroecological production. The Center project involves some members of CAFA, but is an independent initiative, which has received funding from the state to explore the development of 'incubator' farm hubs in the Central Valley, focusing on farm-workers and BIPOC producers.

The Agroecology Center project has, unlike many efforts focused on reforming industrial agriculture or promoting greater justice for neglected Valley populations, been explicitly anti-capitalist and visionary in their goals. Their 2020 Draft Plan (p. 39) concludes:

Socially, humanity is at an edge. Centuries of capitalist expansion have created an untenable situation that is finally culminating in a series of environmental and social events that are forcing humanity to face a new and somewhat terrifying future. And while we witness the daily increased suffering of the most vulnerable people, animals, and communities, we also see the inherent resilience and creativity that enables those same populations to survive.

It is that resilience and creativity that can help create a pathway to a healthier, more equitable food system for all residents of the Central Valley. The strength of our diversity, coupled with the opportunities created by the current social situation, provide fertile ground for seeding a new vision that not only remembers the wisdom of our past, but grows beyond the constraints and narratives that have kept us in a state of survival and scarcity. The time is ripe for us to dream big, to build systems and structures that are rooted in abundance, interdependence, cooperation, and relationships. The transactional nature of capitalism has created a reality that separates us from our true selves, our environment, and each other, and that limits our ability to

see the ways in which we are all connected. But that reality is quickly collapsing, proving that it was never really grounded in the truth of our existence. Human creativity and our capacity to adapt are boundless resources that need to be utilized for the good of all living beings.

In each other we have all the necessary tools to thrive, take care of each other, and share the surplus of our abundance. In this time of change, at the edge of one reality that's giving way to another, it is the [Agroecology Center] Committee's hope that the Agroecology work in which we have been invested for over a decade will fall on this fertile ground of change, take root, and be watered by the resilience of our communities.

This articulated vision indicates how radically anti-capitalist and fundamentally society-centred (rather than state-centred) the group's vision is.<sup>25</sup> As CAFA Coordinator and Agroecology Center organizer Kassandra Hishida told me, the vision has expanded to become even more decentralized and expansive:

Our current collaborative work is focused on launching pilot programming and resources in Fresno and Tulare Counties, where we are most rooted and connected with local communities. Our long-term vision is to co-create a decentralized, regional network of BIPOC-led and land-based projects that mutually support one another and are created by and for communities, farmers, and land stewards of color across the Central Valley. We are strategically and intentionally focusing on pilot programming to continue building community and increase access to immediate resources as we work together to name what we want and build it together.<sup>26</sup>

Another Agroecology Center committee member is a self-described anarchist – a position she came to over years of rejecting and unlearning her fundamentalist Christian, patriarchal upbringing. As an educator and community food bank director of Indigenous-descended ancestry, with roots in the Valley, Nicole Celaya joined the food bank only because it 'wasn't just a food bank' and instead 'works towards food systems change' towards ending the *very need for food banks*. Yet, like the director of Central Valley Partnership, her skepticism about the state and preference for focusing elsewhere in generating long-term, structural change did not translate to some purist rejection of mobilizing some energy towards statist strategies:

It's a balance for me both personally and professionally. Personally, I know what my line is, and what I will and won't support, but that moves a bit for me depending on the situation professionally, and in my work at [the food bank]. Revolution happens in many, many different ways and with many, many different tactics, and so I am not here to bash any other type of movement making that is going on, if it's around voting, if it's around the census, that's fine. ... Unless I know that [some policy initiative is] going to make an immediate difference for the community that we serve, I won't get involved in that. And so it's a very difficult balancing act that I'm doing both personally and professionally, but I am not here to discourage anybody's work. Whatever their work is I'm here to support it, as long as we're moving towards justice and equity I'm down.

CAFA, the Agroecology Center effort, and other environmental justice and food justice groups I studied help us see that particular tactics do not equate to categorical placement in a typology. For example, recent efforts to legalize the sales of homemade foods (an economic survival strategy that in California is racialized and gendered, involving majority BIPOC and women) may indicate a pro-capitalist, reformist ToC, but individuals involved in such homemade food businesses are not all or always depoliticized away from revolutionary desires. Food businesses (as described in the next section) may even form part of decolonizing and indigenizing processes.<sup>27</sup> As discussed more extensively in Chapter 2, Guthman (2008c: 1171) has outlined four 'recurring themes in contemporary food activism as they intersect with neoliberal rationalities'. These are *consumer choice*, *localism*, *entrepreneurialism*, and *self-improvement*. My fieldwork suggests that the last three of these have radical potential, and are not beneficially prejudged as neoliberal. Entrepreneurialism, as part of a wider landscape of alternative or secessionist efforts, is heterogenous with regards to the ToC it indicates, reflects, and promotes. The association of 'alternative food movements' with whiteness, described by Sbicca and Myers (2015) as 'secessionist' elements (in opposition to 'confrontational' activism) obscures the history of BIPOC utilizing similar strategies and taking part in similar initiatives, and diminishes the radical political content within food movements that is at times present. Radical visions and implementations of localism, entrepreneurship, and self-improvement are often hidden behind the hegemony of more critical and normatively statist framings of such activities.

Certainly, there are non-threatening versions of localism, such as ‘Buy Local’ campaigns that enable capitalist-farming-as-usual; or self-improvement efforts that elevate assimilation above other considerations of solidarity (for example, the farmworker who becomes a successful farmer who exploits farmworkers). But self-improvement can also be directed at self-valorization, at times explicitly set against assimilation, and as a tool for strengthening solidarity. Equally important there are self-improvement processes advancing collective agency and community resilience, enabling a stronger basis for anti-capitalist struggle. Some of this results in ‘local’ farms that actively (and at risk) oppose capitalist agribusiness and extractive projects (e.g. Ashwood 2021), not ‘unreflexive localism’ that ignores social issues. A great example of *local, entrepreneurial, and self-improvement-directed* organizing that is simultaneously internationalist, anti-capitalist, and focused on valorization and expanded circles of solidarity (that is, differencing) is the Black-led *Cooperation Jackson* movement in Mississippi, which combines solidarity economy development with revolutionary anti-capitalist, anti-racist politicization (Akuno & Nangwaya 2017). In California’s Bay Area are similar examples: Raised Root’s and Black Earth Farms’s efforts to generate livelihoods for BIPOC farmers *and* provide food for frontline anti-policing organizers in 2020; informal networks of herbalists who sell herbs and teach herbal knowledge at street level, for free; Planting Justice’s combining of fee-for-service revenue generation with grassroots canvassing (political education), hiring of formerly incarcerated individuals at living wages, and deeding land back to local Indigenous leaders; Feral Heart Farm’s efforts to be a viable farm business while modeling horizontal and non-exploitative labour organization, de-commodified seed stewardship, and collaborative learning with other BIPOC farmers.

As mentioned in the farmers of colour section, many of these projects seek to connect business-as-livelihood to the politics of transformation. They are mostly reformist non-state, and sometimes vocally revolutionary anti-state, in ideology. To group these in (even inadvertently) with buy local campaigns and ostensibly ‘apolitical’ farmers market promotion makes no sense. Like other researchers of social movements have noted, even self-described anarchists are not purists who singularly focus their ire on the state and reject engaging it tout court (Raekstad 2019, building on Bray 2013). In addition, many activists hold *anarchistic* positions and values, without taking up the anarchist banner (Roman-Alcalá 2021). A lesson of environmental justice and food justice work is that state skepticism and

nonstate thinking are strong foundations upon which many tactics are possible – environmental justice and food justice activists operating with flexible ToCs allow for state strategies but do not elevate or prioritize them. Combined with anti-capitalist commitments, groups motivated by these radical ToCs seem more likely to mitigate the worst limitations of the NPIC (avoiding infighting for funding, pushing funders to change, maintaining radical views even while engaging non-radical processes). Encouraging internal and external solidarity with those immediately impacted by environmental injustice, their beliefs and actions do not fit comfortably within categories of either prefigurative or oppositional, secessionist or confrontational. Research should appreciate and explore radical, anti-state and revolutionary aspirations in food movements – which are often less explicit or visible – and how they combine with reformist and capitalist aspects.

#### 6.3.5. Indigenous organizing

Indigenous organizing across California is (similar to what we've seen above) not reducible to one or the other ToC, or a narrow conception of what it means to effectively make change. After all, Indigenous tribes are not homogenous. Although there are strong views on the state among many Indigenous Californians – and for obvious reasons, given attempted genocide – there is no 'party line' regarding whether and how to engage the state. Even those who advocate nonstate strategies, such as Cherokee scholar Jeff Corntassel (2021: 88), claim that 'a turning away from the state, which includes heteropatriarchy and settler colonialism, entails a centering of Indigenous nationhood and land-based governance, but it is not a wholesale disengagement with state actors.' As indicated in the quote by Corrina Gould from Chapter 5, many tactics are taken as tools, means to an end, and are not pre-judged according to dogmas. This seems a strength of Indigenous approaches (and approaches of the marginalized more broadly): arriving at tactics from a basis in values, relationships, and reflection. Yunkaporta (2020: 246) refers to the necessarily ordered operation of 'Respect, Connect, Reflect, Direct'. While mainstream US culture emphasizes action, and *sometimes* reflecting after action, Indigenous thinking tends to begin with grounding in spirit-based respect for history, place, and relations, and then builds strong relationships and egalitarian exchanges with these. This process inspires thoughtful reflection, leading finally to wise action.

For some of my Indigenous interviewees, working within ‘the system’ was simply a baseline – not a defining of their horizons of emancipation, or a delimiting of their ToC: ‘participation doesn’t mean belief systems’ one interviewee insisted.<sup>28</sup> Recognizing the colonial nature of the state is not equivalent to maintaining a constant antagonism to it. With heart in community, culture, and tradition (which act as means towards countering Othering with Indigenous self-valorization), many Indigenous leaders have leaned on assimilation strategies as forms of resistance. A-dae from FNDI tells of how she became a lawyer, when as a young girl, the US Army Corps of Engineers built a dam that flooded their community’s agricultural fields:

I remember going to the tribal council meetings with my grandpa who was a farmer and a leader in our community and he would come from the fields and be all muddy and his boots would be full of caked dirt because he was walking in the fields. But then the Department of Justice would bring their lawyers and they would wear patent heels and black suits and I’d never seen anybody dress like that in my community before.

And so I was like “Gosh, who are those people? How come none of those people sit on our side?” And yeah, that’s when I decided I was going to be a lawyer, just like “We need one of those people sitting on our side.”<sup>29</sup>

Later becoming a judge ‘because I wanted to keep our young people out of prison’, she ‘realized that this structure [prisons, courts] is not meant to keep us out of prison’, and quit to start a nonprofit focused on traditional agriculture. Although she finds ‘the system’ inherently problematic, ‘I can learn that system easily...it’s a matter of reading books’. ‘The harder part,’ she insists, ‘is learning how to be in a community that’s outside of that [system] because you can’t learn it in books, you have to participate and have social relationships. So, for me, it’s like, learn that system, learn the Western system because you can. I mean, it’s accessible, you can learn it. But really, the focus of who we are as an Indigenous people needs to be *practiced*. You need to be in your community and not to say that what you’re reading in a book is going to change your Indigenous identity.’ Still, A-dae acknowledges that ‘it is a system that’s meant to swallow you up’ and its individualistic values (such as narrow careerism) and incentives (like the perks of professionalism) need to be actively worked against.

As described in Chapter 5, a spiritual, ontological emphasis on land means that a lot of Indigenous projects focus on land access, albeit via different strategies. Many of these strategies also engage directly with decolonization, indigenizing, and resurgence practices and demands. While policy may at times be a target, it is rarely seen as an end in itself. For instance, the Muwekma Ohlone (federated tribes of the San Francisco East Bay) have sought renewed federal recognition – partly in order to secure some amount of reservation land – even though they refuse to pin their sense of self or community work to the federal government’s recognition and mainly focus on other (nonstate) goals. A-dae says:

No policy, even if you return all the land to my community, is not going to fix [colonialism and capitalism], what’s going to fix that is this societal perception and these societal values that create a system that makes massacres and land theft okay. ... so even if you created a policy in the next two years that returned the land to my community, the fact is, is we’re still in a structure and a system that allows those things to happen. And you may correct it for my community, but you’re not going to correct it for the colonization that’s happening in the Philippines or in India. In order to change that, you need to stop lying to yourself ... stop lying to yourself about our history.<sup>30</sup>

Indigenous organizers usually must contend with exposing and reversing this colonial history (which often entails confrontations with states), while also building towards resurgent practices and resourcing. The Sogorea Te’ Land Trust is a good example of this, whose organizers started off organizing ‘shellmound walks’ to bring attention to the Ohlone’s remaining sacred sites of the Bay Area and avert their continued desecration – including the Sogorea Te’ mound site threatened with development by the city of Vallejo. The confederated tribes of Lisjan Ohlone, including organizers of Sogorea Te’, also partners with the McCloud River-based Winnemem Wintu tribe on an annual ‘Run for Salmon’ from Wintu territory to the mouth of the San Francisco Bay, a ‘prayerful action’ to build opposition to federal government agencies and California Senator Dianne Feinstein’s attempts to raise a dam and further flood sacred traditional territory of the federally-unrecognized Wintu tribe.<sup>31</sup> These defensive, anti-state processes also eventually brought Ohlone organizers into launching legal battles *alongside* the City of Berkeley government against developers who intend to build over another of these shellmound sites.

This latter example shows that the state is not monolithically an opposing force to certain Indigenous demands. In fact, the growing calls for ‘land back’ have been met by some local governments and jurisdictions with supportive (albeit limited) action. The city of Eureka in 2019 gave 200 acres back to the Wiyot Tribe; Sonoma County worked with a land trust to raise funds to purchase 700 acres to return to the Kashia Pomo in 2015; the Esselen tribe in Big Sur region received a state grant to purchase (alongside another land trust) 1,200 acres in 2020. The prevalence of land trusts in these processes are indications that tribes must work the legal ‘edges’ to access land in absence of federal recognition or direct ownership. Sometimes land access means utilizing relationships with private landowners, an approach that is seemingly agnostic about *how* to reach towards rematriation of land and resurgence of Indigenous foodways.

This is the approach of the entrepreneurial project Mak’amham Ohlone Cafe and catering company (run by two members of the Muwekma and Rumsen Ohlone). They have worked to revitalize their traditional foods (alongside heavy investment in language revitalization work in their community) by starting a business which serves Native and non-Native alike. In order to access the ingredients they need, they have partnered with sympathetic landholders who ‘permit’ their wild crafting practices. This project exemplifies a growing trend of food- and gardening-related projects among tribes. The Wukchumni tribe involved in the Agroecology Center project was not a horticultural tribe, but has begun multiple garden projects for its members. FNDI has worked since its founding on supporting tribal food sovereignty projects, although they did not always use the term (which has more recently caught on). Cultural Conservancy as well. This approach might be seen as inevitable for the politics of Indigenous liberation, since Indigenous cultural knowledge is inherently about place, sustenance, local ecologies, and managing relations with nonhuman relations. Seen this way, Indigenous organizing emphasizes less dogmas regarding state and capital than it focuses on internal community work, combined with the bridge-building, solidarity-building, and state-navigating necessary to support that work.

Bridge-building and partnerships with non-Natives indeed have been crucial to many projects. As mentioned, Sogorea Te’ has partnered with food justice nonprofit Planting Justice in order to gain land access directly. When Planting Justice purchased land in Ohlone territory for an organic



nursery, they met with Lisjan Ohlone leadership to develop a plan to return some of this land immediately (and all of it eventually) to the tribe. The land trust is able to legally hold title to the land, as well as fundraise for cultural and political organizing through a voluntary ‘land tax’ paid by non-Natives on Ohlone land.<sup>32</sup> Lisjan Ohlone spokeswoman Corrina Gould’s explanation (in responding to a question on a public webinar about the seeming contradiction of relying on legal ‘ownership’ of land to achieve land access given Indigenous rejection of the idea of land ownership) that land trust tactics are ‘not about ownership’ but rather ‘about co-creating [with non-Indigenous people] a world that’s different than what we have now’ illustrates both the use of partnerships within Indigenous ToCs and their non-dogmatic nature.<sup>33</sup>

Many strategies for resurgence can be found among these examples and projects. Many of these are indeed radical. But indigeneity is diverse, and not static. A-dae from FNDI spoke of the Institute’s recognizing many ways of pursuing Indigenous resurgence in their grantmaking; they recognize differences within ‘indigeneity’ and in offering direct funding to diverse projects, they acknowledge not always knowing what the ‘best’ way to work is. FNDI and its grantees and tribal partners also experience within this the tension between slow work and urgency, as discussed in the previous chapter.

A deep non-state and anti-capitalist radicalism may pervade many Indigenous groups in California, but this radicalism is not tacked to a particular state orientation. The state is approached in diverse ways, depending on its (disaggregated) dynamics, history, and those that actively make it up today. The state appears as: (a) an active enemy to be confronted and work against (as in the case of the development over sacred sites, or the longstanding mistreatment and non-recognition of tribes by the Bureau of Indian Affairs), (b) as a barrier to resurgence practices (for example, parks and forest service agencies preventing Indigenous people from practicing traditions on ‘public’ lands), (c) as an ally (as in some limited land returns taking place), and (d) as a necessary space of struggle, to change conditions of importance. Generally, the federal government acts as – and is thus approached as – a barrier to resurgence and decolonization, while local governments have occasionally acted as partners. California itself has shifted more recently into seemingly greater willingness to admit past harms and desire to partner with tribes, even those not federally recog-

nized. But this varies agency to agency: CalFire actively prevents traditional burning practices from taking place, while the state's Strategic Growth Council offers Indigenous leaders its grants and services, including promising to advocate to CalFire and others on behalf of tribes.<sup>34</sup> Sometimes it takes collaboration with state institutions and actors to enable certain acts of solidarity, but the state is rarely a reliable source of that solidarity.

### 6.3. Theoretical and practical attention to movement non-statism and the state's emancipatory limitations

As we see across the sectors discussed here, ToCs exist in unavoidable diversity. There seems an emergent radicality (namely, anti-capitalism, reference to revolutionary change as a goal, and anti-statism or the prioritization of non-state strategies). This is not necessarily a *dominant* trend but is a *more common* one, especially pronounced among environmental justice and food justice, farmers of colour, and Indigenous sectors. This radicality seems to have emerged from the influence of the at-large shift taking place regarding racial politics, as discussed in Chapter 5, and the long-term work done to surface and advance radical movement frames like 'abolition', 'decolonization', and 'food sovereignty' (which, even if they do not explicitly or uniformly reject statism, indicate antagonism towards the capitalist state). Possibly playing a role in movements' attitudes towards the state (although I did not collect sufficient evidence to strongly advocate this claim) is also the unwillingness of mainstream systems of power (capital and the state, businesses and political parties) to reform themselves to alleviate the suffering of the poor and marginalized.<sup>35</sup>

Research on food systems and efforts of social movements to change them can benefit from better attention to how states work. This entails acknowledgment that – generally speaking – capitalist states (and especially settler-colonial ones) act against justice and ecology as a default, as elaborated in the eco-Marxist, anarchist, and Indigenous theories discussed throughout this dissertation. Acknowledging this, environmental justice scholar David Pellow (2016: 5) advocates skepticism about organizing in statist terms: 'I think it makes sense to proceed cautiously whenever and wherever state-centric approaches are proposed as a solution for environmental injustices.' Much critical food scholarship shows how some aspect of the state causes harm to marginalized communities, and/or how

it reproduces colonization, and/or how racism is perpetuated through policy, then normatively propose more and better research and policy as solutions (e.g. Sbicca 2018). In recognizing the historical role of states in reproducing social stratification (even if states are not monoliths, and components of them go against the default at times), I have suggested researchers take a more critical view of the state, especially in its settler-colonial-capitalist formations. This state-critical view also acknowledges the historically-based and contingent differences among food movements with regards to their various perceptions of and approaches to state power. Radical options beyond the usual calls for more research and policy may emerge, therefore, if analysts more forcefully address the implications of the state's harmful attributes and address a convergence of movements inclusive of their anti- and non-state elements.<sup>36</sup>

Meanwhile, a wider literature on food/farm movement attempts to make substantial change with regards to the state is underutilized in understanding state-related dynamics among food movements in the US. This literature in food sovereignty and agroecology is largely international, focused on 'developing' world contexts and in particular on Latin America. US-focused food studies should more deeply and widely engage such literature. Though the state and movement contexts differ widely in terms of histories of ethnicity, settler-colonialism, 'development', and politics, dynamics and patterns that appear in these other countries still offer helpful lines of inquiry and lessons to apply to the US context. For instance, liberal-statist territorialization and its antithesis in food sovereignty movements is found in many contexts of food movement struggle (Trauger 2014). Agrarian citizenship is at work in Brazilian movements of the rural landless, and urban people in South Africa, Canada and the US (Siebert 2019; Wittman 2009; Bowness & Wittman 2020). Schiavoni's work on Venezuela (2015, 2017) provides valuable tools for looking at food sovereignty in any context, such as the 'historical-relational-interactive' (HRI) approach taken in this study.<sup>37</sup> Right-wing political power has reasserted itself in various countries, following failures of Leftist and liberal governments to affect structural change. Work that analyzes these shifts in terms of agrarian movements' interests and organizing in Bolivia, Brazil, and Ecuador shows the dangers of state-led strategies, and the relation of liberal-reformist status quo politics to the creation of political space for the populist right (Tilzey 2019, Andrade 2020, Giraldo & McCune 2019, Vergara-Camus & Kay 2017b).<sup>38</sup>

Taken together with what I found in California, research can translate this Latin America-focused learning into descriptive and normative theoretical insights, which might help make sense of the state orientations of US movements. Theoretically, these works indicate the benefit of greater skepticism of the state in normative analysis of US-focused food movement research. In considering the role of Latin American states in scaling out agroecology, Giraldo and McCune (2019: 3) in a very insightful review ask ‘*how, why, and under what circumstances*, agroecological movements should engage with the State to design or implement public policy.’ Upon an elaboration of the ‘autonomist’ and ‘sovereigntist’ positions debated among agroecological movements, they fall mostly (but not dogmatically) along the former, answering that (ibid: 18) ‘agroecological movements can and should develop the capacity to create and defend their knowledge, their territories and their sovereignty, constructing their own institutions and making use of the State when and only when such use concretely strengthens grassroots processes of emancipation, autonomy and self-determination.’<sup>39</sup> These debates are crucial, given that (ibid: 17) ‘history has shown that radical changes – such as those required by the transformation of the globalized agrifood system – cannot be made while respecting the current [state] institutionality and status quo’. As mentioned, scholars have seen this *non-respect* where movements have waged open conflict *with* existing institutions, rather than collaborating or appealing to them as effective means to justice (often, the former approach coming after failures of the latter; see Arsel 2020, Orta-Martínez et al. 2018). In their review of ‘the agrarian political economy of left-wing governments in Latin America’, Vergara-Camus and Kay (2017b: 434) conclude that social movements ‘[g]aining access to the state did not end up yielding more concrete results than building autonomy from below and outside the state’. Rosset and Barbosa (2021) discuss their proposal of movement autonomism, from an Indigenous/Latin American perspective. While explicitly distancing their studied autonomism from European anarchist lineages (although they do discuss the interactions between them, given historic overlaps of anarchist intellectuals and Indigenous rebels, such as in the Mexican Revolution), Rosset and Barbosa make it clear that the stakes of engaging in unquestioned statism are too high for agrarian/rural/peasant movements in Latin America to continue on a path riddled with at best contradictions, and at worst, failures. Such debates are by no means irrelevant to the US context.

There *are* studies that bring insights from external agrarian and rural movement scholarship and experience to bear on the US, but their analysis regarding state orientation of movements and state-society interactions remains underdeveloped. The literature has helped in various ways to understand the complex roots of US food movements and their relations to international concepts like food sovereignty (e.g. Alkon & Mares 2012, Slocum & Cadieux 2015). However, such research is often uninformed by autonomism, rejects it out of hand, or borrows from its critiques only selectively (as in Sbicca's [2018] incorporation of insights from anarchists Murray Bookchin and Peter Gelderloos, while concluding as is typical with national policy recommendations). In contrast, analyses could more centrally consider the US federal state's consistent repression of Left movements, its active oppression of Others and undermining of movement-based solidarity strategies, its forms of radical movement demobilization through cooptation and selective reformist concessions, and the counter-insurgent properties of the NPIC (and the role of reformism broadly), especially when making normative recommendations (see Roman-Alcalá 2019). Extending and deepening consideration of the state – its histories, its relations, and patterns of interaction with diverse social sectors – would aid analysis of US food movements.

For instance, the widely cited work by Alkon and Mares (2012) on 'neoliberal constraints' on the greater adoption of food sovereignty politics in the US claims that US movements are not critical enough of capitalism, and are too skeptical of the state. 'Food justice organizations ... while rightly critical of the role of institutional racism in producing hunger among communities of color, tend to be less aware of the role of capitalism (ibid: 357).' They claim (ibid: 358) that '[t]he food justice movement has ... not engaged the critiques of capitalist agriculture that distinguish the food sovereignty movement, which would suggest a more radical strategy aimed at transforming, rather than providing alternatives to, the corporate food regime.'

Perhaps it is simply an empirical disjuncture between my research subjects and theirs, and/or a reflection of the changes in the cultural hegemonic context of the integral state from 2010 to 2021, but I did not find this to be the case with the groups I studied. Based on my sample set I find it quite likely that many food justice projects use entrepreneurial strategies even while they harbour critiques of capitalism. I appreciate how Alkon and Mares (2012) and analyses like theirs attempt to get movements

to think and act in terms of (critiques of) capitalism. Yet, such analysis may neglect the possibility that a critique of capitalism *might include or lead directly to a critique of the capitalist state*. Alkon and Mares (ibid: 357) continue that, ‘In the food justice analysis, government, not capitalism, is largely responsible for the racist policies and programs that produce hunger. Because the government is not seen as an ally, food justice organizations tend to choose social change strategies that work through the creation of alternative markets rather than political transformation or even reform.’ This quote – and analysis like this – implies (a) that it cannot be the government *alongside* capitalism that is responsible for food injustice, and (b) that there are simple dichotomies in mind and action within food (justice) movements: either a movement actor implicates capitalism, and acts via the state to change conditions, or implicates the state, and acts via the market. Such well-meaning analyses that push back against market-based movement strategies can further the hegemonic notion that a ‘more radical strategy’ to confront the ‘corporate food regime’ (Alkon & Mares 2012: 358) entails foremost reformist policy-making via the state – which a state-skeptic perspective, informed by the state-assessing theories discussed throughout this research, might suggest requires greater justification.

What this research has found is a complex picture, where emancipatory US food movement ToCs are diverse, self-contradictory at times, and characterized – at least, if considered generously – by realist utilization of available strategies to achieve both tangible short term *and* very difficult long-term goals. This more complex picture mirrors recent studies that have disputed the sometimes-dichotomous slippages in food movement analysis (McInnes et al. 2017) and assumptions of hegemonic ‘neoliberalism’ (Harris 2009, Thompson & Kumar 2018). And although some neoliberalism-focused scholars have responded to similar previous critiques of their work (Alkon & Guthman 2017: chap. 1), the responses have not acknowledged that the neoliberalism lens (which tends to lump all non-state strategies in with neoliberalism) perhaps never described food movements fully or well enough in the first place – including their valid, rooted, and perhaps normatively useful nonstate elements. Alkon and Guthman (2017: 18) in their introduction to *The New Food Activism* even claim credit for movement shifts towards more race-conscious, confrontational types of activism: ‘critiques of neoliberalism in food movements have pushed food activists to craft new strategies, subjectivities, and alliances’. Perhaps

they have, in part. I would like to believe that scholarship influences movements, and my informants did include activists whose work was or is informed by scholarship. But movements move for many reasons and based on many influences, and I believe it is just as possible that movements are evolving and responding to changing conditions and opportunities. This research indicates that (a) nonstate, radical elements have *always* been at play in food movements, including among Others; and (b) there has been a shift in recent decades which has elevated these more radical aspects of food movements into public and scholarly view. And so, from another view, scholars simply have begun catching up with movement practices that never were absent, but were obscured by a fixation on (scholarly understandings of) neoliberalism.

Movement wisdom exists, and should be recognized by scholars. This does not entail uncritical boosterism, as it is true that food movements can be naively committed to problematic strategies (like the race-blind and purely market-focused approaches that the critical food movement literature so rightfully derides). Movements (like scholars) can also be caught in the hegemony of statism, unaware or unquestioning of their own statist biases. The more self-conscious of movements are the radical elements that navigate uncomfortable waters of reformism while maintaining a transformative vision for change. These are individuals and groups that act through the state, but do not consider themselves necessarily in favour of or a part of the state and its problematic histories and tendencies. Researchers should thus tread carefully when pronouncing particular movement groups or sectors as purely constituted by or rallying behind one theory of change. Trauger's discussion of the implications of food sovereignty politics *via-à-vis* the modern liberal state (2014: 1146-1147) elaborates a diversity of aspects of enacting such radical politics:

[F]ood sovereignty may implement its radical vision within the existing structures of the modern liberal nation state by working with, against and in between its juridical structures by reworking the central notions of sovereignty: territory, economy and power. Until the rights to govern are granted to people and communities, rights to food are taken, often illicitly, in order to provide food, protect natural capital and exercise collective decision-making against the interests of capital. These examples include ways to work against the primacy of private property rights through fighting for and acting on the right to access to territory, the (re)development of an anti/post-capitalist subjectivity with gift economies, and the use of civil disobedience to

both obtain food and produce political subjects oriented toward shared power and community food security.

Certainly, I encountered such movement elements in my fieldwork, within a movement ecology that was not obviously or easily compartmentalized into separate ‘radical’, ‘reformist’, ‘market’ and ‘anticapitalist’ bubbles. Mutual aid efforts in the Central Valley and between farmers of colour and frontline protestors do show efforts to create non-capitalist support systems – but some of those same actors are involved in local food economy development (Guerrero 2020). Territory-seeking works against notions of private property at times, as in Indigenous organizing against pipelines and sacred site desecration, but also alongside or without threatening such property relations, as in the Ohlone Café’s approach to gathering traditional Indigenous foods. Direct action, rooted in autonomist values, sometimes coincides (in individuals and groups) with efforts to utilize state processes to stop harmful policies from moving forward, or to ‘shake the money tree’<sup>40</sup> to gain further resources from the state (Roman-Alcalá 2018). Movements operate in tensions, not dichotomies.

Although they also accomplished analysis that avoided dichotomizing social movements, Holt Giménez and Shattuck (2011) and Wright (2013) did not emphasize enough the tensions that emerge from the effects of reformism and statism within the context of the capitalist-colonial state; as such, they (like other food movement scholarship) pay not enough attention to the limits, harms, and exclusions of statist and reformist strategies, and do not emphasize (as I have tried to here) the often beneficial and pragmatic dynamics of nonstate strategies, and especially the revolutionary anticapitalist aspects of these. This is one reason why further integrating state-skeptical Black, Indigenous, and anarchist theory, and the literature on food movements in the developing world in which these limits and dynamics are more so discussed, can helpfully reframe US food movement scholarship.

Giraldo and McCune (2019: 18) offer a helpful corrective to the longstanding scholarly tradition of presenting movement dichotomies (with regards to the state) and seeking a ‘correct’ answer within that dynamic:

Perhaps, the choice of whether to engage or not in institutions is a false dichotomy. We believe it is necessary to open a struggle on several fronts,



although it may sound contradictory. As long as the State exists, it is necessary to dispute it in order to open certain cracks. In some aspects, such as access to the means of production, the State constitutes an entity that we cannot renounce in the process of building hegemony. That is why when there are [friendly] regimes it is necessary to co-opt them, to permeate them, to conspire from within, to create common sense, to gain space for the proposals of social transformation thanks to the allies within the structures of power. But also to know themselves distanced, as critical entities of the state bureaucracy.

This, in other words, means rethinking strategies by decentralizing the State: taking it out of the center, marginalizing it, which means that we cannot concentrate on the State, but neither can we ignore it.

This proposal matches what I saw with California's diverse food movements, especially when focusing on those sectors composed of Othered groups. Giraldo and McCune (2019: 4) argue that 'nothing can replace committed, territorial, grassroots agroecological movements as a means to autonomous self-determination' and that in seeking 'revolution' rather than mere 'reform' (ibid: 20) 'only the active practice, time and time and time again, of grassroots community organizing methods, based on agroecological practices, dialogue, local struggles, and leadership building, can create the kind of solid grassroots movements that can change the balance of forces'. This concern for revolutionary change, and commitment to grassroots, local, dialogical processes was apparent across a number of my interviews, initiatives studied, and participant observations. Reflecting upon both scholarship and theorizing among movements about the state and its (potential) role, I suggest that an additional theoretical attentiveness is needed to the uneven playing field (in the US) between statist and non-state strategies, in order to recognize the bias against nonstate positions and the dangers of policy (and policy advocacy) undermining such grassroots efforts – even if, at times, state action indeed can support such efforts.

### 6.3.1. Practical tools in working across difference

To develop any tools, we should first know what problem the tool addresses. Working across social difference is hard, especially when dealing with contentious issues often implicating life and death. There are many,

perhaps countless, forms of difference, too. The previous chapter attempted to deal with differences in race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, generation, and geography (urban-rural divides); this chapter focuses on the differences that arise in terms of relations to the state (understood in this context as specifically liberal, capitalist, and settler-colonial). To address these differences and the tensions they bring up, we should understand political actors, in terms of their personal stories, and family, community, and sectoral lineages. These lineages contain traditions of both action and theory, lineages which evolve in interaction with those of others. People in movements act out unspoken and unconscious theories of change, and can exhibit contradictions between spoken theories of change and actual practice. One tool, then, is simply the discussion and reflection process helpful to unearthing what theories of change are in play, how these appear and are navigated by groups, and across them. This research – as ‘convocation’ strategy – has hopefully helped develop such a tool, in its ‘encounters’ and the sharing of these written-up findings with informants and incorporation of their feedback.

There is no accountability possible between people and groups that have differential power, if those differences are not recognized first. As in Chapter 5, this includes a recognition that pushes for particular kinds of movement action – and actions prevented or avoided – are not neutral, and are influenced by ToCs, themselves shaped by factors like (changing) class positions and professionalization. Movement participants from BIPOC reformists to white revolutionaries can speak to their own habits of thought, traditions of action, their places of overlap and antagonism; scholars can be more transparent about their sources of knowledge, personal histories, and reasons for one or the other interpretation of the evidence. All can be more conscious of how strategies of assimilation, valorization, and differencing are pursued, and whether and how tactics advance support for one or the other strategy – and whether such tactics work against Othering or reinforce it. Organizations and initiatives utilizing the ‘master’s tools’, such as entrepreneurial gardens or state climate policy reform, must grapple with these as *specific* choices (whether consciously made or not), not as default normatively-accepted approaches. In the inevitable process of dealing with the state – whether this is entering it, pushing or defending against it, petitioning it, or seeking to escape it – the honesty about such positions and tendencies can lead to greater tactical

humility, tendency to collaborate, and understanding of the movement ecology in which one (or one's sector) acts.<sup>41</sup>

Practically speaking, in such processes of developing collaborations and coalitions ('convergence'), it is helpful for all sectors – but especially the more hegemonic ones with fewer participants who have been subject to Othering – to temper their own 'strong' commitments to certain ToCs. Bringing ToCs into the sunlight can help determine where work is fundamentally at odds, find common areas of overlap, and clarify remaining space to actually work in concert. It can bring to light the state skepticism and trauma brought into reformist processes, perhaps engendering appreciation for how open people are to doing movement work imperfectly, considering deeply challenging histories. The quality of facilitation in coalition-formation processes matters, as it can variously result in hardening of positions, compromise and mutual recognition, or effective differencing – the transformative creation of a larger We. Sometimes people will stretch out of their bounds and comfort zones. Good facilitated spaces recognize that the playing field is not level, that statist positions are the status quo and expected, and that marginalized groups are structurally and culturally disempowered in 'multi-stakeholder dialogues'. This means, for equity's sake, those with more conventional views of change-making should practice extra humility in seeking collaboration from those who've more often been considered too 'radical', 'utopian', or 'unrealistic': equity in ToCs implies counterbalancing the existing uneven weight that currently leans towards reformist and statist assumptions. But humility must go all ways, and as I hope examples in this chapter have conveyed, having clarity about negative institutions and their dynamics and positive alternatives for future-focused organizing need not translate into dogmatic refusal to engage historically-problematic institutions or into defenses of one 'right' way of doing things (or attacks on others for having different ToCs).

For instance, CalCAN was described by multiple interviewees in negative terms, as an 'insiders' group of relatively privileged Northern Californian white women, which was not accountable to BIPOC or environmental justice and food justice communities. But as one critic of their approach told me, 'Should we write off CalCAN? I don't think so'.<sup>42</sup> This interviewee insisted that no transformation-minded movement group should play the insider game only, but that they remained open to the possibility that CalCAN's work could synergize with the more justice-focused and outsider work of others. In speaking with CalCAN staff, it was clear that

there is more openness and vocalized interest to change alongside more marginalized communities' leadership. Indeed, they are seeking to create more alignment with environmental justice groups because they think it would make them more effective. Insofar as the group is dead-set on its existing insider policy approach, it cannot necessarily change to fully accommodate to that sector's beliefs, needs, and approaches. But reading out from existing changes – for instance, its policy director pushing its farmer-dominated Board of Directors to include farmworker issues *as climate issues*, the change to its policy sign-on guidelines mentioned in Chapter 5 – CalCAN's engagement of radical BIPOC formations may push it to be less dead-set, and to reconsider at various points the *how* of accountable 'insider' work.

Another insight from ToCs discussions is the recognition that any assessment of alignment depends on perspective. From the point of view of conventional industrial farming and its political-economy, white-dominated environmental groups like CalCAN are more antagonists than allies. As pointed out in some agricultural journalism (Hooker 2020), CalCAN and CAFF are 'outlier' groups when it comes to most ag-related policy in the state: they are rarely on the side of industrial agriculture interests, and industrial-capitalist agricultural interests are the primary political barrier to achieving anything like a transformed food system. This indicates how convergence may be more likely when it is built out from personal relationship and differencing processes that develop analyses and critiques out of deeper relationships and longer-term interaction, rather than from a priori assumptions about identity politics, political party affiliation, or stated values (versus enacted values). Rather than being based on abstract principles, it is often where the 'rubber hits the road' that convergence is built or tested, as when funding is at stake, policy processes proceed, personalities conflict, tangible issues are addressed, and contexts change. Considering this, it is important to recognize that ToCs are not definitive in creating the needed conditions for convergence.

#### 6.4. Conclusion

In this chapter I have used a theory of change lens to understand how differences in relations to state power show up in US/Californian food movements, and how these differences cause intra-movement conflict and are navigated. This analysis supplements the previous chapter's attention

to how various axes of social (identity/class) difference generate and mitigate social movement tensions, and how these influence convergence. Through some of the same theoretical lineage insights as used in the previous chapter (BRT, Indigenous resurgence, intersectional-Marxism, anarchism), we saw how the colonial-capitalist state is a problematic (and contradictory) entity through which to pursue emancipation. Still, this does not mean that either theoretically the state is an easily-parsed subject, or practically that this means movements can or should reject and avoid any state engagement. State engagement is unavoidable, in most cases. Instead, what this chapter showed theoretically is that scholars attending to emancipatory social movements (in this case food movements, although I believe this finding is relevant to other kinds of movements) should attempt to avoid subsuming movement theories of change under their own analyses of neoliberalism. Instead, scholars can supplement attention to neoliberalism and neoliberal subjectivities (without normatively assuming state strategies as the correct ones) by bringing into such analyses (1) consideration of longer histories and lineages of struggle (which influence movements composed of self-aware descendants of those previous, pre-neoliberal-era struggles), (2) assessment of how differential class and identity positions influence individual and group positioning vis-à-vis the state, and (3) insights from long-standing critical theory on the state (including in Marxist, anarchist, Black radical, and Indigenous traditions) and from contemporary studies on the state and global agroecology/food sovereignty struggles; this latter literature might suggest that any normative recommendations for state strategies bear in mind the theoretical and empirical limits to state strategies, and elevates the importance of international solidarity. Together, these generate analyses that better include non-state aspects of social movements and understand movement theories and actions as relational, historically-grounded, dynamic, and pragmatic – even if contradictory.

In terms of my central research question, this chapter clarified how movements conceive and manifest emancipatory politics in diverse manners. I cover this briefly here, before describing in the dissertation conclusion how these outcomes relate to the potentials of (radical) food movements to counter contemporary manifestations of rightwing politics, and their longer historical trajectories.

Aspects of food justice, environmental justice, farmers of colour, and Indigenous sectors of California food movements continue the legacies of

various overlapping radical traditions in their rhetoric and action, but this radicality is combined with more reformist and statist behaviours. That these latter behaviours continue even when they conflict with stated radical beliefs does not necessarily indicate hypocrisy. More so, it shows the tactical agility of insurgent US social movements, which find openings and navigate even ‘enemy turf’ in order to seek emancipatory aims. Still, the uneven playing field between accepted and radical ways of change-making (and thus ToCs) creates a political (movement) space often fragmented and in conflict. Hegemonic power defends itself by absorbing popular sentiment, incentivizing nonthreatening forms of activism, and suppressing radical threats. Conflicts among ToCs often fall along the lines of various preexisting stratifications that parallel opposing ToCs. That is, radical ToCs are marginalized alongside the already-marginal social positions of their foremost proponents (BIPOC, women, queers, youth, the undocumented). To be clear, identity does not equal politics, and marginalized people can and do proclaim reformism/statism. But historically, radicalism tends to circulate most among the marginalized in society along with layers of the intellectual classes.<sup>43</sup> In addition, forms of state repression of Othered groups (through both coercion and consent) can be synergistic in simultaneously marginalizing both a society’s minorities (that is, BIPOC in the US) and its political radicals, as Ngai (2004: 3) indicates in describing how late nineteenth and early twentieth century ‘exclusion of Chinese, other Asians, and various classes of undesirable aliens [including anarchists]... signaled the beginnings of a legal edifice of restriction’, and as in Burden-Stelley’s (2017) description of overlapping anti-Black/anti-communist efforts to subvert midcentury radicalism.<sup>44</sup>

However, there is a danger in weaponizing identity to normatively promote radical ToCs: if only the minority can be radical, how might change truly occur on a scale that extends beyond that minority? Alternatively, ‘progressive neoliberal’ promotion of identity-as-politics can normatively provide cover for mainstream politics of incorporation and appeasement, reformist reformism, and the maintenance of the status quo. Arguably, while the status quo is most often defended by the privileged (for example, Trump voters who were wealthier than average US citizens; male patriachs who dominate their households; the white-led institutions that pushed back on mid-twentieth century antiracist cultural progress), and anticapitalism and nonstate autonomism remain self-marginalizing counter-hegemonic positions, we should not lean too hard into a dichotomous

understanding of marginalized radicality versus privileged status quo defense. ToCs should be disentangled from particular sectors and identities (Black, Indigenous, migrant, women, commercial farmers, urban farmers, environmental justice groups, and so on), and the politics of identity should remain an open, empirical question rather than a closed, assumed theory-informed answer.

Different food movement traditions (revolutionary, reformist, statist, non/anti-state) evolve within larger movements and periods of upheaval, and through the dialogue and disputes of opposing, adjacent and overlapping currents. In recent years, more radical traditions have increased in visibility and influence, likely due to decades of failed reformist neoliberalism (in both government and movements), resurgent radical BIPOC (particularly Black, Latinx, and Indigenous) social-political movements, and society-wide reactions to rightwing politics-in-power. As a result of previous movement tradition evolution, and current political conditions, movements often act through (but not necessarily in favour of) state powers, and engage in economic development projects while proclaiming anticapitalist aspirations. The approach of seeing theories of change among social movement groups as legacies and as foundations for possibilities of movement convergence (and thus greater social change), is one that can be applied elsewhere. Bringing this idea that movements act through the state but not in support of it (or through the market but with anticapitalist aspirations) to other cases could expand our understanding of social upheaval and its relationship to the capitalist state. In the realm of the US, at least, this research shows that radical possibilities for food systems change have never been absent, and may actually be gaining ground.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Note on terminology: I have been using the ‘integral state’, following Gramsci (1971), to describe ‘the state’ as a conceptual totality that includes ‘civil society’ in addition to the state apparatus itself, along the lines of commonly-understood ‘state-in-society’ approaches. Here, for simplicity, I begin using the term ‘the state’ as describing only the *state apparatus* part of the integral state – since this is what is at issue in this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> With the state understood here as a disaggregated rather than monolithic apparatus, located in global/globally-uneven political economies.

<sup>3</sup> Of course, there are other large and fundamental changes that people in emancipatory movements seek, such as an end to patriarchy, to colonialism, and to racism. Anarchists would see these important considerations as all needing to be changed simultaneously, as part of what they call ‘social revolution’ (or in more recently-used terms, ‘total liberation’ [Pellow 2014]). Although these are all important axes of revolutionary thinking, for the purposes of this chapter, I simplify in order to speak of *revolution* and *revolutionary* in relationship to capitalism.

<sup>4</sup> Some examples here include Pesticide Action Network North America, Californians for Pesticide Reform, Farmworker Justice, and California Rural Legal Assistance.

<sup>5</sup> Phone interview, November 2019.

<sup>6</sup> See Javier Zamora’s successful Central Coast operation JSM Organics: <https://www.jsmorganics.com/our-story/>.

<sup>7</sup> There are also elements that overlap with even further rightward ideas, values, and sectors, to be discussed briefly later in the chapter.

<sup>8</sup> See analyses of ecofascist tendencies to overlap with food/farm issues in the UK (Carter 2020) and the US (Rueda 2020). As another example of this overlap, one of the white nationalist rioters arrested after the January 6, 2021 attack on the US Capitol demanded (and received) only organic food while imprisoned.

<sup>9</sup> This assessment is based on fifteen years of experience in these spaces, including participation in the California Food Policy Council and other similar gatherings of Californian ecofarming movement entities.

<sup>10</sup> Video interview, January 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Personal communication with a small northern Californian ecofarmer, June 2021.

<sup>12</sup> For examples of farmer-led groups, see the National Organic Coalition and National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition; for environmental/consumer-focused groups: Friends of the Earth US, Organic Consumers Association, Regeneration International, Environmental Working Group, and the Union of Concerned Scientists.

<sup>13</sup> This observation stems from personal communications with various NFFC and Rural Coalition staff over the years since 2016, when I worked for a national-level NGO and sought to support their efforts as BIPOC and grassroots leadership within the larger field of national ecofarming-supporting organizations. I later represented Rural Coalition as a delegate to La Via Campesina’s 2017 conference in Basque Country.

<sup>14</sup> See for example efforts to support farmers of colour during the pandemic by Slow Food organizers (<https://slowfoodeastbay.com/sister-farms/>) and a wealthy



philanthropist (<https://tomkatranch.org/2020/09/30/growing-the-table-shifting-demand-towards-a-regenerative-and-equity-based-food-system/>).

<sup>15</sup> This was before the May 2020 police murder of George Floyd that galvanized worldwide protest.

<sup>16</sup> Such incubator programmes have a decades-long history in projects like Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association (ALBA) (<https://www.albafarmers.org/>) and the Center for Land-Based Learning (<https://landbasedlearning.org/>). Over time, ALBA has focused its work on (mostly Latinx) farmworkers who seek to become farm owners, and another BIPOC-focused incubator has been launched at the white-owned farm and NGO Pie Ranch (<https://www.pieranch.org/cascade>).

<sup>17</sup> See Erway (2019) for details on the Asian American Farmers Alliance.

<sup>18</sup> This includes phone and video interviews with seven founders or participants in CFJC, in June, July, November and December (2019) and June of 2020.

<sup>19</sup> Kristyn, Aaron Dinwoodie from Feral Heart Farm, and another member of the Asian American Farmers Alliance have expressed their anticapitalist commitments in personal conversations, a sentiment I have heard widely from farmers of colour during the agroecology encounters, in interviews, and at EcoFarm conferences. Black Earth Farms is one of the only California BIPOC farmer groups (that I am aware of) to express these views publicly, unambiguously.

<sup>20</sup> See the websites of Oakland's City Slicker Farms (<https://www.cityslickerfarms.org/>) and since-disbanded People's Grocery (<https://www.globalonenessproject.org/library/films/peoples-grocery>), San Francisco's Alemany Farm (<http://alemanyfarm.org/>), and Los Angeles's Community Service Unlimited (<http://csuinc.org/>).

<sup>21</sup> For instance, Black Earth Farms Collective (<https://www.blackearthfarms.com/>), Sacramento's Yisrael Family Farm (<https://www.yisraelfamilyfarm.net/>), Community Alliance for Agroecology (<http://allianceforagroecology.org/>), and Planting Justice (<https://plantingjustice.org/>).

<sup>22</sup> For one example of this 'funder organizing', see this webinar recording 'Naming What We Want: Central Valley Agroecology Virtual Funder Convening' from April 2021: <https://zoom.us/rec/play/fCWGIo14a8LB1ID-1ACHTr8eGYXDOA4EILqi5AV0I2moQZ5on08s-hHidXMUO9gS1eG9Wr5rlbP9j9ld.kChGNH-gUu41wZxz?start-Time=1619716121000>.

<sup>23</sup> Examples of Black-led urban farming projects that act out these principles include Black Earth Farms (East Bay), Acta Non Verba (Oakland), Afrikatown (Oak-

land), Butterfly Movement (California-wide, multiple sites), Urban Tilth (Richmond), as well as the 2021-founded (rural) Black-led Earthseed collective farm in rural Northern California.

<sup>24</sup> Daniel works on multiple fronts to make change beyond that discussed here, for instance he recently published a book on activist-scholar legacies from California's Central Valley; see O'Connell and Peters (2021).

<sup>25</sup> This perspective bolstered by my interviews with six members of the group and participant observation at their meetings, strategy sessions, and trips conducted to develop their Agroecology Center planning.

<sup>26</sup> Personal communication, June 25 2021.

<sup>27</sup> Critical commentators deride nonstate elements of movements (especially urban agriculture) as 'neoliberal': 'the rejection of the state and the privileging of communities as most appropriate for the organization of social reproduction within the commons movement bears an uncanny resemblance to neoliberal ideologies that they claim to reject' (Rosol 2020: 60). I worry that the repetition of such unsympathetic critiques reifies the very neoliberalism such analysts claim to be against, by reducing the generative and solidarity-laden politics of *rejection* of state power to an endorsement of neoliberal forms of state governing (which are a recent elite invention, and not reasonably pinned on radical social movements). And as shown here, movements actively struggle for space within the neoliberal state even while embracing more wholeheartedly the less alienated politics of civil society.

<sup>28</sup> Video interview, October 2020.

<sup>29</sup> A-dae's quotes in this and the following paragraphs come from a video interview, October 2020.

<sup>30</sup> Video interview, October 2020.

<sup>31</sup> See <http://www.winnememwintu.us/who-we-are/>

<sup>32</sup> See <https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/shuumi-land-tax/>

<sup>33</sup> Quotes from webinar, March 3 2021.

<sup>34</sup> This information comes from participant observation in a state-level programme on environmental justice from February to June of 2021.

<sup>35</sup> From the Democratic Party's neoliberalism seen in Obama's promotion of fossil fuels, bailing out of banks and 'the 1%', and suppression of Standing Rock and Black Lives Matter movements (and now Biden's refusal to follow through on progressive campaign commitments like to a \$15 minimum hourly wage), to the Republican's hate-mongering and racist response to Covid-19, Amazon's profiteering off of its low-waged workers, agribusiness's treatment-as-usual of workers (including and especially during the height of Covid-19 impacts on workers; see FCWA 2021), reformism appears as a losing strategy, and may be losing its appeal.

<sup>36</sup> Theories from various radical, autonomist traditions can be brought to bear on this: Afropessimism and 'Black Optimism' (Wilderson 2020, Moten 2013), Indigenous Resurgence (Simpson 2017, Cornthassel 2021), Anarchism/autonomist Marxism (Holloway 2002), Zapatismo (Fitzwater 2019), and Anarcho-Blackness (Samudzi and Anderson 2018; Bey 2020). Afropessimism describes the state as ontologically committed to anti-Blackness, incapable of generating the liberation of Black people. There is an overlap between such traditions in a foundational, strategic distance from treating the state as a reliable guarantor of emancipation. This is central to Coulthard's (2014) opposition to the 'politics of recognition'; and Cornthassel's (2012) rejection of 'politics of distraction'. However, this is not to claim Black radicalism or Indigenous theory for (Eurocentric) anarchism, but simply to point out resonances, which can at times distinguish movements extending from (and learning from) these more autonomist traditions, from those of more orthodox Marxist, social democratic, and liberal ideologies and origins. Most pertinent to the US context this attention would foreground the distance between reformist-statist and revolutionary formations, marking revolutionary Marxism and these autonomisms as closer to each other than either is to liberal-reformism.

<sup>37</sup> Although almost one hundred articles cite Schiavoni (2017), I could not find a concrete application of the HRI approach to North American food movement processes.

<sup>38</sup> Important as it is to learn from state failures to bring about emancipation elsewhere, we should not forget the international context of an imperialist world system and how this influences the chances of counter-hegemonic ideas taking root in the state. This is likely a blind spot for most anarchism, which is likely to see all states as suspect, when from another vantage point, in the context of US and Global North imperialism, developing world states may advance self-determination among the world's POC against global relations of power, even while they may fall short in their fidelity to democratic, ecological, or anticapitalist ideals.

<sup>39</sup> Within movements, defining the point when engaging the state is necessary and will result in strengthening is contentious – one person's necessity is another person's selling out. Theorists cannot make such determinations for movements. Yet, there needs to be open discussion of such fault lines in the first place, among movements and intellectuals (something I have seen little of in fifteen years of movement participation). From this, a sense of 'necessity' can be formed, with which to respond to existing conditions and political opportunities in a more thoughtful, strategic, and perhaps convergent manner. In this, allied researchers (and especially those who also participate in movement work) can play a valued role in seeding, sparking, or contributing to such discussions.

<sup>40</sup> Video interview, February 2021.

<sup>41</sup> See Nunes (2021) for a theoretical elaboration of how many sectors of the Left can see ‘the question of organization’ on shared terms, enabling a better assessment of that ecology and strategic options, without the hindrance of longstanding dogmas regarding tensions like the statist/nonstate one discussed here.

<sup>42</sup> Personal communication, June 2019.

<sup>43</sup> See Wolf (1969) for a thorough treatment of the social and class composition of revolutionaries in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that supports such a claim. And as anthropologist David Graeber (2004: 76) ‘frequently argued’: ‘revolutionary constituencies always involve a tacit alliance between the least alienated and the most oppressed’.

<sup>44</sup> Burden-Stelley (2017: 216) describes ‘statist technologies that facilitate the accommodation of Black intellectual and practical challenges to the capitalist state while, at the same time, ensuring their cooptation’.

## 7

## Food movements and rightwing politics: research results and future directions

To conclude, I bring the study's results together here, to make sense of them as a whole, to draw lessons useful to further research and to inform future practices and conceptual understanding among readers. As my initial research interest focused on emancipatory movements' relations with rightwing populism, I will discuss how the previous chapters' focuses on understanding (rightwing) populism and state politics from an anarchist perspective (Chapters 2 and 6), Othering and solidarity (Chapter 4), and food movement convergence amidst diversity (Chapters 5 and 6) come together to answer the central research question: *How do agrarian and rural movements in California describe and manifest emancipatory politics, and in what ways and to what extent might these politics counter historical trajectories and current manifestations of rightwing politics?* Hence, in the first part of this conclusion, I will answer this primary research question and elaborate the answer via the study's subsidiary research questions. In the second part, I will address the implications of the dissertation to the specific study of US social movements on food and farming, to theories within broader fields of political ecological research and critical agrarian studies, and to activist research methodologies. I will also address the practice-focused implications, pitched mainly to self-styled actors in emancipation-oriented food movements.

In short, the research has found that in the context of a racial reckoning in the broader society, emancipatory food movement politics are increasingly radical and influenced by BIPOC and Others. These new more radical movement elements have not eliminated Othering or demonstrably stopped rightwing politics from advancing, but they are promising bases for further change and for countering rightwing politics. Taken together, the answers to my research questions suggest that if supported by sympathetic scholarship and the less-radical sectors of food movements and civil

society, these radical elements may continue to develop as important beacons for emancipatory politics and barriers to rightwing political strength. A key aspect of the new knowledge generated in this research – via a research process that conceptually unpacked and historicized strategies against Othering and analyzed typologies of today’s food movement theories of change, and was refracted through critical agrarian studies literatures and codeveloped by way of Black and Indigenous radical theories – is the emphasis on *nonstate* movement elements and strategies. I have concluded that nonstate ideologies and actions are crucial to food movements’ deepened impact, on their own terms, but also in terms of opposing the rise of rightwing politics.

## 7.1. Part one: emancipatory food politics in California and rightwing trajectories

### 7.1.1. Emancipatory politics

Agrarian and rural (that is, food) movements in California today describe and manifest emancipatory politics in radical ways that were less prevalent or visible at the turn of the twenty-first century. California’s food movements include those who see emancipation in anti- or post-capitalist terms and who emphasize self-emancipation politically, and that these radical elements have been gaining prominence in recent decades. These elements and their radical views on emancipation interact with more ‘progressive’<sup>1</sup> members of food movements, and together these are shaping the contours of emancipation’s meaning to rural, agrarian, food and farm movement sectors, and thus the political-economic-social changes sought and strategies pursued. Food movement actors seek these changes internally (within the movements themselves) and externally (with non-food-movement actors and institutions), in relationship, through autonomous and direct action, through entrepreneurship, through government and legal work, through the creation of organizations and institutions, and through farming itself (and more generally through relating to nonhuman natures). Of course, movements have always been diverse, and so unsurprisingly food movement elements today describe and manifest emancipation in many ways, with concerns ranging from small things like building better relationships and increasing immediate access to resources, all the way to huge goals like dismantling colonization, capitalism, white supremacy, and heteropatriarchy. It is the latter, larger concerns, however, that

now define much more discussion in food movements: a central empirical finding with potentially great impact for future developments in politics, agrarian and otherwise.

Through historical analysis, the study developed the concepts of assimilation, valorization, and differencing to describe the emancipatory strategies for countering Othering, which utilize acts of internal solidarity and external solidarity. Internal solidarity looks a lot like valorization: validating the worth of those within the in-group of an ‘Othered’ category (Black, Indigenous, ‘illegal alien’ worker). But internal solidarity can also be assimilation-oriented, such as building community resilience by sharing assimilative resources within a community of Others (such as money or access to political power). External solidarity includes instances where those in mainstream positions valorize those who have been Othered, or work to support redistribution towards them or their greater representation in various fora. It can also include similar acts of support, aimed at bringing members of Othered groups closer to the established methods of belonging in capitalist-liberal society (namely, economic success within capitalist structures and political power via the state). That is, external solidarity by those in positions of relative privilege can contribute to assimilation and valorization, just as can the efforts of Othered groups themselves. Othered groups themselves also act in external solidarity, in working across difference. For instance, the many non-Black POC participants in Black Lives Matter mobilizations throughout 2020; or the support of some Indigenous groups for the Justice for Black Farmers Act of 2020; or the ways that ethnically and culturally diverse members of EcoFarm’s Diversity Advisory Group have sought greater inclusion for multiple Others and previously-excluded groups like Latinx farmworkers, queer farmers, Black farmers, Indigenous tribes, and youth. The conceptual tools of assimilation, valorization, and differencing have helped to analyze and present the diverse ways in which emancipatory politics appear.

### 7.1.2. Countering rightwing politics

The politics of agrarian and rural movements in California counter historical trajectories and current manifestations of rightwing politics by way of ideological development among its participants and audiences, restructuring of internal organization to elevate BIPOC voices and push back against conservative (that is, rightwing-aligned) movement elements, strengthening of collective agency and community resilience, and engaging

with state politics to attempt to wrest control from current rightwing political actors. In addition, the research confirmed that differencing is a key strategy that distinguishes successful movement efforts in countering rightwing politics over the long term, compared to those that may immediately contribute to certain emancipatory goals, but also inadvertently contribute to (or fail to undermine) rightwing sources of power.

Upon this support for differencing, which is simply a solidification of a hypothesis developed through Chapter 4's historical analysis, the research has developed new understandings of differencing and its dynamics in opposing rightwing politics. The research suggests that differencing processes are most likely to oppose rightwing politics when four conditions are met: (1) when these processes include, centre, and work to elevate and respect Others; (2) when they deal explicitly with the impacts of capitalist social relations; (3) when the discursive work of differencing is combined with work that offers tangible benefits, often non-state and prefigurative in nature; and (4) when risk is taken, particularly on the part of more privileged actors (such as white people in the US context), but also by the less-privileged. BIPOC must take risks as well in working against the influences of professionalization and class accommodation, if the desire is to maintain radicalism within the new 'we' created through differencing. Differencing processes counter rightwing politics by way of the counter-narratives and valorization of Others that they generate, by linking present-day marginalization with societal structures born of (and contributing to) rightwing politics, by generating resources and access to resources (which can strengthen communities against rightwing attacks and social marginalization at large), and by directly opposing rightwing forces in state politics and in state institutions essential to the continuity of rightwing power, such as policing, border security, and legal structures that reinforce Othering and marginalization.

Radical US food movements, largely (but not purely) rooted in BIPOC values and perspectives, are a particularly generative race-class project that seems today to be shifting the landscape of food movement politics, and thus food systems politics. This radical race-class project is based on goals of autonomous bases of decommodified food production, not inherently tied to or identified with the capitalist-colonial state, combined with discourses against that state, its failures, and its support for both capital and white supremacy. This race-class project acts out solidarity internally, among its kinship Others, and externally, with others who are Othered



and marginalized, and in extensions of direct support to those on the front lines of food systems' impacts, and on the front lines of anti-systemic and counter-hegemonic struggle. Food movements limit the advances of rightwing politics in society insofar as they advance a radical race-class project that directly opposes and confronts rightwing aspects of the integral state – including not only its actors within the state apparatus, but also its economic centres in business and civil societal 'ground troops' like the militias and gangs that appeared to counter-protest Black Lives Matter.

### 7.1.3. Elaborating on answers to the research questions

Taking lessons especially from Chapters 4 and 5, which emerged out of a recursive analysis of historical and contemporary data, filtered through the lenses of Black radical and Indigenous resurgence theories alongside the study's overall theoretical lenses of intersectional Marxism and state-critical anarchism, we see how assimilation strategies *in the absence of anticapitalism and broader working-class solidarity* can generate reformist efforts that reinforce existing rightwing economic, territorial, and political (state) structures, and habits of thought that underpin continued Othering. For example, Ngai (2004) brought our attention (via this study's examination of California's historic agrarian development and its labour system and migrant struggles today) to the fact that the imaginary of the 'illegal alien' is undiminished by assimilationist drives to legalize *some* migrants as 'deserving' against others who remain 'illegal' and hence undeserving. Assimilation efforts can refuse to fall into patterns of thought or practice that bolster rightwing values and practices of exclusion, downward or lateral blame for social ills, authoritarianism (through the state's coercive apparatus), and closure when they (a) recognize the differentiated nature of the working class, and (b) consider it globally and across many axes of difference, yet (c) still emphasize the potential of alignment among manifold different kinds of working classes, and (d) identify *capitalism itself* as an obstacle to emancipation and a target to attack (rather than simply 'elites' that might be imagined to be dispensed with through populist political rhetoric and strategy).

Movement elements are likely to end up isolated and unable to affect structural transformation when they pursue valorization *in the absence of anticapitalism and working-class solidarity* (and anticapitalism's associated tactics of opposition, not just prefiguration). When valorization goes 'too far',

elevating one particular axis of difference (or only a subset of a larger marginalized population) above another, it can act as a bulwark against efforts at differencing, or of finding commonalities among groups and areas of alignment aside from consideration of commonality. Inclusion of anticapitalist analysis and working-class identification (not instead of but *in addition to* other aspects of individual, group, or organizational identity) can lead valorization processes towards recognizing their limits. For instance, Black valorization will not solve Black liberation in the absence of broader changes to capitalist and colonial institutions and social structures (Samudzi & Anderson 2018). Unionization in one sector of the workforce (albeit important) cannot emancipate labour as a whole. The need for broader, anti-systemic struggle and oppositional force (beyond more inwardly-focused valorization) is indicated in the theories of Indigenous resurgence, which also relies on some level of confrontation with the structures of colonization (for example, the state, settler culture, land use and control).

Valorization strategies, when combined with external solidarity with (other) groups of Others, can militate against the sort of conservative autonomism that is seen in the US's rightwing (often white nationalist) politics. While this research has taken on an anarchist lens at times, this does not mean that we should accept uncritically that autonomist politics are always and everywhere the better form of politics. It can be (and in the US case has been) politically regressive when autonomism appears as an isolationist effort to claim (racialized) rights to resources, against and regardless of the status of others. Solidarity outside of self-defined in-groups – even if that in-group conceives itself as an emancipatory ‘class for itself’ – is necessary to reach towards convergence, and thus towards structural transformation. Movements combining valorization with solidarity help everyone to see, as the early-twentieth century International Workers of the World slogan proclaimed, that ‘an injury to one is an injury to all’. This slogan clearly flattens differences and does not account for the detailed (context specific and regularly shifting) relation between one's injury and the condition of ‘all’. But it provides an essential reminder of the linked notion of struggles and the strategic importance of acts of solidarity and the difficult work of differencing.

Differencing strategies that encompass a variety of perspectives, but notably which include antiracist, anticapitalistic, and other radical aspects of food movements, are likely the strongest approaches in countering the

long-term patterns and current manifestations of rightwing politics.<sup>2</sup> This is in part because they build alternative discourses and mental models of change, allowing movement to better see the movement ecology in which they operate and to identify with that larger movement – shifts that can strengthen the counter-hegemonic race-class project against rightwing politics. For instance, HEAL Food Alliance has been seeking a greater ‘we’ from its inception, developing a common platform through years-long multi-sectoral democratic member deliberations. It also has pushed institutions towards radicality through its continued advocacy regarding philanthropy’s historical marginalization of BIPOC-led food movement sectors, which has included both *conflict* and *collaboration* with funders. Differencing can also work towards breaking down binary oppositions that bolster narratives in rightwing politics (and particularly its populist manifestations), such as urban–rural divides. Black Earth Farms has through its formation linked urban, rural, and suburban Black and Brown farmers through agroecological struggles; the more they and groups like the Asian American Farmers Alliance assert BIPOC perspectives in rural spaces, the less possible the conventional association of rurality with whiteness becomes. When differencing proceeds through *politicized* projects of local agriculture and food-related provisioning (for instance, the mutual aid projects described in Chapter 5 and 6), it can better avoid the capture of local food movement spaces by rightwing forces, which are typically able to leverage localist political ideals and anti-elite sentiment into regressive (or at least non-transformation-minded) political ideologies and projects (e.g. Cadieux et al. 2019). CAFA and the Agroecology Center project as coalitions of diverse organizations and individuals function by generating differencing via the term and practice of agroecology, linking issues of migration, care work, pesticides, and economic development. CAFA’s involvement in the Agroecology Center brings the coalition into even deeper relationships with the sectors most impacted by the industrial capitalist agricultural model that still reigns in the Central Valley, developing a visionary goal in its dismantling and replacement with a model rooted in different, but equally valorized, culturally-specific values and practices. This vision, in a form that is true to the differencing dynamics I have advocated for in Chapter 4, incorporates radical tendencies (nonstate, anti-capitalist) yet also is pragmatic in its accommodation for needed tactics of assimilation (entrepreneurship and political leadership development). In the process of such projects and related efforts to diversify understandings

of the food system's social foundations (and to diversify the food movement itself), they also undermine Othering by humanizing the many intersecting positionalities involved in struggles over rurality, agriculture, and food systems. When differencing is detached from assumptions of policy-making, and oriented more towards developing the autonomous ideas and capacities of civil society actors, it is more likely to help movements avoid playing into populist ideologies, which expect state actors to meaningfully advance subaltern interests. While many agrarian studies on authoritarian populism might reference non-electoral forms of solidarity politics (e.g. Gaventa 2019), there often remains an assumption that 'at a certain point in [a movement's] trajectory', it will be 'recuperated into a statist-led political leadership' (Hall 1985: 118). This research suggests that, instead, differencing need not be state-focused, nor does it necessarily contribute to populism, Left or Right.

#### 7.1.4. Histories of US agrarian Othering and counter-Othering

The historical-relational methodology of this study confirmed the well-patterned and foundational role of Othering to the development of agrarian California, in both international and domestic registers. Built on settler-colonization, US agrarian society from early on required continuous Othering of the Indigenous population, and narratives amongst its European settler base of their righteous differentiation from both Native and 'alien' Others (for example, the Chinese, later on: Mexicans). This was aided by the ideological apparatus of white supremacy -- conveniently, also strung together in antagonism to the enslaved Black Other. These are the twin foundations of the US's political (self) identification, and political-economic formation, which link the 'internal' (US-as-nation or 'imagined community') to the 'external' (the external Other including Indigenous Others who must be eliminated in order to both justify and ensure territorial expansion, and groups of imported labour whose assimilation is thought, or made, impossible). These foundations are (as methodological precedents from Hobsbawm [1972] and Schiavoni [2017] insist) not merely 'historical': they exist in the present in continued labour, land, and political alienation, manifesting as beliefs, expectations, and practices across a political spectrum, from Trumpian, overtly racist populism, to the reproduction of agrarian mythologies and assumptions about the continued availability of cheap labour for farms among some elements of US food movements.

At the same time, Othering processes are a dialectical reflection of structural needs of capitalist processes of exploitation, appropriation, accumulation, and expansion, and a precondition for them. That is, Othering is a key strategy used to justify capitalism's continuity and its unequal proceeds, and a 'solution' to the problems generated by capitalism's inherent tendencies. As Hannah Holleman's (2017) example of the Dust Bowl showed, white/European-led colonization (which served to expand capitalism's reach at the same time that capitalism was a tool of colonization) led to soil degradation, which became a 'white man's burden' solved through further capitalist development, leaving largely untouched the racial and colonial thinking that underpinned ecological disruption in the first place.

This interwoven nature of capitalism, colonialism, and racialization via Othering is so foundational to US food systems, yet until recently was not much a subject of outward debate among most food movement elements. The history behind this complex interweaving and its continuity in the present is still often ignored or minimized, but this research found that it is now being discussed in some food movement spaces. This foundation (laid over the 1600-1800s) led later to the development of 'whiteness' as a racial-social position within colonialism and capitalism. As whiteness became hegemonic (in consent terms: encouraging buy-in from working class whites and assimilationist strategies by those 'not white' or *not yet* white), the ground was laid for the terrain of economic class-focused struggles of the revolutionary late 1800s and early 1900s. That these anarchist and socialist movements were often inter-ethnic is notable, yet both race questions and colonial questions were often obscured by a generally class-centric analysis and rhetoric. Without ignoring or dismissing that some parts of these movements took the intersectionality and specificity of struggles seriously, generally speaking working-class movements in the US have grappled with these foundations only unwittingly, partially, or harmfully. This is best exemplified by the New Deal, which consolidated a working-class solidarity that left behind non-white agrarian Others in a state-focused policy response that would (from white workers' perspective) provide better social security and protections and (from the political and business elite perspective) could stabilize and protect the capitalist-industrial order itself.

Regarding the strategies that movements used from roughly the 1850s to the late twentieth century, we saw that solidarity occurred within movement efforts to assimilate, valorize themselves, and work across differences in pursuit of emancipation, and against their own Othering. The movement to abolish slavery and establish economic bases for the formerly-enslaved involved a foundational need to valorize enslaved and formerly-enslaved Blacks as humans, against their dehumanization in white supremacist society. Valorization appeared in Indigenous tribes' continuation of their traditional ways, maintaining self-identity against efforts to destroy this by colonists and colonial government making war upon them. Assimilation also appeared, such as in the calls for '40 acres and a mule' for the formerly-enslaved to form new, successful economic integration with the evolving nation, in the post-chattel-slavery era of the late 1800s. Political-economic advances via assimilation always figured into social sectors of those who have been Othered, including waves of migrants, from the Europeans arriving prior to and throughout the establishment of 'whiteness' itself, to the Japanese, Chinese, and Filipinos of the turn of the twentieth century. These strategies of achieving voice and rights to vote in governmental apparatuses and achieving economic success as measured by capital have been consistent, but are now increasingly challenged by Indigenous resurgence theory and Black radical positions (as shown in Chapter 5).

But assimilation and valorization, as means of merely integrating into the social order, were not the only movement valences. From the beginning, Indigenous and Black (ex-enslaved) Others fought back directly through escape, frontal attack, and the creation of maroon communities. Oppositional, revolutionary, and anti-state elements also appeared widespread during the height of global socialist movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In this period, direct action, including waves of workers strikes, farmer and farmworker organizing activity, and even violence against the capitalist and political elite classes (for example, by widely-demonized Italian anarchist immigrants) all contributed to a social instability that provoked responses from above. As prefigured in the earlier suppression of radicals in the 1910s-1920s and described in Chapter 4, anti-communist Othering sutured itself to more longstanding racialized Othering, often equating foreignness with radicalness and threats to the social order. Deportation apparatuses and political discourses of belonging evolved to keep restive working classes in order, and to develop new

mechanisms to absorb some elements of these sectors into mainstream political-economy, and to obscure the sources of injustice.

#### 7.1.5. Historical continuities and disjunctures

There are historical continuities between past (1850s to 2000s) and present (roughly, in the twenty-first century). These include some continuities in the practices and patterns of Othering, as described previously, and continuities in the ways that Others (and allies) have sought to counter that Othering. Othering patterns – underlain by interwoven structures and institutions, values and practices of white supremacy, capitalism, and colonialism – continue today to shape agrarian and food systems structures, as seen in the racialized patterns of food systems employment and unequal access to and ownership of land. Indigenous communities are still treated patronizingly by federal law as charges of the state, and deprived of land stolen from them by white supremacist legal precedents of the ‘doctrine of discovery’, a view upheld even by ‘liberal’ members of the US Supreme Court like Ruth Bader Ginsberg (UNESCO 2010: 19). That same legal system continues to separate migrants into legal and illegal, deserving and undeserving categories – marking those who toil in agricultural work as ‘impossible subjects’ that cannot achieve full humanity and human rights, yet remain indispensable to agricultural capitalism in California (and across the country).

However, the roll out of Othering as a process differs from much of the last century, as it varies with changes in the balance of political forces in society, particularly shifts in hegemonic ideas about race and other forms of difference. There is a newness in the levels of racial awareness in society at large over the last century, and thus there has been a change in the ‘integral state’ and its consent apparatus. Othering’s form and operation today, responding to shifts in generalized civil society acceptability of overt racial orders, thus appears more covert. Liberal-statist institutions and norms remain a centre for the reproduction of Othering, but unlike earlier eras where overt claims to the ‘white man’s burden’ or explanations of policy initiatives in terms of uncensored social hierarchies were normative and largely unquestioned *within* dominant classes, today the state’s role is characterized by recalcitrant rehashing of Otherings’ past by the rightwing (for example, Republicans and Trumpism) and more covert reproduction of that Othering that attempts to divide the operation from the discourse, as seen in the ‘progressive neoliberalism’ of the Democratic

administrations of Obama and Biden (Fraser 2016). Due to increasing agitation for justice along the lines of racialization and colonization, the state itself has become a more contested space for countering Othering. Hence, the state's role in Othering today is perhaps less straightforward than its operation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. At the same time, although Othering continues to structure food systems (especially in racial terms), changing racial composition and relations are influencing how racial Others relate within the system. Inspired by figures like the first Black president Barack Obama, people from historically Othered groups can see themselves as potentially taking up powerful positions, and thus invest more in state politics, capitalist upward mobility, and other processes of assimilation. Similar to dynamics wherein European working classes 'became white' via their participation in colonization (and assimilation), today there are a number of BIPOC groups seeking greater access to resources in order to become 'their own bosses', and potentially the bosses of others, as owners of farms. This diversifying farmer base parallels a diversifying food and farm movement base, with impacts on trajectories of Othering as the traumas and lessons of previously-experienced Othering histories weigh on how such movements conceive of themselves, relate to each other, and cohere. This is likely a fruitful avenue for future research to move the boundary of understanding from white supremacist capitalism perpetuated by white people in the food movement, to multicultural versions of the same dynamics.

Internal movement Othering, or the generation and continuation of Othering between members of emancipatory (radical and progressive) movement elements, continues as well, although this was not such a big part of what I saw in fieldwork, and so I do not mean to overly emphasize it. Most of this kind of intra-movement Othering appeared as steeped in established power dynamics (as when white elders in EcoFarm obstructed moves to give greater conference space to Others), or happened inadvertently. This happened via participation in exclusionary processes like policy (excludes non-citizens) and funding (excludes more radical movement elements), but also in practices of self-siloing by race, issue area, or other difference, wherein a movement element or group refuses to recognize the validity of another's position as relevant to their own struggle. This extends out to the different ways movements see rightwing elements in society; some hold an analysis of the latter's place in society as a barrier and enemy, lumping together top-down elements of rightwing power in the



state and capitalist enterprise with white working-class elements of labour (or petite-bourgeoise classes of small farmers, artisans, and business owners) whose political position is contradictory, torn between the ‘wages of whiteness’ and any larger sense of ‘we’. Such perspectives, often refracted through popular media and punditry following Trump’s 2016 election, contrast to those that seek to counter the Othering of rural and poor whites, and to see them as potential allies in struggles against capital. I saw these swirling tensions among and combinations of these perspectives in progressive food movement spaces, as in the HEAL Food Alliance’s efforts to convene multi-ethnic movement organizations and unify them through long-term deliberation on policy, practice, and politics at large.

There were also instances of movement participants leveraging one axis of oppression against other marginalized people, aka the ‘Oppression Olympics’ mentioned in Chapter 5. While not necessarily a form of Othering, these examples show missed opportunities to generate solidarity when a focus on (certain) differences obviate the need to address more than one difference in order to reach towards emancipation. Historically, we saw across-Other non-solidarity in the dominantly-white women’s movement ill treatment of Black women within the movement (which the latter responded to by articulating intersectionality discourses); in my fieldwork, I saw how failing to see (or even ignoring) patriarchal behaviour in movement spaces because of a perpetrator’s marginalized identity prevents deeper transformation and alienates (potential) movement participants. These examples from the research reinforce the proposition that food movement analysis requires intersectional theory.

Upon this somewhat shifting landscape of the integral state there are continuities and disjunctures in the main strategies to counter-Othering of assimilation, valorization, and differencing. Some of my informants did see Othering as important, but they often viewed it within a broader field of marginalization (that is, marginalization as a larger category than Othering-based marginalization). The food movement subjects of this research were also concerned with the here-and-now issues they faced, but many also framed these in longer, historicized accounts of injustice. This attention to history has not been constant among movements, and recently there is a newer interest in recognizing certain long-ignored histories (as seen in the uptake of Indigenous land acknowledgments) and framing issues and struggles more internationally. While internationalism was an early (and thus long-standing) feature of socialism globally, US social

movements with strong internationalist analysis and activity have been marginalized since the 1970s. Food sovereignty as a food movement frame, emerging as it did from a transnational movement, seems to have contributed to renewed interest in the international sphere and anti-imperialist politics. Another feature of US food movement literature (and of food movements themselves until recently) is a relative lack of international analysis. Development studies is by nature more attuned to these facets, including issues of international capital investment and imperialism; a greater dialogue between these literatures would greatly benefit tackling these dynamics and their effects in the US context. Vice versa, more attention to the politics of US food movements and their influence on US foreign policy may improve studies on agrarian change outside of the country (as in Friedmann's [2005] historical analysis of relations between farmer/worker social movements and global food regimes).

There continue to be assimilationist efforts in terms of capitalist structure creation, land ownership, and political representation. Perhaps more so than in times past, however, these are combined with non-assimilationist ideas and values (such as greater interest in worker cooperative social enterprises, rather than single sole-proprietor businesses). Valorization, to some, continues to be as important as it was in the past. Indigenous movements are constantly building on generations of efforts to keep Indigenous ways of being alive, and this appears on the upswing since the era of the founding of the American Indian Movement. At the same time, Indigenous resurgence must work against time, as time brings the loss of elders who are carriers of resurgent knowledge. Amongst Latinx circles, there is increasing attention to Afro- and Indigenous connections as part of 'Latinidad', and thus a greater attention to internal forms of Othering, as white-passing Latinx (and those of class privilege) are less able to unquestionably speak on behalf of a more differentiated Latinx identity/category. While the farmworker to farmer narrative fits well with the American Dream/meritocratic ideal, and thus exists as a means towards assimilation, it also can include valorization of ethnobotanical and agroecological knowledge. It can also be combined with more radical values, as in the Agroecology Center's transformative vision, and thus also contains seeds of potential differencing towards radical convergence.

### 7.1.6. Further conclusions regarding how emancipatory politics relate to rightwing politics

Even if the movements I focused on in this research are *particularly* (and uncommonly) radical, and do not seem likely to influence the mainstream of society very easily or very much, this is not a historical impossibility. Pushes from the edges sometimes translate into long-term shifts in mainstream consciousness (and political standards), especially when these pushes are accompanied by massive upheaval and disrupt reproduction of the status quo (Piven and Cloward 1978). As Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011:134) put it:

Historically, reforms have been forced on liberal markets not by dint of reformists in government, but as the result of intense social pressure, unrest and the threat of ungovernability. To build this kind of political power, organizations in the food movement will need strong alliances and must distinguish superficial reform from structural change.

There is no reason to assume that – as part of wider movements beyond the particular, place-based, and food/farming-focused ones of this research – radical food movements cannot contribute to the same kinds of shifts. To the extent that food movements (and the larger, non-siloed movements they are part of) name, call out, and actively oppose Othering, they undermine the long-term likelihood of rightwing power consolidating itself. Due to this kind of intervention, rightwing positions associated with white supremacy, capitalist excess, and patriarchal, misogynist and homophobic harm are increasingly untenable in some corporate board rooms, university administrations, and sectors of the voting public. At the same time that a shift is taking place in mainstream institutions *away* from rightwing values stemming back to the long arc of colonial, white supremacist, patriarchal, capitalist history, it appears that rightwing forms of organizing and discourse are resilient, strong, and even increasing in political power over recent decades. Perhaps in part this is because the stalwart rightwing base in society (which makes up a disproportionate part of the electorate, compared to its still substantial but less numerous prevalence among the US population as a whole) is galvanized by the increasingly radical nature of oppositional social movements – including food movements (as we saw in Chapter 4's review of rightwing responses to 1960s radicalism). Part of this rightwing base has shifted to avoid obvious displays of white supremacy. Donald Trump, according to Maskovsky (2017:

433) himself represents ‘a paradoxical politics of twenty-first-century white racial resentment whose proponents seek to do two contradictory things: to reclaim the nation for white Americans while also denying an ideological investment in white supremacy’. Overt white supremacy has lost its favour, yet the rightwing which advances white ideologies and interests holds onto positions and influence in media, corporate, finance, and state institutions. In part this is possible through malfeasance (such as continued Republican efforts to disenfranchise Black and low-income voters in order to win elections in absence of a true electoral majority), but it also results from the overlap of and synergies between rightwing political positions (for example, authoritarianism, racism), rightwing institutions, capitalist interests, and the ways colonial-capitalist government typically (perhaps paradigmatically) work. Counter-hegemonic struggle – especially when one considers anti-colonial/Indigenous, Black liberationist, and migrant/anti-border constituencies – continues to have to fight on enemy territory, through and against a state apparatus that is weighted against its needs, values, and goals.

There are risks of inadvertently strengthening rightwing power in both statist and anti-state elements and strategies within food movements. In an obvious sense, abandoning the state as a terrain of struggle risks allowing rightwing elements in society easier access to its power. Ravindran and Hale (2017: 840) argue for a ‘political grammar that “dispersed power” away from the state apparatus, without ceding state power to the neoliberal, oligarchic right.’ Autonomist values also do not sit firmly on the Left in a left-right spectrum: *libertarianism*, stripped of its originally socialist content (Long 2018), is indeed a major discourse in rightwing US politics, including its manifestation in localist food movements seeking greater autonomy from the state – but for reasons laden with racial, gendered, and xenophobic animus. Looking back at Figure 1, we might argue that insofar as food movements operate from nonstate ToCs, they risk bolstering rightwing politics if they do not simultaneously address forms of Othering (against other races, migrants, gender-nonconforming people, queers, etc) *as an essential part of political self-definition and practice*. Without across-difference solidarity, in ideas, feelings, and actions, nonstate food movement activism can reinforce – or at least do not inherently oppose – rightwing aspects of food movements (and in civil society at large). On the other hand, statist ToCs and approaches can also reinforce existing power relations that in turn gestate or empower the rightwing. Especially based on

my historical case methods, but also as seen in dynamics studied from today's broader social movement context within a shifting integral state, I determined that statist approaches can empower the rightwing by (a) undermining the perspectives and struggles of actors and movements whose interests are ignored or subverted in state policy-making processes that selectively incorporate subaltern populations (as when the New Deal excluded the racialized and gendered workforce of domestic and farm workers, in order to appease the needs of another, more white and male, sector of working class society); (b) pragmatically avoiding opposition to rightwing political forces (like the Farm Bureau) in order to strategically achieve limited changes in state policy; (c) feeding into, legitimizing, and strengthening aspects of the state that are leveraged by rightwing forces (when they are in positions of state power) – such as the 'illegal immigrant' deportation apparatus developed by Obama and other Democrats, mobilized readily by Trump's administration, and reinforced as legitimate when activists call for 'immigration reforms' that keep the Othering legal/illegal discourse in place; and (c) taking a 'liberal' position of defending the state, which pits (statist) emancipatory ideas against non-elites who may distrust the state for real reasons, losing out on potential political differencing and convergence.

Altogether, these findings indicate that if researchers and activists are interested in fighting rightwing power over the long term, and are interested in maintaining a horizon of change that includes a future beyond capitalism, then they must emphasize skepticism of statist politics (in thought and practice) and increased investment in nonstate strategies that build autonomous power (among a diversified population brought together through various, place-based, and materially-beneficial processes of differencing).

## 7.2. Part two: Implications

### 7.2.1. Implications for theory

As described in Chapter 2, this research contributes to development studies literatures and theories on agrarian systems that describe how those systems are shaped, how they impact populations differentially, how movements seek to change them, and on the links between agrarian systems and rightwing politics and authoritarian populism. This dissertation sought to reconsider the Trump problematic in light of food movements

of Others, bringing these concerns and literatures on rightwing resurgence, food movements, and international critical agrarian studies into conversation in answering the central research questions.

There are three ways in which this research has sought to intervene in existing development studies and critical agrarian studies debates. First of all, it has intervened in food movement debates about neoliberalism, articulating how rightwing politics and statist politics generally are contiguous with neoliberalism, and disputing assumptions about food movement tactics as inherently neoliberal, by way of BIPOC histories and thinking and the use of an anarchist lens. It has also intervened in debates on agrarian/working-class subjectivity, and questions of who can be thought of as or expected to be progressive political actors. In this, it has challenged more determinist understandings of economic class or marginalized subjectivities (as determinant of revolutionary political potentialities), and conversely has solidified an intersectional Marxist lens and standpoint theory approach in qualitative research on social movements. This suggests that taking up the theories and perspectives of those marginalized Others in context helps us understand how and why movements organize as they do, and helps us see that many and diverse starting points exist for a practice of emancipatory politics.<sup>3</sup> Third, the research has intervened on the ERPI debates, focusing on themes brought up in discussions of authoritarian populism and its opposition; notably, Othering and convergence amidst emancipatory movement diversity. Within these debates on rightwing politics (especially as authoritarian populism within the United States), the research has raised more critical questions about the role of liberal statism, advancing a state-critical view of emancipatory politics that is still too marginal in this larger debate. While agroecology and food sovereignty studies have more so addressed the limitations and problematics of the state (e.g. Tilzey 2019, Andrade 2020, Giraldo & McCune 2019, Vergara-Camus & Kay 2017b), what this research points to is the need for a state-critical perspective, which synthesizes state theory from a variety of perspectives but is formulated within a state-in-society approach, to properly address rightwing politics, with attention to rural and agrarian factors. The state-critical perspective has also called into question the benefits of Left populist political strategies, noting that while they can potentially craft new senses of ‘the people’ in opposition to elites (as advanced in popular theories of Left populism; Mouffe 2018, Laclau 2005), populist

strategies do not necessarily appreciate, acknowledge, or address the central roles of Othering and capitalism in sustaining unequal (agrarian) development, and thus can reinforce thought patterns and political structures (like the liberal state itself) that exclude and undermine emancipation for all.

When I began my study, the condition of contemporary critical agrarian studies was such that rightwing politics and emancipatory food movements were not often addressed in interaction, largely I imagine due to the recency of the phenomena under study (although this rapidly changed with the ERPI). This was especially so when dealing with the US context. At the same time, largely unstated assumptions about the state's emancipatory potential were too-frequently laced into food movement research, alongside a neoliberalism lens limited by its historical recency (that is, insufficient unpacking of state histories) and distance from longstanding emancipatory theorizing (including of the state), going back (at least) to Marx (1959 [1875]), but also including anarchist (e.g. Kropotkin 2019 [1896]), Black radical (e.g. Samudzi & Anderson 2018), and Indigenous perspectives (e.g. Simpson 2017). Additionally, while it was understood that Othering and convergence were important factors in the rise of rightwing politics and its potential opposition, there was insufficient attention to the specifics and mechanics of these processes, at the level of organizations and sectors.

As a result of this study, research can now begin with greater understanding of how rightwing politics is opposed by emancipatory movements (including food movements), and of how emancipatory food movements might overlap and inadvertently create synergies with aspects of the rightwing political project and conditions for its reproduction. There is also now greater clarity on the possibilities and limits of state strategies (at least for the US case), grounded in an understanding of the connections between the past and present state. Of course, this does not entail that there is theoretical closure on the issue of state strategies – but simply that research should now begin with a more sober assessment of the processes by which social movements pursue their ends via state strategies. The research has also uncovered a need for a deeper engagement of rightwing synergies with ostensibly emancipatory food movements. In the US, this involves particularly focusing on the food movement's white elements and its contradictory and often unconsciously racialized nonstate/state ideo-

logical aspects. In other contexts, it may involve more attention to religious ideologies vis-à-vis Othering, as in an analysis of Hindu nationalist elements in India's insurgent farmer uprisings of 2021. A new research agenda could involve thinking through how particularly marginalized food movement sectors (in the US, particularly BIPOC-led aspects) engage with the more mainstream and even potentially rightwing politics of other aspects of local food movements. In addition, it could seek to understand how emancipatory movements spark and engage reaction among less radical rural actors; that is, how more radical (especially disruptive) politics interact with conservative politics in the rural sphere, and how these are re-articulated through national level political debates. How and to what extent does rightwing reaction stem from or relate to different forms of emancipatory agitation?

In terms of implications for the specific study of US social movements on food and farming, this research has solidified the historical view of food systems in the US as rooted in extractive colonialism, capitalist exploitation, and continuing racial hierarchies (e.g. Sbicca 2018, Grey & Patel 2015). Taking seriously this history (especially via the criticisms and theories elaborated by BIPOC and other counter-hegemonic social movements and movement thinkers) leads to recognition of the need to look beyond neoliberalism to understand today's US food movements and food system dynamics. It also encourages future research to attend to mutual influences between various movement elements in historical, relational, and interactive terms (taking off from Schiavoni [2017]). This means that in addition to prioritizing subaltern, marginalized, and Othered populations, and thinking through the various kinds of difference among these and their effects, research should also link these prioritized vantage points to the 'whole' of the integral state, including both the (problematic) state apparatus and (variegated) civil society in which these sectors move. All of these directions for research, furthermore, encourage researchers to see nonstate elements of social movements in both their positive and negative aspects, and in relation to historical influences and precedents, as well as dynamics of the integral state in the near-past and present.

As far as descriptive theories regarding state-society relations, this research brings in greater emphasis on a dialectic between various sectors of movements (divided by relations of class, race, gender, theories of change, and levels of radicality) and the state apparatus. As food movements lean towards radical perspectives, especially among progressive elements (for



example, white ecofarming organizations taking up lenses of decolonization, Marxist critiques of capitalism, antiracist analyses of racial capitalism, and aspirations towards carceral abolition), they change the valence of the state – but (so far) not its essential nature. As radical elements interact with the state, in return, they are more likely to be pressured to professionalize, to deradicalize, in order to institutionalize their aspirations – which legitimizes the state as an arbiter among unequal civil societal actors (in all the contradictions this arbitration entails). As such, moving from descriptive to normative theories of the state, I advocate more state skepticism when looking at the US case, inspired by state-critical theories of anarchism, Black radicalism, and Indigenous resurgence – which I believe can enrich Marxist and other critical agrarian scholarship.

This research provides lessons that also apply to the broader fields of political ecological research and critical agrarian studies in their interests in the discursive and motivational aspects of political contestation for ecological change (Robbins 2019, Scott 1976, Popkin 1979, Borras et al. 2008). Like others who have analyzed ‘environmental’ struggles as not necessarily or primarily or only about the environment (e.g. Arsel et al. 2015), this research’s focuses on Others in US food movements shows the multivalent character of those struggles, and their discourses of recognition, valorization, and opposition that include (but go well beyond) human/non-human relations. This understanding of environmental movements as inherently *political-ecological* means that an integrated approach to movements would address integrated aspects of movements’ and groups’ stated and unstated ‘race-class projects’ (building on the ‘antiracist racial projects’ of Sbicca and Myers [2017]) – which potentially includes considerations of gender, generation/age, national origin, and other axes of difference. Although often unacknowledged by movements and understudied by scholars, these race-class projects are crucial lenses for political ecology. This is especially because they influence consent, but also affect dynamics of coercion and state responses of suppression and recuperation/co-optation. This research has uncovered a race-class project within food movements that seeks to allow greater space for BIPOC and working-class voices; this attempt has affected the movement as a whole. Now, research may continue along these lines by delving more deeply into that project’s origins, advocates, contours, directions, enemies, and challenges.

Race-class projects affect hegemony, shaping the contours of consent culture in society, but also (at times) directly confronting the ‘armour of

coercion' that capitalism uses to defend itself via the integral state (and especially its state apparatus). Concerted and disruptive race-class projects can shape the narratives and discourses around political issues, as we've seen in recent years with changes to the discourses of not only police brutality, but the very nature of policing – and questions of whether it should be abolished. Following the May 28, 2020 burning by racial justice protestors of the Third Precinct police station in Minneapolis (Minnesota) following George Floyd's murder, a poll found that 54 per cent of US respondents found the burning 'justified'. According to a Monmouth University Poll (2020: 1), 'A majority of the public now agrees that the police are more likely to use excessive force with a black person than a white person in similar situations. Only one-third of the country held this opinion four years ago.' In fighting, literally and physically, with the domestic apparatus of colonial-capitalist statism (local and state police, national guard, border agents), actors in such protests shape state responses, often weakening the state's position in the public sphere in its ability to suppress dissent. When a radical horizon like police abolition begins to enter into broader public view (even though clearly it is not a widely-accepted horizon), it can lower the effectiveness of the coercive apparatus. Donald Trump's failed 'hardline' approach to continuous Black Lives Matter protests in Portland, Oregon during the summer of 2020 attests to this. Direct actions along the southern US border with Mexico by pro-migrant and anti-border activists (providing water, food, and support to entering undocumented migrants) do the same: they shift the ability of the state apparatus to maintain physical and discursive control over populations, and to maintain the status quo. They expose the violence of state power and rightwing use of it, and present ideological alternatives rooted in working class self-emancipation and solidarity. Existing theories of the state (Jessop 2007, Gramsci 1971) hold space for non-elite influence on state action – indeed, as Holt Giménez and Shattuck (2011) and Piven and Cloward (1978) have argued, disruptive action 'gets the goods' – but these theories rarely emphasize, and studies of food movements rarely focus on, these more radical forms of action within race-class projects. This study has elevated the importance of this research agenda. It also has moved the signal interest in research from different ToCs dichotomously competing (for example, neoliberal approaches versus state focused approaches) to how ToCs interact – at times synergistically, but often in dynamic tension and contradiction.

### 7.2.2. Future research agendas

Movements in California (and the US more broadly) are already taking up questions of Othering, most visibly regarding racial dynamics of Othering. An important question and concern for future research is whether and how this will expand to other aspects of difference (particularly in gender and age), and how the combination of attentions to various forms of Othering will engender greater or more widespread forms of solidarity. Attention to other aspects of difference might especially take up gender and the effects of patriarchy, which seems to be an under-studied fault line in food movements, causing tensions and breakdowns in food movement formations through structural inequalities and harmful behaviour (mainly but not exclusively exhibited by men). Solidarity as a concept could also be more developed, separated out and further clarified as to its within-group (internal) and between-group (external) functions. Assimilation, valorization, and differencing as concepts have been developed through this research, allowing future research to explore counter-Othering strategies in greater depth. But each concept could benefit from deeper elaboration, especially differencing, which this study has indicated is pivotal as a means towards convergence. What are the ways and forms of differencing? How are these processes changing over time? Who are the protagonists and opposition in these processes? Conceptual understanding might also be deepened with regards to the rightwing, as its politics also entail internal and external solidarity, and processes of convergence across difference – even if this solidarity and convergence is qualitatively different from politics on the emancipatory left. The broader question of how the concepts I have developed in this research could apply to rightwing politics in the US remains a large one to explore.

An agenda which potentially overlaps with this one is the agenda of linking white positions that are ‘Othered’, notably the poor white working class, and other ethnic groups, which has been less dealt with in research, and seems to be less self-consciously addressed among US food movements. This requires movements to develop common frameworks of analysis that do not rely *solely* on a racial lens – as these may Other such poor whites rather than seek solidarity with and from them.<sup>4</sup> Research should seek an understanding of racial capitalism that does not dogmatically promote race *or* capitalism as the fundamental axis of oppression, knowing that conditions and dynamics vary. Such research can pursue a theoretical approach that is solid enough to use in analysis but that still maintains an

openness to the empirical conditions that face movements, and thus that generates greater understanding of and opportunities for interracial solidarity and convergence.

Hence, a distant but potential outcome from this research would be to take its lessons and methods and apply them to a process that establishes greater connections between the Others focused on here (for example, Indigenous peoples, farmworkers, people of colour farmers), and the white farmers across the great geographic middle of the US, and politically active members of the ‘white working class’. These latter groups at times (and depending on social positioning) have themselves been Othered, and the political openings created by countering Othering across these groups could be significant. Especially since the marginalized white populations of the US’s rural ‘sacrifice zones’ (Edelman 2018) have too often been Othered by populations on the coasts, in places like California (by people who are sometimes involved in the very movements addressed in this research), the political-investigative task to uncover means and values of alignment between these groups such that counter-Othering can occur may be an important future one. And it is hoped this investigation will at least provide some initial ideas and momentum for that project.

Also, future research could provide greater detail on dynamics between BIPOC Others. For instance, such research could look closely at overlaps between overlapping Othered communities, each with their own dynamics of assimilation, valorization, differencing, Othering, solidarity, movement-generated theories, and theory-informed practices. Moving in a different direction from that mentioned in the last paragraph, another area of interest, would be to develop greater detail on dynamics of convergence and differencing among, and tensions between, specific groups of Others (for example Latinx/Black, Black/Indigenous, Indigenous/Latinx). Looking in greater geographic and historic detail at specific Other group intersections and internal-to-group dynamics could elaborate more on the specifics of Othering, and also inform broader theorization of racialized food systems and political dynamics today.

### 7.2.3. Implications for activist research methodologies

Here I speak briefly to some tensions that manifested in the activist-research process, and what they suggest for future, similar research. Besides the agroecology encuentro as a relational data collection process, this

research did not break much new methodological ground regarding activist research. Instead, it came up against some of the known issues in activist-research concerning researcher positionality and interactivity with the researched. Interaction matters: it has ‘power effects’ as Burawoy (1998: 7) puts it. Burawoy (ibid) argues that this kind of interactivity between researchers and subject does not invalidate the science, but it must be dealt with transparently by the researcher. The next paragraph discusses this issue of transparency.

There will always be tensions between theories of social transformation that inherently touch upon utopias and intangible, unpredictable forms of change, and their ‘practical’ application. How a researcher positions themselves on these tensions is bound to affect who one’s informant/collaborators are, and how they are both analyzed and presented. Being as honest as possible means trying not to represent the subjects of your research as standing in for all food movements, or for the entire sector you studied. For instance, while some argue that the NGO sector is a de-politicizing and conservative force (see INCITE 2004, Allen 1990 [1969]), it also seems that at times some NGO workers have *more ambitious* horizons of emancipation than those they serve or seek to represent, who (in the example of farmworkers in Chapters 5 and 6) sometimes seek more basic advances, and/or lack the overtly societal-transformational goals, or a theoretical ‘systemic’ justification for such goals. This brings up questions about movement-focused research: who to talk to, and who can be represented (by research) as the ‘authentic’ subjects in movements? Whose goals and justifications matter? Insofar as subjects are found through a researchers’ own social networks, we should be transparent about our inclinations and biases, and how these will influence the sampling. I have tried to be transparent about this in my methodology and introduction, given my preexisting interest in radical social change. Conscientious of factual disclosures that could negatively impact movements, researchers can still try to be more transparent about who is included, and why certain subjects and stories are given prominence. Existing discussion on activist methodologies does address this issue of transparency (e.g. Weissman 2018), but the present research has elevated the desirability of transparency specifically regarding researchers’ interests and positioning vis-à-vis NGOs, professionalization, state power, and emancipatory horizons. A possible advance in order to increase data reliability would be to comple-

ment transparency about sampling bias with methods of placing one's informants in a broader context, through surveys or other methods which can elicit greater contextual data on the movement in question. In addition, basic surveys of informants accompanying qualitatively-focused interviews might unearth important data about where and how informants appear along various lines of difference (for example, gender identity, level of education, age, etc).

*Invocation, avocation, convocation: future strategies*

One of the inspirations for this study's activist methodology was Haiven and Khasnabish's (2012, 2014) outlining of invocation, avocation, and convocation strategies (as described in Chapter 3). My use of agroecology encounters was an attempt to implement convocation, while supporting invocation and avocation as potential complements. Here I discuss what was learned about these strategies, and suggestions for moving forward.

Regarding invocation, there is still work to do to invoke existing knowledge to advance social and ecological justice in US food systems, by bringing existing knowledge into spaces of policy and practice, such as spreading the knowledge and experience of the cooperative structures of Black farmers, or the regenerative agriculture practices of Hmong migrant farmers or Japanese American farmers. Granted, this kind of work is not incentivized much in academic contexts. If research indeed *does* influence social movements, then focusing (as invocation strategies suggest) on the marginal and radical elements of movements (in research on movements) can help engender shifts (in attention, resources, legitimacy) towards them.

Regarding avocation, I advocate that fieldwork be designed to combine social science and hard science: research question development can spin out from convocation methodologies like the agroecology encounters of this research. It also would be important to seek ways to valorize movement thinking *as theory*, and to follow these leads so as to advance theory in new directions. Such avocation work may leverage the *overlaps* between theoretical-movement traditions, in order to move beyond the more academic interest in *differences* between theories. This may also generate more synthetic theoretical knowledge rather than simply extending forward theory debates, and may lead to more pertinent theoretical and actionable insights.

Three strategies might help to improve convocation methodologies. One is simply to allow more time for dialogue, recognizing that at their best research processes (insofar as they are collective and deliberative processes) can themselves act as convocation. The research as a whole would have benefitted if more time were allocated to organize and conduct encounters, to develop research questions out of them, and to iterate on the information developed within them more extensively. Providing for more time between writing up the initial analysis and finalizing the final write-up (or other presentation of findings) would have allowed informants to take more of their (often limited) time to absorb the ideas contained here, reflect on them, and discuss their perspectives with me, allowing me to improve my understanding and analysis, and making the write-up more so a product of collective work. I will largely have to extend this effort *after* submitting this thesis. Another strategy would be to host encounters (or a similar form of movement gathering/focus group) earlier, and more often, and to partner with a wider diversity of social actors to design their processes. Within the context of a PhD dissertation it might also be beneficial to chunk out research questions such that at least *some* of these can be ‘triangulated’ with US social movements, rather than only emerging from the researcher’s interests and needs (Derickson & Routledge 2015).

Alongside this dissertation, the research lessons will be described in more popular outlets (such as in articles for the Civil Eats website mentioned earlier, for which I have written since 2009) alongside peer-reviewed, academic-oriented journal articles. I am also working via ARC to explore podcast production on these and related topics, in order to access listenership beyond readership. Multiple informants have expressed interest to hear overviews of the research outcomes and take part in future dialogues about them, potentially to influence further publication and media outputs. The current director of EcoFarm, for example, is interested to host a discussion of the research at the forthcoming 2022 conference. Meanwhile, these movement actors (and their organizations/groups) may advance their work by utilizing the purposefully accessibly made analysis materials coming out of this project (that is, less so the peer-review literature associated with this project than blogs, popular and webmedia articles, and podcasts). Based upon these materials, I hope to develop (for USFSA, ARC, and California-based partners) internal movement trainings that engage with the ideas contained within this dissertation, and seek refinement of the study’s understanding in dialogue with participants – as

would be useful to an ongoing ‘critical food systems education’ process for agrarian movements (Meek & Tarlau, 2016).

Within the California context, it is hoped that this research (through the participatory-action component of the methods) has helped increase the success of alliances between people who have been Othered historically. That is, through the *encuentros* process multiple individuals – organic intellectuals in their own right – have experienced mutual understanding, and greater alignment on political issues coming out of this understanding. Practical efforts have had greater chances to connect, as well. Indeed, I have heard reports from participants of making valuable personal connections that were leveraged in later political work. That is to say, activist scholars can use encounters methodologically for their research purposes, but also practically for their activist benefits. I turn now to discuss activist implications.

#### 7.2.4. Implications for political activism

It is important for research to build useful knowledge capable of being mobilized by social actors beyond researchers, which entails navigating a delicate balance between recognizing the nondeterminism and unpredictability of social systems, the need to abstract somewhat and put forth ideas generalized enough to use in practice, and the disinterest (among some political actors) in too much abstraction. This is why I advocate an emphasis on advancing dialogues among relational networks where embodied practices can inform theoretical knowledge, and vice versa, improving in collective ways action over time. I have tried in my own work and practices to embody this ethic: I do not speak *for* ‘movements’ as a whole (or even just ‘radical’ ones), but I can speak from a combination of personal experience (participation in food movements), collective and individual study, and time dedicated to reflection (which many movement participants lack due to time or inclination). Considering the challenges to working within the actual conditions of the current moment, it is important to generate insights into what people can *actually do* in the here and now to counter Othering and advance recognition, representation, redistribution, and regeneration as a whole.<sup>5</sup> Here I will outline lessons from this research for action at individual, organizational, and philosophical levels, and regarding policy.



First may be obvious: many people within the US and elsewhere have been interested in the question of what could be done to slow, stop, or roll back the Trump administration's agenda – and the slate of other, similar rightwing populist leaders that have ascended to power in recent years. While those on the 'liberal' end may see Joe Biden's administration as a respite from Trumpism (against the view of revolutionary-minded anarchists, communists, anti-colonialists, and anti-imperialists who see Biden's politics as more continuous than different), the fact remains that Trump or another Trump-like figure is quite possibly going to emerge in the 2024 election cycle – posing the same challenges as those posed by Trump over the past six years. While people are looking for ways to address such politics, with implicit and sometimes explicit understanding that Othering plays a role in Trumpian (rightwing populist) politics, specific ways to go about countering Othering are not always clearly described in either academic work, media coverage, or by activist 'organic intellectuals'. This research contributes to this need, by contributing ways to think about, discuss, and counter Othering, as individuals and in social formations in which we take part.

From Chapter 5, I concluded that (1) the unpredictability of convergence itself demands an openness and humility from movement participants who seek it; (2) in this humility, action is rooted in relational (individual and interpersonal) work but must move 'up' from there, recognizing that social structures always weigh upon us; (3) it is essential to pursue explicit dialogue to surface beliefs, values, tensions, and alignments – particularly with regards to various axes of Othering and capitalism; (4) discourses to counter Othering must be accompanied by actions that redistribute resources, including action that works against unequal existing relations within and between movement sectors, and that prefiguratively builds collective agency and community resilience; and (5) both dialogues and redistributive action can elicit conflict, discomfort, and negative reactions, necessary elements to transformative change (especially for the relatively privileged). All these suggestions can be implemented in organizations, although #1 and #2 are more so *individual* values that must be practiced. Alongside this, there is the need to be more humane and compassionate *within* oppositional, emancipatory movements, yet simultaneously bolder in moves *against* those that are truly in opposition. That is, movements can strive to be *less* subject to internal divisions, and *more* able to fight along the lines of a conscious race-class project,

against enemies of that project – whatever race or class positions those enemies happen to occupy. This entails active awareness that a movement's opposition can include people of the same race, but of a different class, or of the same class but of a different race. For examples of the former position, 'black faces in high places'; for the latter, the white supremacist formations of the white working class.<sup>6</sup>

From Chapter 6, we might remember that concrete solidarities matter, regardless of whether these are pursued through state or nonstate, capital-involving or capital-avoiding means. Such differences *do matter*, but a practical emphasis and acceptance of pragmatic choices given existing conditions should allow movements to be more mutually supportive, less dogmatic, and more likely to cohere and express further solidarity across differences in ToCs. Philosophy, in a word, also matters. That is, we saw in Chapters 5 and 6 that ToCs are influenced (but not determined) by philosophies about capitalism, colonialism, and urgency. Such immaterial discourses on state, capital, and Othering are also capable of acting as material forces, insofar as they start to influence the strategies movements take or prioritize. Importantly, because movements operate on an uneven playing field, wherein nonstate and anticapitalist (and especially nonstate *and* anticapitalist) ToCs are marginalized, it is imperative that movements bring these ToCs debates to the surface, and for the more mainstream actors to recognize the general prevalence and dominance of their ToCs.

Because the tactic of seeking policy change seems to never go out of style, I will suggest what policy relevance the research offers, wherein countering Othering as a strategy might be translated into policy proposals and advocacy. An example might be building upon the 'Farmer Equity Act' described in Chapter 5. This legislation has allowed/enabled greater funding and resource allocations through the CDFA to farmers of colour. In itself, this legislation contributes to the normalization of such Others *as farmers*, and as deserving of particular (and public) support. Moving forward, the implementation of such legislation (and the development of future legislation) might be influenced by an understanding of (counter-) Othering processes, such as attention to the exclusions of policy-making processes themselves and of inequality in policy implementation. Legislation development and implementation can be informed by the notion of 'targeted universalism' (powell et al. 2019): pitched towards Othered classes but serving the broad working class simultaneously. Policy advocacy might also seek to more directly go against the powerful players of the

agribusiness lobby (and Farm Bureau, specifically) in California. There was a notable absence in my fieldwork of food movement groups actively working to oppose the Farm Bureau and its rightwing agenda, lobbying of state powers, and discursive work to advance hegemonic ideas about industrial agriculture, water rights, government intervention, and so on. Groups that work on California policy expressed the need to strategically work *around* the Farm Bureau's power, rather than campaign publicly against it. I know of no prefigurative, nonstate efforts confronting the Farm Bureau either. Although I earlier described ways in which today's food movements are countering rightwing politics in its larger trajectories, there seems a gap in action that *directly* opposes these politics *in the field of agrarian, food, and rural politics itself*.

There are myriad policy effects of food movement actions, as movements intersect with policy even when they are not mainly or ideologically state-focused. As the state becomes more attuned to Othering, as it acknowledges its own role in this, and as its agencies and bodies are composed of people from backgrounds in groups who have been Othered, this offers opportunities for Othered groups (outside of the state) to exert additional influence. At least, if California as a state continues to shift towards 'woke' politics (to use popular parlance), BIPOC and radical food movements should pay attention, and seek to push it further, but also maintain distance and skepticism, as we saw advocated by Giraldo and McCune (2019), and as I have advocated in this study.

Although I showed throughout this research that race matters and has seemed to effect recent shifts in ToCs across food movements, tensions of choices between statist/nonstate intentions and strategy should not be seen as an issue of 'BIPOC' versus 'white' organizations or sectors – of race per se. This is important because if movements desire radical changes, they need to address dominant dynamics whereby radical demands are jettisoned in favour of statist reforms and accommodations to capital – even if and when this dynamic is perpetuated by BIPOC. The professional class is increasingly multi-ethnic, and decisions about tactics and where to direct resources are often taken by this class, representing what Dylan Rodriguez (2021) argues constitutes a 'multicultural white supremacy' that preserves rather than challenges existing institutions. NGO culture, even when led by more diverse people, can still undermine the political power of the poor, the uninvolved, the underclasses and the lumpenproletariat, and to

redirect the change energy these populations provide towards nonthreatening reformism. This is most visible in the realm of policing abolition, in which calls for abolition have morphed via the machinations of social justice NGOs, celebrity activists, and reformist politicians into tepid reforms like body cameras. But in food and farming, we might notice how radical demands for land redistribution have been abandoned in favour of tax-based incentive programmes (Havens & Roman-Alcalá 2016), or efforts to bolster worker power generally and challenge capitalist wage relations at large (via unions and worker politicization) garner less food movement attention than a decade-long, heavily funded but so far failed legislative effort to achieve a national \$15/hour minimum wage (which even if achieved would not amount to a livable wage in much of the country). Radicalism circulates in food movements, and BIPOC may be at its cutting edge, but this need not mean that every BIPOC food movement formation is actively constructing a radical future. Movements should take note of this and not unselfconsciously assume radicalism comes about simply by ‘centring BIPOC voices’. *Whose* BIPOC voice matters greatly.

The flattening of the unequal playing field might in some ways be aided by maintaining and expanding existing efforts to democratize access to power in *all* spaces, including within movements themselves and their NGOs, and also in the state. This is a point made by many, including Ravindran and Hale (2017: 839–840), who argue that ‘the future of leftist politics will require concerted work on both fronts: helping localized autonomous initiatives to flourish [democratically] while also working to decentralize and de-bureaucratize the state apparatus’. Wright (2013: 21, *emphasis added*) also emphasizes the combination of democratization efforts in both ‘interstitial’ and ‘symbiotic’ strategies:

I think the best prospect for the future is a strategic orientation organized around the interplay of interstitial and symbiotic strategies, with perhaps periodic episodes involving elements of ruptural strategy. Through interstitial strategies, activists and communities can build and strengthen real utopian economic institutions *embodying democratic egalitarian principles*. Symbiotic strategies through the state can help open up greater space and support for these interstitial innovations. The interplay between interstitial and symbiotic strategies could then create a trajectory of *deepening socialist elements within the hybrid capitalist system*.

Broadly, with caveats mentioned in Chapter 6 (that symbiotic strategies can undermine radicalism in both interstitial and ruptural terms), I agree with Wright's proposition here. Food movements in the US can best advance a radical emancipatory politics by moving within interstitial spaces and efforts (consciously increasing their radical content through dialogues, questioning, and 'difficult conversations'), and moving them from non-state-reformist towards nonstate-revolutionary; they can also demand greater space for non-elite voices in state processes and 'shake the money tree' of state resources to forward autonomous movement needs as is possible, while maintaining cautious and strategic distance from the state itself. If both of these processes are pursued with state skepticism, attention to Othering in society and in movements, and vigilance regarding capitalism's and state power's tendencies to reinforce unjust hierarchies, food movements can effectively pursue radical politics within the flawed, compromised, imperfect world that exists.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Here I am using Holt-Giménez and Shattuck's (2011) terms.

<sup>2</sup> That is to say, this research supports Holt-Giménez and Shattuck's (2011: 109) contention that 'Regime change will require sustained pressure from ... durable alliances between Progressive and Radical trends'. Although their focus was on the 'corporate food regime' at the global level, and mine the regime of rightwing politics within the US, there are important overlaps between the two regimes.

<sup>3</sup> It also suggests the relevance to the US context of critical agrarian studies debates between Marxists and peasant-populists (e.g. Bernstein 2009 versus van der Ploeg 2009) regarding the potential and actual radicalism of food producers, considering that their involvement in capitalist circuits and differentiation in complex class positionalities.

<sup>4</sup> Note that this is *not* the same as arguing for a politics of 'converting the racist white'. Many have rightfully balked at the suggestion that the Left's primary goal in the US context is to politically de-radicalize those who are already solidly self-isolating in white supremacist worldviews (Bonilla-Silva 2019). Instead, the argument is to reflect on histories of organizing such poor, non-elite whites for the benefits of tangible reductions in exploitation, building oppositional counter-hegemonic political power, and countering Othering both *from* and *towards* working white class sectors (e.g. Ashwood 2021, Gaventa 2019, Rice & Burke 2018, Tracy and Sonnie 2011).

<sup>5</sup> For other insights into what some US food movement leaders themselves think can and should be done, see Hoey & Sponseller (2018).

<sup>6</sup> Of course, keeping in mind that white supremacy is more so a product, historically, of middle- and upper-class sectors than something inherently linked to poorer sectors; besides the history outlined in Chapter 4, we might think here of the class composition of the January 6, 2021 attempted insurrection against the US Capitol on behalf of Trump, which included many white small business owners, lawyers, military and police officers, and other professionals, and very few truly poor or working-class whites.



## Appendices

### Appendix 1

Table 1: Other, subaltern, marginalized, counter-hegemonic

Category:	Other	Subaltern	Marginalized	Counter-hegemonic
<b>Location in hegemonic power structure*</b>	Purposefully and actively marginalized from it; hegemonic power relies on Others and their being Othered	Outside of it; but even if existence of subaltern classes is necessary for current hegemony this is not necessarily overtly discussed or enforced by hegemon or subalterns	In some ways marginal or outcast (economically, socially, politically), but potentially also inside it or/and benefitting from it	Actively against it and/or seeking to supplant it
<b>Example (for US context)</b>	Immigrants, Blacks, Muslims, non-human Nature	Poor, working class people of colour (BIPOC)	white working class, White ecological farmers, small-scale farmers	Movements actively opposing economic, political structures of power (in state, capital, and civil society)

Author's elaboration. \* It is important to note that any of these categories can be selectively incorporated into hegemonic power systems, whether through assimilation, cooptation, or (from another point of view) political



‘success’ in having ideas or demands incorporated into state policy or capitalist behaviour. This is one reason why subaltern, Othered, or marginalized people are not necessarily counter-hegemonic.

*Appendix 2: Table of definitions of key concepts*

<b>Othering</b>	<p>As defined by powell and Menendian (2016: 17): ‘a set of dynamics, processes, and structures that engender marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identities’.</p> <p>Othering can be overt and covert, explicit and embedded in structures of action. It is a process of dehumanization of a category of human beings ‘across any of the full range of human differences’.</p>
<b>Food movements</b>	<p>Overtly organized social movements dealing with issues of food, food production, land management, rural livelihoods and life, and the politicization of food production and consumption.</p>
<b>Assimilation</b>	<p>An emancipatory strategy of attempted entry into the world of the mainstream in which one has been forced out (via Othering).</p> <p>Typically, assimilation is thought of in cultural terms: as abandoning attributes of one’s culture in order to assimilate to a new culture. Although this is at play in the assimilation I describe here, conceptually I consider assimilation as a set of acts, which seek to improve one’s conditions through use of and accommodation to the established structures, values, and processes of</p>

	<p>the mainstream society (which has excluded one as an 'Other').</p> <p>'We (Other) are just like you (in the hegemonic position)'</p>
<b>Valorization</b>	<p>An emancipatory strategy of valorizing one's particular, different-from-the-mainstream contributions as a group or collective identity:</p> <p>'We are valuable, because of who we are, as we are.'</p>
<b>Differencing</b>	<p>Differencing can be thought of as a process by which a new 'we' is created, but without obscuring the differences contained within this new 'we'. It unsettles (and in Left forms, expands) categories of identity and political community, without necessarily displacing the valorization that sustains self-worth in those existing positions or categories of identity. It demands neither that Others become assimilated to hegemonic politics, nor for them to validate their political claims only through existing self-categorization (valorization).</p> <p>Thus, it is a collective process of unsettling existing categories, building new affinities, identities, and political projects across differences</p> <p>Instead of taking for granted the categories of opposition in which movements find themselves operating, differencing emphasizes</p>

	seeking new categories, identities, and unities-in-difference that can be constructed in particular times and in particular places, based on particular histories
<b>Convergence</b>	The objective and/or subjective process by which social formations ‘converge’ or gather around particular claims, demands, analyses, actions, and race-class projects. This study has analyzed convergence mainly in regards to ‘emancipatory’, broadly Leftist, social sectors and movements.
<b>4Rs</b>	The four main goals (and often demands) of social movements, namely greater: (1) recognition, (2) redistribution, (3) representation, and (4) regeneration (of human-nonhuman relations)
<b>Integral State</b>	In Gramsci’s words (1971): ‘State = political society + civil society, in other words hegemony protected by the armour of coercion’. The integral state encompasses the way class power is reflected, enacted, and contested in both the state apparatus and across civil society.
<b>Class-for-itself</b>	The precondition for radical social change, as classes (considered objectively, based on, for example, relationships to the means of production) become ‘for themselves’; that is, politically self-aware and conscious of their class interests.

<b>Race-class project</b>	<p>Race-class projects are concerted efforts by certain classes – considered in terms of both economic class and race (and not assuming homogeneity among these) – to direct political-economic development.</p> <p>A ‘counter-hegemonic’ race-class project is one that opposes the existing hegemonic construction and reproduction of race-class power dynamics (for example, white supremacy in today’s US society)</p>
<b>Radical</b>	<p>A ‘north star’ horizon for movements to look for, seeking to undermine capitalist accumulation and the state power enabling it, and move towards the abolition of the state/capitalism nexus.</p> <p>That is, radical describes normative goals oriented towards abolishing capitalism and the capitalist state.</p>

*Appendix 3: Timeline*

2004-2018: Ongoing involvement in food movements in California, mostly as an active organizer of urban farming projects, policy coalitions, and creator of educational media.

2017: Inspired by examples from/experience with the People's Agroecology Process, Rural Coalition, and La Via Campesina (representing Rural Coalition at their July conference in Basque Country), I begin to organize agroecology encuentros through USFSA and in partnership with CAFA coordinator Janaki Anagha. First encuentro held in Visalia, California. Co-authoring of ERPI paper with Maywa Montenegro, Alex Liebman, and Siena Chrisman, based on conversations about Midwest farmer organizing with Siena sparked during a Rural Coalition gathering in New Mexico. Participating in HEAL Food Alliance member summit (North Carolina).

2018: Developing research design proposal, attending UN FAO Agroecology Meetings in Rome, Italy, participating in ERPI Conference in The Hague (Spring); defending research design (November); presenting UNRISD paper on 'Othering and solidarity in historical Californian agrarian movements' at UNRISD in Geneva. Second encuentro organized in February, in El Sobrante, California as well as a West Coast/Regional Gathering of USFSA which was organized similarly to an encuentro model. Participation in the USFSA National Assembly in October, in Washington state (where I was nominated to coordinate the Agroecology, Land, and Water Collective). Out of the ERPI conference, commit to coordinating ERPI North America and our effort to edit a special issue on ERPI themes in our region.

2019: Third encuentro held at Richmond, California in April; fourth encuentro held in Sacramento, California in July. Participating in HEAL Food Alliance member summit (New Mexico); and in EcoFarm Conference (January, Pacific Grove); Beginning interviews with informants and participation in multiple venues of food movement activity, mainly in California but also in Washington, DC. Participation in Celebrating Women's Leadership in Food symposium, Sebastopol, California; in Radical Food Geographies meeting in Washington, D.C.; Sharing initial research concepts and ideas with some interviewees, and in personal communications

with informants; Begin drafting of JPS article on 'Agrarian anarchism', which built on the 'anarchist lens' approach taken up in a minor way in the research design, and applied it to the contemporary US political context. Ongoing organizing of the ERPI-North America special issue; re-drafting our ERPI 2018 paper into an article for Journal of Rural Studies, revisiting some of the histories and themes of the dissertation research.

2020: Continued interviews with informants and participation in multiple venues of food movement activity; participation in EcoFarm Conference (January, Pacific Grove); revisions of 2018's research design into Chapters 2 and 3, on the 'problematique' and 'methodology'. Finalizing JPS article on 'agrarian anarchism'. Finalizing and publishing the co-authored Journal of Rural Studies paper.

2021: Participation (online) in various food movement gatherings, including: EcoFarm Conference (January), UC Berkeley webinar conference 'Agroecological City: Sovereignty, Resilience, and the Future of Food' (March), Follow-up with informants (March-May) with initial write-ups to elicit feedback, followed by phone calls, email correspondence, and revisions; final conversations and confirmation of permission to publish in June and July.



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**Biography**

Antonio Miguel Martín Roman-Alcalá is an educator, researcher, writer, and organizer based in San Francisco, California who has worked for just sustainable food systems for over 15 years. Antonio co-founded San Francisco's [Alemany Farm](#), the San Francisco Urban Agriculture Alliance, and the [California Food Policy Council](#), and his 2010 documentary film, [In Search of Good Food](#), can be viewed free online. He holds a BA from UC Berkeley, and earned his MA in 2014 from the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Hague. Currently, Antonio teaches at UC Santa Cruz, University of San Francisco, and with the [Urban Permaculture Institute](#), maintains the blog [antidogmatist.com](#), conducts [research](#) on agroecology, social movements, and social change, and co-facilitates the scholar formation [Agroecology Research-Action Collective \(ARC\)](#). He also participates in and supports a variety of social movement projects, including urban farms, tenant councils, rural agroecology education collaboratives, and the US Food Sovereignty Alliance. When not concerned for “working”, Antonio spans time as an adventurous father and co-explorer of the natural world, forager, gardener, drummer, songwriter, doodler, bike rider, and aspiring Buddhist.

