Cultivating Subjectivities:
The Class Politics of Convivial Labor in the Interstitial Spaces of Neoliberal Neglect

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A dissertation

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Washington

2016

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Abstract

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This dissertation explores home kitchen gardens and the role they play in the lives of a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual community of diaspora and low-income residents in San José, CA. Drawing upon ethnographic fieldwork from 2012 through 2016, I develop three central arguments. First, I argue home kitchen gardeners produce garden subjectivities. These subjectivities enunciate a complex world-view that challenges inequality through cooperative labor. They allow this group of gardeners to learn to live with uncertainty as they navigate and transform their worlds. I argue a "moral economy of the home kitchen gardener" exists because people have the necessary knowledge and skills as well as a capacity for autonomy to create new worlds while transforming existing ones through the intentional self-organization of direct lived experiences. Second, I argue that there exists a tight relationship between social and cultural diversity.

These gardens encourage various forms of biological, social, cultural, and economic diversity. The ethnographic narratives and observations reveal that the gardeners actively seek to make sense of their worlds and their circumstances with a sense of openness to the truth claims of others, and this encourages the diversity of the crops grown in gardens as much as it promotes a wide range of convivial social relationships. Finally, I argue that home kitchen gardening offers new spaces to emerge through the practice of autonomy. These home kitchen gardeners encourage cohesion informality, or an assemblage of informal networks that foster solidarity, trust, and social-ecological resilience. Growing food for this group and many other precarious, diasporic, and working class groups like them, is a means to self-determined and self-defined justice.

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Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank the people of *La Mesa Verde* who welcomed me into their community and took the time to share their lives with me. Your desire and willingness to share and give has transformed this research and me. I want to express my gratitude to all of you. The open hearts, gardens, and tables of the LMV community, made this dissertation possible.

I would like to thank my committee members, Devon Peña (Anthropology), Stevan Harrell (Anthropology), Ann Anagnost (Anthropology), Lucy Jarosz (Geography), and Roberto González (Anthropology at San José State University).

Devon Peña has been my advisor since before I began at the University of Washington in 2011. He served on my thesis committee in 2009 and encouraged me to apply to the UW. Upon entering the university he told me that getting a PhD was not going to be easy and that he would always push me to exceed my own expectations. He sat with me for hours as we pored over every word of this dissertation. He always demanded not just my best, but *the* best. Thank you for our countless conversations, discussions, revisions, and words of encouragement throughout the years.

Stevan Harrell has been a guiding force behind my thinking of the relationship between resilience and autonomy. He has encouraged me to investigate deeper each step along the way through thoughtful feedback and constructive criticism. Thank you for challenging me to take into account all aspects.

Ann Anagnost has always been there for support and a warm cup of tea. She was always welcoming and inviting. She encouraged me to build upon a paper I wrote for her in class. Much of this dissertation grew from those early writings.

Lucy Jarosz did more than serve as the GSR, she was an important member of the dissertation committee and provided me great training and encouragement throughout the entire process. She pushed me to pursue a deeper understanding of what health means for the community, which led me in different and exciting directions.

Roberto González was a wonderful addition to the committee in 2015. He provided Bay Area specific knowledge as well as great insight into traditional farming and provisioning practices. He encouraged me to be less abstract and to always take into account how gardeners make practical use of knowledge and science.

I would also like to thank a fantastic graduate student cohort that I was lucky enough to be apart of. Claudia Serrato, Joshua Griffin, Darren Byler, Layla Savloff, Kate Zyskowski, Stephanie Cruz, Lily Shapiro, and Kalani Young, without all of your support, this path would have been much more difficult. I have learned a lot from each of you over the past few years, and I carry the lessons you taught with me. Not everyone is a fortunate as I was to have every cohort member at my dissertation defense, thank you for

the support. A special thanks to Ava Holiday and Jessica Lozano, who where always willing to discuss and work through deep theory.

I would also like to acknowledge the support of Julia Curry who advised me at San José State. She always saw potential in me and worked with me while I lived abroad. Without her encouragement I would have never applied to the University of Washington.

I would like to acknowledge my family - especially my parents, David and Cathy Valle, who have always been there for support throughout my studies. And of course, none of this would be possible without the love and support of my wife and best friend (and editor), Charissa Hayes Valle, who has always believed in me.

Thank you

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to those home kitchen gardeners from around the world who use their gardens to enact collective positive futures for themselves, their families, and their communities. "Don’t stop, we can’t stop."

La Mesa Verde Community and Cast of Characters

Alfonso moved from Mexico City just over five years ago. He is in his eighties and is new to growing his own food.

Alma is one of *La Mesa Verde*'s older members. She is *mexicana* from Southern Mexico in her 50s. She regularly volunteers and is an active member and supporter of the program.

Davíd grew up in a small town in rural Jalisco, Mexico where his family still resides. He is in his sixties and has extensive garden knowledge and grows many corps not commonly found in the U.S. He has been gardening with *La Mesa Verde* since 2014.

Diana and **Grandma** are neighbors and share a garden. Diana is in her forties and Grandma in her seventies. Grandma was born on a small farm in rural Jalisco and moved to the Santa Clara Valley in the 1950s with her husband who was a *bracero* worker. Diana is Latina, a single mother, and a great cook. At any *La Mesa Verde* event you can find them together.

Diego was born in Peru and moved to the Santa Clara Valley several decades ago. In his mid sixties, he continues to make trips home and to his brother in Mexico to gather seeds and propagate them in the Valley.

Elizabeth is Asian American in her fifties who was born in San Francisco. Her and her husband, Paul, have been gardening for many years and have been a part of the *La Mesa Verde* program since 2013.

Evelyn is White, in her late sixties, and lives alone. She grew up in the Midwest before moving to Northern California and later to the Santa Clara Valley. She is one of the longest standing members of *La Mesa Verde* and remains a very active member.

Grace was born in the Sichuan province of China. She is in her 50s, lives alone, and is always present at *La Mesa Verde* events. She began gardening in the program in 2013, and since then has transformed her backyard into a diverse and abundant garden.

Guadalupe, in her fifties, and was born in urban Mexico City and moved to San José two decades ago. When she joined the program in 2010, she was new to gardening, and today she is one of its longest standing members.

Hector began working with the *La Mesa Verde* first year gardeners in 2012. He is Chicano in his late twenties and has family just south in Salinas, CA. He is a trained nutritionist and helped to develop the program's Cooking Matter curriculum.

Jacky is a young Chicana in her twenties. Born and Raised in Central California, she is rooted in helping to further *La Mesa Verde's* mission. She began working with *La Mesa Verde* as an AmeriCorps volunteer in 2012 and is today in charge of the *La Mesa Verde's* graduate program.

Jaime is Chicano, is his forties, and a long-term resident of the Santa Clara Valley. He is currently serving as the director of Sacred Heart's advocacy and self-sufficiency programs.

Jamie began working at Sacred Heart in 2012 and became the program director of *La Mesa Verde* in 2014. She is Asian American and in her twenties. She was born in Maryland and educated at Columbia University before moving to San José to work for Sacred Heart.

Jessica is Cherokee and White. She still regularly visits friends and family in Oklahoma, where they live. She is a very active member of the community and a great advocate for *La Mesa Verde.* Her and her husband have been a part of the program since 2010.

Karla was born and raised in the Santa Clara Valley. Her family history goes back generations in California. She is a mother, grandmother, and *curandero* or healer. She is Latina, in her fifties, and has been a part of *La Mesa Verde* since 2013.

Laura began with *La Mesa Verde* in 2013 and became one of its most active members. She is White, in her mid sixties, and can regularly be found organizing and advocating for the program.

Luís was born and raised in the Santa Clara Valley. In his late fifties, Luís identifies as Chicano and has witnessed the transformation of the Valley. He has been a member of *La Mesa Verde* for many years and has become a leading advocate in the advisory committee.

Lupe is a *mexicana* in her fifties from Central Mexico. She grew up in the outskirts of Mexico City and learned much of what she knows about gardening from her parents. She has been part of *La Mesa Verde* since 2010.

Lucy was born in Manila, Philippines and later moved to Singapore before she ended up in the Santa Clara Valley. She is in her sixties and has been gardening in *La Mesa Verde* since 2011.

Malin is a Chicana in her thirties and was the director of *La Mesa Verde* from 2011-2014. She self-identifies as an *eco-guerrera*. Trained in popular education as well as agroecology, Malin helped to develop the program into what it is today.

Mary is White and in her early sixties. She prides herself on being a mother and grandmother. She has been part of *La Mesa Verde* since 2013 and is very active in the advisory committee.

Nancy is White and in her late fifties. She was been a part of *La Mesa Verde* since its early years and still volunteers today even though she no longer has a garden. She is still a member of the advisory committee and can be regularly seen at events and workshops as well as volunteering to help out when she can.

Oscar is a Chicano single father in his mid thirties. He runs and operates his own landscape company. His "green thumb" can be partly attributed to the intergenerational knowledge passed down from his grandfather, who he still visits in rural Northern Sonora.

Patty was working with *La Mesa Verde* when I first began research there in 2012. She is a Chicana in her twenties, and while at LMV, she was in charge of the graduate program. She attended college in the Bay Area and recently left to study food systems in graduate school.

Paul was born and raised on a farm outside of Medford, Oregon. He is White and in his fifties. He and his wife, Elizabeth, have been gardening for many years and have been a part of the *La Mesa Verde* program since 2013.

Raul was the founder of the *La Mesa Verde* program and has seen it develop from its infancy. He is Chicano, in his 50s, and has spent the majority of his life in the Santa Clara Valley. He is currently the director of Valley Verde, a 501(c) garden program in the region.

Sara is a Latina in her sixties. She lives alone and shares a garden space with her neighbors. She began gardening for the first time in 2013 and since then has become an important member and advocate for *La Mesa Verde* outreach.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Planting a seed is a humble act. Yet the implications of planting extend into the histories of cultural, social, and ecological change and deep into the social and political makeup of larger structures of power. By sowing a seed the gardener is not merely seeking to grow a plant. Rather, by sowing seeds we are continuing the legacy of our ancestors. Each seed contains within it the memory of life. These memories are biological and cultural. They remind us of who we are, where we come from, and where we will go. Embedded within a seed is not just a genetic code, but a map that connects a place and a time to a multitude of other places and times. Each time we plant a seed or share the knowledge of how to care for and cultivate a plant, we continue the ancient tradition of agroecological exchanges that expand our biological and cultural well-being.

This study arose out of a simple email conversation with the past director of *La Mesa Verde* (LMV). I had flown to San José, CA from Seattle, WA to visit family. It was the summer of 2012, the first year of the continuing record drought in California. I was born and raised in California; I conducted my M.A. thesis in California, and spent several years living in and around the San Francisco Bay Area. My graduate training at the University of Washington generated a set of concerns and interests about the environmental justice experiences of the urban poor. While visiting San José, I read about LMV in a local newspaper. The paper explained how the program sought to empower the low-income community of the Washington-Alma neighborhoods by growing food. Their goal was to address the roots of poverty by challenging health inequality. To address the lack of open space for a community garden, the organization provided families with raised garden beds, irrigation, seeds, and seedlings to create home kitchen gardens in

their own backyards. The organization felt that by growing their own food, households could become less food insecure and more self-sufficient. Accompanied with gardening classes, these provisions allowed participants in the program to learn how to garden based on agroecological[1] principles of organic and sustainable urban agriculture (e.g. Alkon and Agyeman 2011; Holt-Giménez 2011).

While I was interested in how LMV challenged inequality through popular education[2] and hands-on learning, what I was drawn to most were the stories of the gardeners. Participants in LMV come from a wide rage of backgrounds, which include many part-time, full-time, and unemployed workers. There are teachers, custodians, laborers, contractors, landscapers, agricultural workers, cooks, food handlers, city and country employees, students, artists, daycare providers, and many more. Some are U.S. born White Americans, others second or third generation Chicana/os, and many others are recent migrants. Many were born and raised on farms in Mexico, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic, as well as China, Vietnam, and the Philippines. While many of the people in this study come from *el campo* and know how to garden, they participate in LMV because it provides them an opportunity to deepen their knowledge, gain access to resources, and meet people who are also working to be self-determining. What the gardeners quickly taught me was that while LMV provided garden beds, seeds, seedlings, workshops, and classes, the gardeners used these opportunities and resources for self-

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[1] In this dissertation, agroecology refers to the sustainable design and management of agroecosystems based on traditional farming and provisioning methods that interlink social, economic, and environmental systems. See, for e,g,, Altieri 1998.

[2] Popular education is a form of education first articulated by Paulo Freire (1984). Popular education is seen as a practice of freedom and self-determination.

[2] Popular education is a form of education first articulated by Paulo Freire (1984). Popular education is seen as a practice of freedom and self-determination.

organization in ways that no one had anticipated and they established a “subversive” process among an emerging community of practice to create vibrant informal social networks promoting coevalness, reciprocity, and conviviality. Agroecological exchanges (i.e. the sharing of traditional farming methods) serve as a medium in which to collectively enhance and (re)define the well-being of the community. Within LMV, not one gardener stands alone because together they make-up a cultural mosaic to transform spaces and selves in the pursuit of a sense of place and community.

During my first visit to Washington-Alma, Malin, the program director, met me at Sacred Heart Community Service center. *La Mesa Verde* is connected to the advocacy and self-sufficiency branch of Sacred Heart, a local non-denominational charity whose mission is to end poverty in the Santa Clara Valley. It was Sunday, the building was quiet and no one was there except the director who agreed to meet me. We sat outside in the courtyard as she explained to me the goals and aspirations of the program. After a lengthy conversation she asked if I would like to meet some families, and I eagerly accepted. She told me there were four homes within a few blocks and they were usually home on Sunday afternoons.

At the first home Malin took me to that afternoon, she introduced me to Alma. At the time, she lived only a few blocks from Sacred Heart. Her home was a small, Victorian, three bedroom home with a large garden. The living room led into a galley kitchen where her brother was steaming a large pot of tamales to sell. Alma led us through the house to the backyard where she grew an abundance of different vegetables and several fruit trees. Over the next few years I would visit Alma’s home several times as she has been an important part of the study and a close friend of mine. Alma, is a

mexicana who presents a dignified and stout stature, strong in presence and posture, and speaks eloquently and with purpose. The director explained to me that Alma was a self-starting entrepreneur, and while she did not have a stable job at the time, she employed people in the community to help her make tamales to sell. Alma explained that while she grew several varities of corn in her garden, there was not enough to make all the *masa* she needed. However, all of the other ingredients came from her garden. I was amazed the so much grew in such a small space. I thought home kitchen gardens were supposed to only provide supplemental foods like herbs and lettuces. Alma explained that she rotates crops, uses fava (*Vicia faba*), pinto (*Phaseolus vulgaris*), and lima (*Phaseolus lunatus*) beans as nitrogen fixers, and makes her own compost to continually improve her soil. Making efficient use of space, she practiced vertical agriculture scaling up rather than out. When we left, Alma filled my pockets with cucumbers (*Cucumis sativus*), summer squash (*Cucurbita pepo*), jalapeño (*Capsicum annuum*) and habanero chiles (*Capsicum chinense*), and peaches (*Prunus persica*).

After we toured Alma's garden, she wanted to introduce me to her neighbor, Rosa, who grew several crops not commonly found here in the U.S. including *capulines* (*Prunus capuli* or Mexican chokecherry; in Nahuatl, *Capolcuahuitl*), which is a relative of sweet cherries found in the U.S., and Mexican plums (*Prunus mexicana*), a wild plum found from Northern Mexico and into the Central U.S. As we walked to Rosa's home, Alma introduced me to several children playing soccer in the street, to neighbors in their yards, and to a couple who drove by. Alma has a reputation for knowing everyone and everything. It is her desire to share, help, and do what she can for her neighbors even if she is struggling to just get by.

When we reached Rosa's house, she was out back, but Alma invited us in as she called for Rosa. We eventually found Rosa weeding her plants. Rosa explained how she brought plum and corn seeds from her rural home in the Mexican state of Durango and remembered how her father cared for his crops. She also explained to Malin and I that she looks up to Alma as a mentor. As we left, I was given heirloom tomatoes (*Lycopersicon esculentum*), Mexican plums, *capulines*, and green figs (*Ficus carica*). I visited four households that day, and while each household was different in the crops grown and the spatial organization of the garden, what remained the same was the willingness to share the gift of food. Gardeners wanted to share their great knowledge of cultivation and their bountiful harvests.

My first trip to Washington-Alma was a humbling experience. I walked in expecting to learn about how an organization was helping to reduce food insecurity and walked away with a different take on life. How is it that those with the least, share the most? Each home I visited on that day was what sociologists call "low-income," several of them were living well below the federal poverty level, and many were undocumented. Yet, their willingness and desire to share seemed remarkable. My initial reaction was that perhaps because of my own relatively privileged position as a visitor, gardeners wanted to share their harvests with me. It took me over four years of creating relationships with gardeners for me to learn that sharing is a social norm that grounds the community and binds them to their social relationships. It is both a strategy of resistance and cooperation that encourages collective well-being. This research is a result of over four years of participant observation, in-depth interviews, and garden conversations. And while it is informed by theory, it privileges the grounded knowledge and experiences of those

involved. The open arms, hearts, gardens, and tables of the LMV community is what made this study possible.

Research Question and Objectives

Several weeks after my first visit to *La Mesa Verde*, the program director asked if I would be willing to co-create a participatory action research (PAR) project with the LMV community. I was thrilled. My initial reaction was to formulate a research question that asked, what is the role of kitchen gardens in helping to foster community? However, after several months of pilot research I came to the realization that this was not the right question, and that I was pre-empting the participation of the gardeners in defining the research focus. The way we frame research questions has a large impact on the findings we come across. So, through countless conversations with LMV gardeners and organizers, the project finally took a more gardener-directed orientation, one that in the end, focused more on how gardening is a strategy used to adapt to the challenges while transforming the conditions of precarious labor most of them face in the Santa Clara Valley.

The principal research question that emerged for this dissertation is thus posed: What practices do home gardeners engage in to protect against precarity, allow for social mobility, and improve their well-being? Well-being is a loaded term, and my use of it refers to the diverse ways that people individually and collectively act to achieve a desired quality of life that improves health outcomes and resonates with their cultural and historical heritage, sense of place, and community. To investigate this question, I engaged in fieldwork with LMV families in and around the city of San José, CA. LMV invited me to attend workshops, community events, focus groups, advisory meetings, and LMV

organizer (or staff) meetings. Between 2012-15 I attended as many of these gatherings as I could, which worked out to roughly two or three times a month. In addition to these structured events, I met with gardeners in their homes, gardens, and sitting with them at their kitchen tables. I was invited to observe, and sometimes to help in the garden and/or kitchen. Over the years I had the opportunity to interact with more than 200 families and many other area activists, volunteers, other scholars, community members, and agricultural extension staff. I shared stories, experiences, meals, and recipes with more people than I can remember. LMV's legacy is unique because the norms of humility and sharing operate as core values underscoring daily interactions and organizational work. With the help of LMV, this study is a unique window into how the garden offers the opportunity for people to influence the food system on a more human scale.

Many of the challenges faced by immigrant and low-income communities are a combination of economic and environmental uncertainty. Yet, in spite of, or perhaps because of uncertainty, the families in this study remain open to engagement with the newcomer and "Other." This study builds upon the linage of anthropologists who have sought to understand and bring attention to the diverse ways oppressed peoples navigate interstitial space to remain self-determining (e.g. De Genova 2005; Zlolniski 2006; Gomber-Muñoz 2011). Similar to Chela Sandoval, who sees love "as a technology for social transformation" (2000, 2), this study brings a focus on sharing and cooperation into the discourse on the politics of growing and preparing food in urban low-income, immigrant, and diaspora communities. This study contributes to "critical political ecology" (Forsyth 2003) as a means to emplace the lived experiences of LMV gardeners at the center of the production of knowledge. Informed by theory and grounded in the

bodies and practices of LMV gardeners, this study does not seek to enact truth or validate the right to exist. For LMV gardeners already exist and they are well aware that they belong to global trajectories. After all, many are recent migrants to the region from places outside of the U.S. and can articulate a complex subjectivity. This study draws attention to what Walter Mignolo (2011) refers to as the "decolonial option" whereby the LMV community de-links itself from Western epistemology through the transformative practices of growing, sharing, and consuming food.

***La Mesa Verde*: A Community "In Transit"**

To define the LMV community is near impossible because it is constantly in transit. When I began working with LMV in the summer of 2012, the program only served a small amount of families, about one hundred and fifty. At the time, the program was made up mainly of Spanish-speaking recent migrants to the U.S. However, today, the program consists of a very diverse, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual group of gardeners that span nationalities and ages. In 2012 this study focused on the community of Washington-Alma, the location of Sacred Heart and where the majority of participants still reside. LMV continues to expand its reach into other low-income pockets of San José, such as Gateway East and Mayfair in East San José as well as Spartan Keys in the South. It also reaches into areas of North San José, Campbell, and parts of Willow Glen.

The continual demographic changes that typify *La Mesa Verde* can partly be explained by its growth, and by its revolving door of gardeners and organizers. Since 2012, I have witnessed the program change directors, organizers, participants, and even strategic missions. Chapter four presents these changes in greater detail. Many who garden in the LMV community want to be a part of the program, but just like everyone

else, they too are subjected to the unpredictability of modern life. Throughout this study, I refer to three distinct groups that make-up the LMV community. First, there are LMV participants or gardeners, who are the focal point of this study. I have spent countless hours working and talking with these families, some of whom are new to the program, and others who have been gardening with the program since it began in 2009. Second, the LMV organizers or staff is a group of young and motived organizers who work tirelessly with the gardeners; they are employed by Sacred Heart and work within the *La Mesa Verde* program. They help organize events, workshops, and classes. Lastly, University of California Master Gardeners, who lead workshops and visit the homes of new gardeners. Many of these Master Gardeners are retired, white men and women who have lived in the Santa Clara Valley for many years. Recently, more Spanish-speaking Master Gardeners have been recruited by the UC Cooperative Extension to help provide more resources to Spanish-speaking families across the state of California. The LMV community consists of recent and long-standing diaspora migrants from places like Mexico, Guatemala, Dominican Republic, China, Vietnam, and the Philippines. It includes U.S. born Chicanas/os, white Americans, African Americans, and Asian Americans. There are people who are new to gardening and others who grew up working and living on a farm or garden. This diversity is what makes the community so difficult to define and what allows for its continual transformation.

Many who are part of the LMV community are often coded as "immigrants" because they are recent arrivals to the U.S. While this can prove to be useful in helping to understand how various people are impacted differently by life in the U.S., I hesitate to code the community as an "immigrant" community. This hesitation is in part because of

the diversity present within the community, but also because I recognize that, "to be in transit is to be active presence in a world of relational movements and countermovements. To be in transit is to exist relationally, multiply" (Byrd 2011, xvi-xvii). To be in transit encourages multiple subjectivities and ways of being in the world. This is what Tlostanova and Mignolo refer to as "border thinking," or a worldview that arises from outside of Western epistemology. The worldview rearticulates the perspectives generated from within the Western "modern" world. Concepts such as Marxism, Socialism, the Common, value, and even the economy are repurposed to meet a multiplicity of subjectivities and realities. Tlostanova and Mignolo believe that we are "learning to unlearn" Western epistemology in order to understand how its concepts are being rearticulated and deployed to create positive futures. As the authors explain, "by border thinking, we mean a specific epistemic response from the exteriority of Western modernity, a response from the outside created from the perspectives of the inside" (2012, 6). This is fundamental for my framing and reading of the concepts of Marxism and *autonomia*. An advisor of mine once reminded me to let the participants define and articulate their own political struggle. As a result, my use of many of these concepts that come with distinct historical baggage, demonstrate, "that while we are all in the colonial matrix, not everyone belongs to its memories, feelings, and ways of sensing. Many of us have been 'trapped' in the colonial matrix but do not 'belong' to it" (2012, 7). Yes, many of those who are considered part of the LMV community are white, but the "cruel optimism" (Berlant 2011) of late capitalism ensures their exclusion of the provisions and ability to enact well-being. Neoliberalism creates spaces of neglect that people in transit

fill. Yet it is their ability to remain in transit that allows them to continually transform their worlds.

Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Schema

The theoretical enunciations of this study are guided by four over-arching frameworks that I have melded together in order to better understand and clarify the meaning of uncertainty and precarity and the role of mutual reliance interests in this articulation of strategies to escape this condition: autonomía, resilience, critical political ecology, and ethnoecology. In the chapters that follow, each framework engages with its own body of literature as it fits into the context of the argument. The work of Karl Marx has greatly contributed to this research project. Whether we consider Marx as the economist (Rubin 1973), ecologist (Bellamy-Foster et. al. 2010), humanist (Gramsci 1992), or revolutionary (Negri 1991, Cleaver 1979), his work provides great insight into the dynamic relationships presented in this study.

Autonomía and Indigeneity

In this study, the theory of autonomía is closely aligned with the intellectual history and political programs of autonomous Marxism, which is perhaps best understood as a working class perspective toward self and communal determination (Cleaver 1979). This study stresses workers' autonomy as the guiding principle of political action. I use autonomia (also referred to in this study as autonomy) as an over-arching theory to understand how social groups create spaces to (re)define their own needs and then act upon those needs *in a manner that removes their labor from the circuits of expanded capitalist reproduction*. This is very similar to what Negri refers to as the "dynamism" of

class recomposition because autonomy constitutes itself within it a "plural universe" (1991, 13). Similarly, "the theory of class composition restates the problem of power in a perspective where recomposition is not that of a unity, but…a multiplicity of needs, and of liberty" (14). This is the study of a multiplicity of voices and cultures that have coalesced to create spaces for the self-organization and self-determination of their needs, wants, and desires. This is what Negri refers to as the highest form of class-consciousness, which "consists in the realization that power resides not in a representative or a delegate but in the class itself" (204).

This study contributes to the legacy of autonomía theory by building upon the foundational works of Karl Marx (1990, 1991), Antonio Negri (1991), Harry Cleaver (1979; 1989; 1992) and Silvia Federici (2009; 2012). These works represent some of the foundational writings in autonomía theory because they establish a distinct method of analysis and inquiry that demystifies systems of social control and regulation. They demonstrate how through the cycles of composition and recomposition of the working class, opportunities for a revolutionary subjectivity may appear because they reframe "marginality as an inventive force" (Peña 1997). These works offer insight into both the oppressive nature of capitalist (and state-capitalist) organizational forms, i.e. from Taylorism and Fordism through post-Fordist regimes under neoliberal globalization, and the liberating experiences of self-valorization (Valle 2015). While there are many shifting and intersecting terrains of struggle i.e. craftwork, wages, union recognition, the length and intensity of the working day, and continued cycles of struggle, the autonomists propose that site-specific worker-directed studies offer the possibility of an end to this "negative" dialectic (Negri 1991, 190). By privileging the margins, I seek to continue the

sentiments expressed by Gustavo Esteva in his pursuit to celebrate, “the adventure of common men [sic]” (2005, 22). The privileging of the voices and knowledge of the “common man” operates as an undercurrent that guides this research and embraces the politics of epistemic disobedience.

This study takes into account what Mignolo (2013) refers to as the “colonial difference.” For him, this difference is on the one hand the enforcement of power through economies and policies, and on the other, the power to control thought through the colonization of epistemologies and ideologies. The only way to break this is at first to liberate philosophy and then to use that philosophy toward emancipation. This “decolonial option” is what he refers to as “epistemic disobedience.” However, epistemic disobedience is different from civil disobedience because civil disobedience can only reorganize itself within our current structures (or coloniality) of power, not transform it. But epistemic disobedience seeks to de-link the production of knowledge from the clutches of Western epistemology (Mignolo 2009, 15). He believes decolonial thinking (or decolonialism) includes a type of “border thinking” that is not about how indigenous knowledge exists beyond or against Western epistemology, rather how it happens along side of it. This thinking recognizes both antiquity and modernity as sources of knowledge and highlights how those who exist outside of Western epistemology can reinterpret it through their own understanding and lived experiences. Gloria Anzaldúa recognized this awareness as a “*mestiza* consciousness” (2007, 99). As explained by Mignolo, decolonial thinking may opens doors, but “it does not deal with the doors that lead towards the truth... rather to other places; to the places of colonial memory; to the footprints of the colonial wound from where decolonial thinking is weaved. Doors that lead to other types

of truths whose basis is not being but the coloniality of being, the colonial wound" (2011, 48). This is particularly important for *La Mesa Verde* because the members of the community come from such a vast array of experiences and have confronted the effects of colonialism in a variety of ways. The goal of decolonial thinking, and this study, is to de-subalternize knowledge (Alcoff 2007) by de-centering the production of knowledge from West epistemology, and re-center it upon the lives of those who have experienced and continue to experience borders as "*una herida abierta*/an open wound" (see Anzaldúa 2007, 25).

Both autonomia as envisioned by Negri (1991) and decolonial thinking, as explained by Mignolo (2009, 2011) foresee that emancipation cannot take only one form. In fact, its outcomes and pursuits must always be multiple. I use autonomía theory in this study to understand how groups engage in "network struggles" (Hardt and Negri 2004) in diverse ways to improve their well-being. The concept argues that, "creativity, communication, and self-organized cooperation are primary [working-class] values" (83). Hardt and Negri make the case that creativity is a central element in the self-organization of people who are struggling for self-determination because creativity inherently offers opportunities for a multiplicity of outcomes. Cooperation and communication are central tools because they offer ways to strengthen social networks. While their theory of network struggles helps to inform the study, it is missing several key elements. For this reason, my use of autonomía includes within it elements of indigenous resistance. Oaxacan philosopher and anthropologist, Martínez Luna (2010), offers the concept of *comunalidad* to shed light on an indigenous reconceptualization of autonomy. According to Martínez Luna, *comunalidad* contains within it four elements: territory, governance,

labor, and enjoyment. In addition, “the principles and values that articulate these elements are respect and reciprocity” (89). Building upon the work of Cleaver (1989), Peña (1997), and Arellano (2014), this study highlights how indigenous worldviews do not often accept a leisure/work binary and instead minimizes the amount of *joyful* work done to support as many people as possible. These theories help to broaden the range in which to understand the many ways in which groups of people engage in collective acts of resistance against oppressive structures and relations of power in ways that celebrate and extend what it means to be in relation with Others.

Throughout the dissertation I acknowledge the nuanced fissures between autonomous action and the ethics of self-care perpetuated by neoliberal logics. This is clearly articulated in chapter seven, which discusses the relationship between resilience and autonomy. It is my belief that the praxis of autonomy is bound to various actually existing systems of institutions of collective action like the autonomous indigenous municipalities and commons of Mexico and the urban agriculture networks I uncovered in San José. Marx critiqued the folklore of the Robinsonades[3], because such a view obscured and mystified the material reality that the well-being of people is reliant on society as a whole. “The more deeply we go back into history, the more does the individual, and hence also the producing individual, appear as dependent, as belonging to a great whole” (Marx 1993, 84). This study helps us to further critique the space between the individual and the concept of individualism because it recognizes that individuals do not exist in isolation and are instead in relation to Others in the myriad larger social

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[3] In the preface to the *Grundrisse*, Marx refers to the Robinsonades as those who embrace William Defoe’s utopian ideology of the self-producing, self-sufficient individual in order to emphasize the social nature of production and reproduction (see Marx 1993, 83-111).

groups, communities, and societies that we affiliate with. Autonomous groups do not exist in isolation either because they are continuously opening spaces for "escapes" from the dominant political composition of neoliberal capitalist formations and their strategies and technologies of governmentality, *qua* the "conduct of conduct" (see Peña, Calvo, McFarland, and Valle fothcoming). Indeed, this too represents an important thread in the indigenizing of this entire problem since many of the gardeners I work with constantly enunciate and exercise the basic premise that being human is relationship.

Resilience

Resilience theory offers an understanding of the prevailing elements of both social and environmental systems. C.S. Holling (1973) first proposed resilience theory as a distinctly interdisciplinary framework. He offered this as a form of inquiry on the intertwining elements of nature and society, or the "coupling" of social and ecological subsystems. As explained by Walker and Salt, "resilience is the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and still retain its basic function and structure" (2006, xiii). Resilience theory explains how subsystems may respond to a disturbance without losing the capacity for a basic regenerative "function" and is concerned with understanding how, over the course of time in the coupling of social and environmental systems, these changes may comprise adaptive stages of disturbance and transition. This idea is further complicated by recent scholarship that bridges the social and biophysical world to discuss socioecological systems (Hornborg and Crumley 2006). My interest in the use of the theory is not only to understand how systems absorb disturbances, but also to explore how the coupling of social-ecological systems might be (re)made to promote community well-being, self-sufficiency, and the values of conviviality and sharing. During my initial

visits to *La Mesa Verde,* I observed how these gardens functioned as social systems (because they allow gardeners to create alternative food networks that strengthen already existing social networks) and environmental systems (because they produce agrobiodiversity). Beyond that, resilience theory provides the opportunity to consider the possibility of many futures, including how LMV gardeners transform and are transformed by their gardens. This intersubjectivity allows us to gain great insight into how garden networks may offer "escapes" from neoliberal governmentality in hopes of achieving autonomy.

All socioecological systems are complex and adaptive and are characterized by "feedbacks, thresholds, and self-organization" (Dearing 2006, 40). Through the process of both positive and negative feedbacks, the system itself adapts to the given circumstances. Thus, simultaneously, society and nature co-evolve. The ability to negotiate between positive and negative feedbacks is determined by four things: 1) disturbance, how we cope with both social and ecological change; 2) diversity, how social and ecological complexity create a source for adaptive responses; 3) ecological knowledge, how our epistemology informs the institutions and management practices; and 4), self-organization, how the uses of memory of the system contribute to the renewal process (Berkes et. al. 1998, 23). This may also open pathways to the emergence of *alter*-subsystems that are often overlooked escapes from hegemonic renderings of the ever-shifting mosaic of socioecological couplings.

These four principles of resilience are important because without the ability to negotiate between positive and negative feedbacks, the adaptive cycle becomes rigid (Holling 1973), limiting the ability of subsystems to transform toward renewed viability

and robustness. According the Gunderson and Holling, "the reorganization phase is essentially equivalent to one of innovation" (2002, 35). The original essay by Holling in 1973 did not stress the ability to "bounce back," as Walker and Salt state in 2006, but rather the emphasis is "to keep options open" (Holling 1973, 21). Similar to negotiating the theory of autonomy and its role in this work, my use of resilience theory requires a delicate balance between structure and agency and attention to easily and previously overlooked details of how groups enact autonomy in pursuit of resilience. Embedded within this study are conceptual tools to uncover the dynamic coupling of social and ecological systems, which provides a basis for the critique of the logics of neoliberalism. This study challenges a neoliberal reading of resilience theory, which absolves individuals of responsibility for harmful impacts on Earth systems under the guise that resilience will prevail. I do this because if neoliberal capitalist logics prevail, then we are left asking: Are such system failures simply to be lamented as driven by the inescapability of hyperobject effects of climatic issues like climate change (see Morton 2013)? If this is the case, then resilience scholars may lack an adequate grounding in the social sciences, especially political economy and the critique of the historically specific forms of capitalism.

What interests me about LMV home kitchen gardens is the question of not so much how, or if, urban gardening can be scaled up (Nasr et. al. 2010), but rather how it can be adapted at an optimum scale. In other words, at what scale are home kitchen gardeners most supportive of autonomy and conviviality? This of course is a relative question, which can only be answered when gardeners have the opportunity to use their gardens as "escapes" from the neoliberal capitalist coupling of economic and ecological

subsystems. To address this I use the work of Mignolo (2009), who believes that many indigenous peoples engage in "epistemic disobedience" as a decolonial or anti-colonial turn to remove the production of knowledge from the normalized assumptions of Western epistemology. When studying socioecological systems, many scholars leave very little room for human agency. Larger systems are often viewed as acting upon individuals and rarely the other way around. Cajete (2000) enacts what he calls "Native science," to explain how a person's and community's collective creativity has the power in influence the loop cycles of larger systems. In fact, he argues that the true power of Native science is "the subtle power to influence the entire world" (19). For him, Native science is "the reflection of creative participation" (19). While it is true the home gardens are often small, their impact extends widely into larger systems. My use of resilience theory coincides with my use of Native science(s) to present a community that enacts creative participation to influence and transform the loop cycles of larger social and ecological systems.

Critical Political Ecology

Critical political ecology is a term created by Tim Forsyth (2004), who believes that political ecology is not just about the politics of ecology, but how "social and political framings are woven into both the formulation of scientific explanation of environmental problems, and the solutions proposed to reduce them" (2). Similar to Forsyth, my use of the concept is to consider the many ways "in which science and politics are mutually related" (1). While political ecology might not have a comprehensive theoretical framework, it does possess an understanding of how "power relations mediate human-environmental relations" (Biersack 2006, 3). Throughout the

following chapters I use a critical political ecology framework to understand how power and privilege influence the subjectivities of gardeners who participate in the politics of food and health.

Most studies of urban agriculture focus attention on the cultivation of food and how access to those foods encourages positive health outcomes. But in this study, a critical political ecology takes it a step further and teaches how the "subject" is also being cultivated. For many in this study, the false hope of neoliberalism assures that the existing wealth inequality damages the prospects of healthy living. But gardening encourages healthy living where one can counter or subvert the neglect of neoliberalism. These cultivated subjectivities reveal a "revolutionary subjectivity" (as a non-compliant, defiant, innovative, communally oriented, subject), which is as much a central part of this work as the food-health nexus.

Perhaps the first use of the term political ecology came from Eric Wolf (1972), who uses studies of cultural ecology[4] to understand competing interests of environmental resources and land ownership in the Alps. He argues that in order to survive the ecological conditions of Alpine societies, communities must organize their resources in a viable manner. He points to capitalism and changes in land ownership as the principal social force in the removal of people from the means of their own (re)production. Thus, "property connexion in complex societies is not merely an outcome of local or regional ecological processes, but a battleground of contending forces which utilize jural patterns

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[4] Julian Steward (1902-1972) is considered the founding father of cultural ecology. In his early writings of 1938, *Basin-Plateau Aboriginal Sociopolitical Groups*, he described an anthropology that was cultural, ecological, and evolutionist in nature. He believed that the environmental resources available to a culture would determine their forms of production and influence the character of their social and political systems.

to maintain or restructure the economic, social and political relations of society" (Wolf 1972, 201-2). His point is that over the course of time, and in particular, after WWII, the transformation from land inheritance to land ownership has been prompted by a variety of factors, many of which are outside of the control of small Alpine communities. The balance between local and regional interests over the use of environmental resources is thus a product of modernity.

A critical political ecology lens can inform research on this contradictory power relation that has been configured by the rise of capitalist private property and how people accept and resist its logic. Political scientist, James C. Scott (1998) argues that the more uniform a space, the more legible it becomes and the easier to control. Yet, legible cities are "thin" cities. Carefully planned cities are always accompanied by underground economies because they support what the formal economy does not (261). Clarity is always followed by gray. This means that within the slums, ghettos, and barrios of the inner city, individuals possess the agency to question and transform the logics of social control. My use of critical political ecology is to understand the discursive technologies and strategies of power deployed in the production and qualification of knowledge. This means understanding a multivalent field of power/knowledge: My approach considers the side of the capitalist (neoliberal) regimes of governmentality to explain how the regime produces and manages the subject through hyper-individualistic constructs of self-care and its privileging of acquisitive behavioral economics. My account also addresses how people learn to question the production of such a subject and develop alterNative fields of knowledge in pursuit of a desired quality of life derived from the norms of mutual reliance instead of those associated with selfish and disconnected individualistic

utilitarian interests. According to Scott, "customs are better understood as a living, negotiated tissue of practices which are continually being adapted to new ecological and social circumstances" (1998, 34). The gardeners of San José constantly affirm this phenomenological truth through their agroecological knowledge and formal and informal social networking practices. People are innovative, and the ways in which they continually remake their worlds in pursuit of a better quality of life can best be explored when we avoid the "simplistic separation of science and politics" and are informed by a "more politically aware understanding of the contexts within which environmental explanations emerge" (Forsyth 2004, 33). By using critical political ecology I am acknowledging the interdependence of human-environment relationships while at the same time acknowledging the manner in which environmental problems are defined and how policies are carried out under the sway of the ideological frames enunciated by differently positioned actors, for e.g., governmental rationalities as opposed to the multiple and shifting subjectivities of the gardeners.

At the forefront of critical political ecology is an intentional focus on struggles for justice. My use of critical political ecology is filtered through the lens of an environmental justice framework that extends into the "ways that the natural environment sustains and affects human health and wellbeing" (Agyeman and Carmin 2011, 4). Environmental justice informs the study of how environmental racism disproportionately affects low-income people and people of color (Kozol 1991; Bullard 2000), how groups frame their struggles to achieve their goals (Taylor 2000), and the role of racialization in the production of privilege and inequality (Omi and Winant 1989; Pulido 2000; Park and Pellow 2004). This study builds upon a great legacy of environmental justice scholars

who have helped to shed light on how social inequalities are the root cause of environmental inequities (Faber 1998; Pellow and Park 2002; Agyeman 2005).

Ethnoecology

The use of the methods and materials of ethnoecology – understood generally as the study of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) – has grown since the 1980s (Berkes, 1999), but the actual knowledge fields, beliefs and practices are ancient. My approach to ethnoecology and the study of traditional ecological knowledge is similar to that of Fikret Berkes who insists that, "traditional ecological knowledge is often an integral part of the local culture, and management prescriptions are adapted to the local area" (ibid, 9). What makes ethnoecology particularly important to this study is that the knowledge and practices embedded in the community of gardeners is are constantly evolving, adapting, and changing in its political composition. Hunn explains that, "new ideas and techniques may be incorporated into a given tradition, but only if they fit into the complex fabric of existing traditional practices and understandings" (1993, 13). Hunn's realization in the 1990s is even more important today as more recent scholars like Mares and Peña (2010, 2011) have shown that as groups of people continue to migrate across the globe they bring their traditional knowledge with them while adapting their practices to place.

According to Berkes, Colding and Folke, traditional ecological knowledge is, "a cumulative body of knowledge, practice, and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationships of living beings (including humans) with one another and their environment" (2000, 1252). This is why traditional knowledge is "associated experiential teaching and learning

practices and strategies for sustainable living" (Cajete 2000, 269). In other words, the ethnoecological knowledge passed down through generations informs a people of how to "live well in a place" (see Peña 1999) and co-evolve along with it.

Traditional environmental/ecological knowledge is a complex concept, in part because the terms "traditional," "environment," and "knowledge" are all ambiguous, contested, and political, even in scholarly discourse. The politics of TEK has led Nazarea (1999) and her colleagues to propose that traditional knowledge is "situated knowledge" because it is rooted in the local environment. Because it is situated, this type of knowledge challenges the universalizing logic of "Western" reductionist science (see for e.g., Shiva 1988 for such a perspective that still resonates today). In fact, TEK does not seek to answer the same universal questions because place and culture make a difference in the pursuit of truth (Esteva and Prakash 1998). This is why Roberto González believes science to be "a practical quest for truths about the world – a dynamic search for effective [knowledge based on experience]" (2001, 22). In fact, González goes a step further to argue that knowledge is a form of "dynamic accommodation" (23), in which people balance between experience and received wisdom. His point is that knowledge is not fixed in frozen traditions and that as people go through life they are constantly negotiating between lived experiences and received wisdom to create their perceived reality.

My use of the methods of ethnoecology and its focus on TEK is more narrowly focused in this study on the related interdisciplinary study of agroecology, which according to Altieri and Nicholls, is, "the application of ecological concepts and principles to the design and management of sustainable agroecosystems" (2005, 30). In

these instances agroecosystems are seen as complex communities of "plants and animals interacting with their physical and chemical environments that have been modified by people to produce food, fiber, fuel and other products for human consumption and processing" (2005, 31). Agroeoclogy is not a one-dimensional view of ecology, rather it recognizes the interrelatedness and dynamic processes occurring between human and non-humans. That being said, agroecology is more about the holistic farming practices (also see Soule and Piper 1992), while TEK embodies a knowledge-belief-practice complex (see Berkes 1998), which is important for anthropology because it allows for deeper investigation into how worldviews and ideologies frame farming methods and practices of self-provisioning.

What makes these concepts vital to this study is how people use these kinds of knowledge as practical tools to transform the world around them in accordance with their own needs. Shiva argues, "the intellectual heritage of ecological survival lies with those who are experts in survival" (1988, 224). Traditional ecological knowledge can provide a window into the coevolution of people and places by uncovering the dynamism of knowledge and the transformative power associated to those who use it.

In their formulation of agroecology, Altieri (1998) and others clearly value and privilege the epistemic worldview of local indigenous farmers. They even allude to the ontological and ethical dimensions of a farmer-centered approach to the production and legitimation of this alternative agricultural knowledge (Peña 1999, 113). But in general, they do not seriously consider the cosmological and spiritual dimensions of this knowledge. My study provides glimpses into the ontological escapes that urban gardeners of San José interweave into their agroecological practices by means of narratives

enunciating spiritual and religious beliefs. In other words, the autotopographical enactment of place in the form of the kitchen garden is as much a material as it is a spiritual practice. My approach to agroecology once again requires that we observe and respect the multidimensional subjectivity of the gardeners themselves: This is evident, for example, in the planting of medicinal and religiously significant companion plants, shrubs, vines, and fruit trees. It is also evident in a statement made by Luís, one of the gardeners: "The health side," he told me, "brings in the spiritual" (see p. 191 below). It is by focusing on the spiritual dimensions of gardening that I look to open a wider window toward a deeper and richer understanding of the phenomenology of agroecological practices among immigrant and diaspora peoples who must be recognized as place makers in motion.

Gardening in the Spaces of Neoliberal Neglect

In 1976, James C. Scott identified what he called the "moral economy." His premise is that the peasants of Southeast Asia form a subsistence economy that is based on a specific set of morals that support an informal social safety net in order to ensure the overall well-being of the community. He acknowledges that state building projects marginalize people and mystify the ways in which individuals are exploited, yet, he argues that deciding whether peasants are mystified by their marginality or have no other option but to participate in their own exploitation is not the proper question. Rather, the question is, to what extent do marginalized people make sense of their world through moral values? "Since the freedom of peasants to elaborate and define their own culture is almost always greater than their capacity to remake society, it is to their culture we must look to discover how much their moral universe diverges from that of the elite" (238-39).

The other side of Scott's moral economy is where the oppressed draw the line between morally "justified" oppression and something that demands revolt or at least active resistance. To avoid the trap of "idealism," my use of the concept of the moral economy in this study is to understand how the marginalized low-income and immigrant communities of San José possess the capacity to transform their world based on moral values and norms of mutual reliance in order to ensure their material and social survival and the well-being of others in the LMV community.

This study focuses on understanding how groups utilize mutual reliance interests to create accountability and improve well-being. While my use of the term mutual reliance aligns more closely with the anthropological use of the term, the origin of the phrase comes from contract law (e.g. see Hicks and Peña 2003). In contract law context, it suggests that the two parties in a contract cannot pursue whatever value they are seeking except by relying on each other to do their part of the agreement – cooperation creates mutual value. The *La Mesa Verde* community is not bound by contract, but their cooperation creates a different kind of accountability to others rooted in relationships of reciprocity.

The relationships that create mutual reliance and the moral economy help to enable a community social safety net. This offers the basis for understanding the diverse ethics of care. According to Joan Tronto (1993), "care helps us rethink humans as interdependent beings," and thus, it allows us "to move toward a more just and caring society" (21). But mutual reliance is not just about caring for each other on the premise of love. In fact, Peter Kropotkin (2006) argues, "to reduce animal sociability to *love* or *sympathy* means to reduce its generality and its importance" (xi). When acts of mutual

reliance are reduced to a narrow understanding of love or personal sympathy, it detracts from morality as a whole. Thus, acts of sharing and mutual reliance do not fit into a narrow definition of love, but rather arise from the innate human instinct of solidarity (see, for e.g., Anton and Schmitt (2012).

In a similar vein, Marcel Mauss explores the gift giving societies of the South Pacific in his classic, *The Gift* (1950). He finds that gift giving operates as a kind of institution that regulates and informs certain norms and codes of conduct. Coinciding with the receipt of a gift is the obligation to give a gift. Wealth in these societies is not based on accumulation, but on ones ability and willingness to give. Furthermore, the fact that these gifts are not based on money, which has an abstract value attached to it, but on an object that has a personal value attached to it (i.e. food), part of giving a gift is giving part of oneself. These forms of exchange help to create a society that cherishes interpersonal relationships. What is interesting about Mauss' findings is that the norms of gift giving are reciprocal, and thus gift giving is a system that perpetuates itself (also see Malinowski 1953).

Michael Taylor (2006) contributes to my theoretical and interpretive framework revolving around the concept of mutual reliance interests. He argues that neoclassical economic theory is an "ideology of disconnection" because it "assumes and idealizes a world in which a person's acts are disconnected from his or her life and people's lives are disconnected from cultural practices" (87). His work serves as my point of departure for a critique of rational choice theory (RCT) in sociocultural anthropology and especially studies that focus on adaptation and assimilation of immigrants. Rational choice theory does not address place attachments or the evolution of cooperation in the form of

alternative rationalities that emphasize collective mutual reliance interests. In the context of transnational migrants and diaspora communities, the radically individualistic behavioral economics of RCT cannot inform our interpretation of the research findings in a community with a distinct set of social norms. Such an analysis of inquiry offers new ways to imagine different forms of social organization and self-determination that are attempts at working-class self-valorization and autonomy, rather than forms of neoliberal individualistic self-care.

In this study, the concept of self-valorization helps to highlight how gardeners use their own labor as escapes from neoliberal governmentality (Valle 2015). The refusal to participate in the production of capitalist value allows gardeners to cast their own articulations of the value of their labor. This decolonial move is a form of epistemic disobedience (Mignolo 2011) that challenges the reality of "bare life" (see Agamben 1998) faced by many gardeners. The state of economic exception is delicately held together through chaos and order, because through chaos fear is born, and with it, so too is order and the production of bare life - a body without political existence (Agamben 2005). Throughout this study, I focus my attention on subjectivity rather than identity, because, "As soon as you identify yourself, then the technologies of surveillance, exception, discipline, punish, and division can be deployed against you" (Pena 2012, 9). The point is, identity and identity politics can be used against those most vulnerable by rendering the bare life through the state of economic exception. The strategy of refusal to participate in identity politics, on the other hand, is the practice of strategic invisibility. With the refusal, "is the refuge of self-valorizing labor (ibid. 7).

Gender is important to the decolonial project and to any effort to understand subjectivity and autonomy. In order to bring forth the subjectivities of the community requires close attention to how production, and more specifically, reproduction, influences the pursuit of autonomy. While this study is interested in how gardeners enact spaces of autonomy as escapes for neoliberal governmentality, it is also interested in how those escapes seek to reclaim production at "point zero" (see Federici 2012). LMV gardens provide gardeners with access to both the production of food and to the reproduction of their social lives. Silvia Federici believes that throughout history capitalism has sought to destroy the body, thus prohibiting or limiting the ability of social reproduction (Federici 2009). But as escapes, LMV gardeners challenge this logic by repurposing the value of their own labor. Moreover, Federici argues that "Women have also led the effort to collectivize reproductive labor both as a means to economize on the cost of reproduction, and protect each other from poverty, state violence and the violence of individual men" (2012, 143). Her point is that a "revolution at point zero" (at the point of reproduction, and thus life), women can de-link reproduction from the commodity flows of global markets. "No common is possible unless we refuse to base our life, our reproduction on the suffering of others, unless we refuse to see ourselves as separate from them. Indeed if 'commoning' has any meaning, it must be the production of ourselves as a common subject" (ibid. 145). The heart of this study pays close attention to how LMV gardens function as a "new commons" (Esteva 2005) whereby gardeners reclaim the means of their own production and reproduction in pursuit of well-being.

An Outline of the Chapters to Come

In chapter two, "Epistemic Disobedience and the Ethnography of Subjectivity," I present the decolonial methodological and epistemological framework used for this study and how it binds my social responsibilities to the community as an ethnographer working with an oppressed group of people. As part of a participatory action research (PAR) project, this study is the product of the community. I outline how this framework has influenced my approach to research in assuring the grounding principle of "relational accountability" (Wilson 2008). This research was forged from the relationships developed during my time with the LMV community, and thus, it recognizes that the maintenance and accountability of these relationships must be at the forefront of the research paradigm. This has allowed for the process of research to be "from, by, and with the margins" (Brown and Strega 2005). Continuing the lineage toward critical and alterNative ethnography, my methodology follows a "creation-centered" (González 2000) approach, in which the natural cycles of reciprocity between participants, the earth, and myself, form a co-creative ethnographic process of inquiry and eventually theoretical enunciation. I show how epistemic disobedience helps to inform this study and the subjectivities of its participants. In addition to these critical and alterNative methods, I bring attention to how my methodology melds ethnoecology and political ecology in a move to bridge the social and environmental sciences into a more critical mutual conversation guided by "indigenizing" perspectives.

Chapter three, "Trading Food for Silicon," presents an alterNative history of the Santa Clara Valley. I present San José and its political and ecological histories to better recognize how race, class, gender, and nativity have shaped the trajectory of the historical

development of the valley (Almaguer 1994). I use first hand accounts of LMV gardeners who have lived through some of the rapid transformation of the region. In this chapter, I argue that the current poor health and diminished quality of life in the low-income and immigrant and diaspora communities of the valley are a direct result of the patterns of maldevelopment, to borrow a term from Shiva (1988). In doing so, I situate the LMV community into the discourse of environmental justice, food justice, and food sovereignty. These terms are understood here not just as social movements, but as struggles to escape regimes of control.. The social-ecological landscape of the Valley is the result of restructuring modes of production, economies, labor practices, cycles of struggle, and the subjectivization of bodies. The Santa Clara Valley has a rich history of anthropologists, sociologists, and historians who have studied Chicana/o communities. They have explored inequality in the workplace (Zavella 1987), the role of cultural citizenship (Rosaldo 1994), the extent of the informal economy (Zlolniski 2006), and the elusive nature of the "Californian Dream" (Pitti 2003). Like the work of Park and Pellow (2002; 2004), this chapter uncovers how racial formations and environmental racism have shaped the Valley with direct consequences for the health and quality of life in marginalized communities.

Building off of the systematic ways in which low-income and immigrant peoples have been marginalized, chapter four, "Cultivating Seeds of Change," presents the importance of food in the Valley. It addresses the prevailing question of, why now? I argue that it is no coincidence that LMV and other organizations like it have emerged in recent years. In many ways, the barrio itself has emerged as a zone of abandonment (Biehl 2005; Povinelli 2011), yet people challenge the "bare life" imposed on them by the

regional state of economic exception by growing food in the spaces of neoliberal neglect. But LMV is different from other organizations in many ways. In this section I explain how and why the ability to grow food in ones backyard has become increasingly important as an escape from the regime of neoliberal governmentality. *La Mesa Verde* is the overarching structure that helps to bring families together to grow their own food. Chapter four presents LMV, its structure, and its goals. Throughout the course of conducting fieldwork, I heard countless different meanings and uses of the organization and this section helps to bring out these differences. This is not so much an argument as it is a window into the diverse ways the LMV community uses the spaces provided to mobilize the resources they have in pursuit of self-organization. What I make clear in this section is that while the organizers of LMV have goals and objectives, the community reinterprets those goals and objectives as they see fit. While the organization seeks to be the facilitator of interaction between growers, the social networks created beneath the surface emerge in a rhizomatic way that puts the grower in control. A colleague of mine referred to this as the "grassroots beneath the grassroots." This section takes a look beneath the surface to find the meaning(s) of growing food.

The former director of LMV once told me that the program is the result of a "creative accident." What she meant was that in spite of all their preconceived goals and aspirations, things happened organically. Chapter five, "Gardening with Marx and Mauss" came about in a similar fashion. In this chapter I argue that value is relational, and because of that, gardeners continually remake and reinvent it. This is an important and often overlooked aspect of gardening because when people transform value to have culturally relevant meaning they possess the ability to reshape themselves and society

along with it. Humility is a core value that all of these gardeners share, which is why the value of food, labor, and resources is in constant transformation. At the heart of this chapter is the project to understand how relationships, and the responsibility to maintain these relationships, underscore the social interactions of the community. While food serves as a medium of exchange, the ability and desire to grow and share food embodies deeper, and possibly revolutionary, meaning. In this chapter have also included a brief overview and literature review of value theory as it pertains to LMV while at the same time conducting a grounded theory analysis of value in the community.

In Ramona Lee Pérez's dissertation, *Tasting Culture* (2009), she argues, "what and how we eat can change the way we think" (286). In chapter six, "Keeping Hands in the Earth," I argue a similar point, yet I am more interested in peoples' pursuit of growing their own food and the implications those pursuits may have on individual and community health. I argue that while health is the culmination of many factors, including biological, cultural, economic, and social, it must be placed in a larger historical context. The inequalities embedded with the current industrial food system have their roots in colonialism, and the ability to heal from the structural violence caused by our food system overlaps with peoples' ability to reconnect with the means of their own production. In the pursuit of growing food, gardeners celebrate health, culture, and life. Informed by critical medical anthropology, this section observes how the LMV community challenges the structural limitations imposed by our food system through convivial relationships.

Resilience and autonomy are two sides of the same coin, the struggle for working-class self-organization and alternative ways of knowing and being. Emerging near the

same moment in history, the two concepts intersect in interesting and often overlooked ways. Chapter seven, "*Tierra y Libertad*," presents the theoretical framework of the two complex theories while positioning the LMV community at the center of the discussion. By using the work of C.S. Holling (1972) and Antonio Negri (1991), this section highlights the similarities and points of contestation that exist between resilience and autonomy. The LMV community exists by navigating the unsteady terrain between too much and not enough autonomy. The delicate balance that allows the community to define its own needs is also what allows it to continually remake itself. In addition, this balance allows growers the freedom to contribute to the biological and cultural diversity of the region by remaining open to change. Because both of these concepts move through cycles and are grounded on a plurality of outcomes, I make no assumption about the meaning of autonomy, nor the reality of resilience. The findings in this chapter highlight how the LMV community uses both the autonomy and resiliency of socioecological subsystems to create alternative food systems and strive toward well-being in the spaces of neoliberal neglect. This chapter shows that there is life in the spaces of neglect, and it is thriving.

The goal of *La Mesa Verde* is to create a "leadership network of urban gardeners to challenge food access in San José."[5] In chapter eight, "The Emergence of Political Subjectivity in Leadership Networks," I explore the underpinnings of a leadership network as experienced by LMV. Taking into account the rhizomatic nature of the network, I argue the existing LMV network is an extension of preexisting social networks. LMV social networks bring people into contact with others they might not

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[5] "We are a network of urban gardeners who create access to healthy food in San José." This is the motto and mission of *La Mesa Verde* as presented on their documents and flyers.

have otherwise interacted with and open new possibilities of self-organization. This creates what Gibson-Graham call a "politics of possibility in the here and now" (2006, xxvi). In this chapter I analyze my findings in the diverse sharing networks that exist in the LMV network. Stemming from conversations and interviews with long-term participants, this section emphasizes the "strength of weak ties" (Granovetter 1983) and the how community resembles a living organism (Montiel, Atencio, and Mares 2009). LMV claims to "meet people where they are at," which means that people use the network in accordance with their own desires. Yet, what the findings in this section also show is that regardless of what people use the network for, i.e. agroecological knowledge, seed, tools, friends, etc., each person carries within themselves the responsibility and obligation to maintain the network. I argue that the social networks created through informal food networks encourages *cohesion informality*, or a assemblage of informal social networks that fosters solitary, trust, and social-ecological resilience.

In my final chapter, "Confronting the Neoliberal Culture of the Non-Profit Charity Industry," I bring the study to a close by revisiting the transformative power of growing and sharing food. This dissertation has been a journey, and lucky for me, I have had the privilege of going on this journey with the love and respect of the LMV community. As I have argued earlier, this study is the product, not just of community, but also of active and creative participation. In this final chapter I acknowledge the importance of the future of participatory action research projects in the facilitation of new forms of self-organization that aspires to improve the well-being of oppressed communities. I argue that LMV gardens produce "garden subjectivities" that encourage

solidarity economies and different ways of being and interacting in this world. This chapter highlights the complex subjectivities of gardeners and how their articulated mutual reliance interests promotes social change.

This is a study of how people transcend borders to disrupt binaries in pursuit of well-being. Borders and walls reinforce systems of social control and regulation, but when people disrupt borders and walls, they pursue self- and communal-valorization as escapes from the dominant regime of governmentality. This dissertation uncovers some of the many ways people find humble human solutions to real global problems. This project is neither pro-capitalist nor anti-capitalist; it is neither pro-development nor anti-development. It disrupts the binary between autonomy and self-care, productive and unproductive labor, and empowerment and disempowerment. It celebrates life and how people negotiate interstitial space to create new subjectivities and new worlds.

Chapter 2: Epistemic Disobedience and the Ethnography of Subjectivity

There is no place quite like the barrio. This has led Chicano scholars like David Diaz to conclude that the barrio itself produces a particular type of subjectivity. This subjectivity enables what he calls the "*ciudadano*." His translation of *ciudadano* is not as simple as "citizen" or "resident" as one might believe, but rather it embodies "active citizenship in all its manifestations (2012, 41). His point is that in order to survive and flourish in the barrio, the individualist, top-down managerialism that typifies urban planning, is not part of the barrio subjectivity. If fact, he believes, "barrio urbanism is the future of the city. Fundamentally, any strategy aimed at reacculturating suburbanites to socially function in a dense urban environment implies their learning to be *ciudadanos*." (42). The future of sustainability must come from this emic understanding of urban life.

When I was first introduced to *La Mesa Verde* and was invited to collaborate in a participatory action research project, I understood that part of my role was to learn to be a *ciudadano*. The common practice for many anthropologists is to find something that one is interested in, post an anthropological question about the issue, go into the "field" to find answers, and return to write about it. The goal is to profoundly influence the domain of the discipline, but the common practice rarely asks if the research is humbling in the impact it has on ethnographers and their affinity groups. In my case, *La Mesa Verde* was already enacting collective positive futures in the spaces of neoliberal neglect by improving collective well-being, encouraging agrobiodiversity, and easing social vulnerability far before I ever stepped into a meeting. My job was not to find answers to

questions, but rather to help fill in the spaces between questions and answers by highlighting the garden subjectivities of the community that the gardeners themselves enabled through the creation and articulation of their own political struggles.

I first visited Sacred Heart, the organization that houses *La Mesa Verde*, in the summer of 2012. I had just finished my first year at the University of Washington and was developing a conceptual plan for a dissertation project on tourism, water, development, and inequality in the Lake Tahoe, CA region. I had hoped to expand on my M.A. thesis, *Sustainable Tahoe* (2009). Yet, on a trip back to California in 2012, I was introduced to Malin, who was, at the time, the program director of *La Mesa Verde*. A simple invitation to meet with home kitchen gardeners changed my perception on how people create spaces of autonomy to enact their own versions of justice. Several weeks later, Malin invited me to participate in a community based research project working with the LMV community. As I got to know people, I was invited to visit their homes, ate meals with families, saw and worked with gardeners in their gardens, and learned about the meaning of gardening for each individual.

One of my advisors explained to me that his research projects were chosen based on which community needed assistance the most and which shared the values with the ethnographer. It is not a matter of choosing the most exciting and rewarding (they all are in different ways) but which are the "best fit" between the researcher's talents and skills and the needs and value orientations of the community. It was not until much later, well after LMV approached me, that I became aware that when a group asks you to join their cause and do research *with* them, there is more responsibility and accountability on the part of the researcher. As explained by Maria Elena García, when a group seeks out an

ethnographer, the actions and decisions of the ethnographer are heavily weighted. "Ethnographers are not invisible observers, nor is their work inconsequential" (2000, 97).

Each day I spent with the family members of *La Mesa Verde*, attending events, or discussing the organization with others, I was mindful that my actions mattered. While I know this project will hold value within the discourses of anthropology and environmental and food justice, I find it more rewarding that the research will become an asset the LMV community can use in positive and affirming ways.

A Critical Ethnography Between Theory and Praxis

While I am a trained anthropologist and ethnographer, I am heavily influenced by Chicana and Chicano Studies, which served as the focal point of my BA and MA degree studies. Chicana/os have transformed and been transformed by American institutions. Our work in Chicana/o studies has always been about locating the subjects(s), understood here as both a search for new subject areas and for our testimonials about our own shifting subjectivities. In fact, four decades ago Nick Vaca (1970) argued that many of the social ills in Chicana/o communities are a result of Anglo institutions, and the "structural determinism" (32) enabled by such institutions contributes to the ideological mystification and internalization of a subject produced as an "ahistoric people who have had no history except that of a long and tedious siesta" (Romano 1970, 47-8). The logics of cultural determinism that griped post WWII America persisted because the Chicana/o experience was often silenced by mainstream academic discourse. As a result, the liberation that *el movimiento* sought compelled the disruption of the status quo. As Paolo Freire believed, "as long as we project the image of our oppressors, we cannot liberate our selves" (1984 186). The critical and decolonial methods this projects entails are

designed to make positive and lasting change within the LMV community and many others negatively impacted by our industrial food system and the regimes of property and governmentality that undergird it.

According to Octavio Romano, the cultural nationalism ideology initiated by Chicana/o scholars was of a particular kind because it was "unAmerican" in the sense that it was "unlike the rampant ethnocentrism" (1969, 173) or erasure present in American institutions, including the extant anthropology, sociology, and other social sciences and humanities of the day. Chicana/o scholars began to challenge structures of power by unpacking the layers of institutional inequalities while at the same time creating a decolonial approach to research. This approach recognized that anthropology was steeped with colonial baggage, and thus, to realize its liberating potential, the discipline "must acknowledge that history and actively seek to reverse it" (Harrison 1991, 104).

Today, decolonial or anti-colonial thinking extends well beyond the disruption of the status quo. Prominent scholars like Madina Tlostanova and Walter Mignolo, believe that decolonial thinking are projects led by those who exists at the margins, "...all those humiliated, devalued, disregarded, disavowed, and confronting the trauma of the 'colonial wound,' a trauma that no modern psychoanalyst can cure..." (2012,19). The authors believe that decolonial thinking cannot exist "in competition" with Western epistemology because competition would assume playing under the same rules. Rather, decolonial thinking de-links itself (which many include norms of association, ethics, and value rationalities) from Western epistemology. So while decolonial thinking is not thinking "in competition," it does considers alternatives and alternative options. But the authors are careful to note that de-linking does not mean reverting toward the "old ways"

of indigenous cosmology, but rather it refers to a shift in the geography of reason, planning, and organizing knowledge from the indigenous point of view of Western epistemology. Furthermore, as it was in the past, the decolonial turn is more than a call for legitimation. In decolonial thinking, “we are not claiming recognition, inclusion, or the right to exist - we know that we belong to global trajectories that do not pretend to compete with modern Western epistemology - rather we intend to move in a different direction, to delink, to shift the geography of reasoning” (ibid, 12).

For *La Mesa Verde*, or other groups like them, this does not mean that they do not participate in aspects of industrial society, i.e. foodsystem, global markets, or civic association. For LMV, “delinking does not mean being ‘outside’ of either modernity or the Christian, liberal, capitalist, and Marxist hegemony but to disengage from the naturalized assumptions...” (ibid 177), which are often taken for granted in Western epistemologies.

As a critical ethnography, this study is an act of relational solidarity with the dispossessed and displaced—*La Mesa Verde* gardeners—and seeks to provide their struggles for social justice with an enunciation of their knowledge base and the co-formulation of strategies they can then go on to use in order to further their transformative political praxis while cultivating revolutionary subjectivities. I am well aware that “anti-oppressive research is not an endpoint, but rather a continual process for justice” (Brown and Strega 2005, 255), which is why this study is as much about theory as it is about cultivating the assets communities can use for sustained praxis. Similar to the work of Katz (1992), this ethnography exists within many spaces, some filled by theory, others by praxis. For this work to have value for the LMV community, it must

contribute to larger food justice projects, remain applicable to and by the local lives of LMV gardeners, and sustain the cultivation of decolonial (and revolutionary) subjectivities.

In order for this project to hold value across different scales of the state, market, and civil society, I surmised that it had to be rooted in a clear understanding of the direct lived experiences, knowledge, beliefs, and practices of gardeners. As I developed friendships with gardeners, I became aware that the seemingly mundane experiences of everyday life are as important, if not more important, as a source of decolonial narratives than conducting formal interviews or oral histories.

It is in such moments and contexts that long-term participatory observation is revealed to us as helping to inform the researcher about what is significant to the community collaborating in a given study (Emerson et. al. 1995, 13). My project takes this positionality a step further because it seeks a better understanding of food, and this is a highly intimate matter whether it involves people seeking access to food or growing their own food. I now see how gardening involves acts of relational solidarity and this is a major factor contributing to the gardeners' construction of a sense of place and also informs the methodological framing of this study. Basso believes that a sense of place is not just about how one feels about a place, but also something people do (1996, 143); of course, in research conducted prior to Basso, some Chicana/o studies scholars had already referred to this process as the "enactment of place" (e.g., Rojas 1991). Culture is experiential and it is also performed, enacted, and enunciated.

Even the most critically self-reflexive ethnography of lived experience inherently only articulates "partial truths" (Clifford 1986)—Nazarea (1999) and others call this

"situated knowledge"—because the community of place-based participants enunciating truth claims are always located in a given matrix of power/knowledge relations. The challenge is: How does one come to extend epistemic privilege to local knowledge? The stories people tell exist only momentarily because the retelling of such stories can transform the meaning of the story. While the characters and events in the story may be the same, the context of storyteller is always different because social life is continually being made and remade in peoples efforts to find meaning in their own lives (Emerson et. al. 1995, 10). The continual movement of people and ideas influence my perception of science, which, similar to Roberto González, is best understood as "a practical quest for truths about the world" (2001, 22). Gardeners make choices with the knowledge and resources they have, and how they learn to maneuver between power structures, cultures, nation states, and languages is what allows them to find the practical uses of gardening and make sense of their local realities while escaping from presumably universal logics. According to Donna Haraway (1988), the lived experiences of people is where knowledge is produced, and by recognizing the situated truths of ethnographic narratives, this study aims to understand and overcome divisions posed by the power/knowledge aspects embedded in any research paradigm and anthropological project. As a co-produced ethnography, this study takes seriously the ways in which truths and realities are experienced through the decolonial option. As explained by Tlostanova and Mignolo:

> The decolonial epistemic option is becoming also, for similar reasons, an option for immigrants to developed countries who organized themselves to work to participate (instead of assimilate or accommodate) in the democratization of knowledge, of economic political life. In other words, the decolonial is an option

for all those human beings who want to participate and share rather than be managed and integrated to master plans that are not theirs or to be expelled and marginalized. (2012, 192)

Knowledge is always political and anti-oppression research is an attempt to "reclaim and incorporate the personal and political context of knowledge construction" (Brown and Strega 2005, 7). In this study, following González (2001), I have worked to reclaim the phenomenological or everyday lived experience as an efficacious mode for the production of knowledge in order to better understand the ways in which people negotiate between the ethnosciences of local experience and the science of universal logics.

Similarly, Nazarea insists that ethnoecology can "no longer ignore the historical and political underpinnings of the representational and directive aspects of culture, nor turn away from issues of distribution, access, and power that shape knowledge systems and the resulting practices" (1999, 9). Her point is that ethnoecology is the investigation of systems of perception and cognition related to the human relationship to the natural environment, but such inquiries are never uncoupled from the discursive fields of power/knowledge. Ethnoecology, considered by anthropologists as a subset of ethnoscience, is a validation of the indigenous human experience (Nazarea 1999; Berkes 1999; Montiel et. al. 2009; Gonzalez 2001) that celebrates and seeks to empower (defend, protect) how mostly indigenous (and diaspora) peoples construct, imagine, and make practical uses of the places they inhabit.

The Agency of People, Places, and Narratives and our Responsibility To them

The goals for ethnoscience and ethnoecology are to legitimatize local place-based knowledge as a variant of scientific (empirical, experimental) knowledge *and* to revalue

the experiences in which “folk” science has been produced and transformed by local people over time (see Gonzalez 2001; Peña 1999, 2005; Hunn 1993; Berkes 1996; 1999). From this vantage point, ethnographies must always consider the historical and cultural context of the words people use to give meaning to their lives. Bringing in the sidelined narratives of oppressed groups can decenter the narrative of the ethnographer (Davidson Buck 1991, 24), yet as Katz reminds us, we must be mindful that the ways in which we enact our own agency through narrative may limit that of our participants (1992, 499). “Ethnographies are self-conscious projects of representation, interpretation, and invention” (Katz 1992, 496). Both the ethnographer and the group in a given collaborative knowledge production project constantly present and represent themselves through various subjectivities and identities. The ethnographic project is an “interpretative performance” (Denizen 2014) because it allows the researcher the ability to provide agency to voice, and ground it in its historical moment.

There is another more severe issue here and it has to do with the difference between the largely defensive and reactive politics of representation and the autonomous and disruptive practice of enunciation as has been noted by decolonial thinkers like Mignolo (2009). Indeed, the trap presented by exclusive engagement with the politics of representation means that the ethnographer and the community of collaborators will remain within the orbit of the colonizers’ eurocentered modernity. As Mignolo so eloquently argues:

> My humble claim is that geo- and body-politics of knowledge has been hidden from the self-serving interests of Western epistemology and that a task of de-colonial thinking is the unveiling of epistemic silences of Western epistemology

> and affirming the epistemic rights of the racially devalued, and de-colonial options to allow the silences to build arguments to confront those who take "originality" as the ultimate criterion for the final judgment...The introduction of geo-historical and bio-graphical configurations in processes of knowing and understanding allows for a radical re-framing (e.g. de-colonization) of the original formal apparatus of enunciation. (2009, 4)

Mignolo's call for epistemic disobedience involves a commitment on the part of the ethnographer to embrace the practice of actively delinking local knowledge "from the web of imperial/modern knowledge and from the colonial matrix of power" (20). The point is to both reveal and conceal, and this depends entirely on the politics that blocks the gaze of any given actant deemed to be serving the extant regime of neoliberal governmentality. A decolonial move does not aim to educate the Other about local knowledge and instead seeks to articulate the enunciations of alterNative knowledge as part of a political project for environmental and food justice. There is a significant set of implications for the performative dimensions of this epistemic disobedience.

Here we can consider how to rethink the ideas championed by advocates of a critical theory of performative ethnographies such as described by Denizen who asserts these are always "political, emotional, analytic, interpretive, pedagogical, local, partial, incomplete, painful to read, and exhilarating" (2014, 87). Because ethnographies are always political, decolonial ethnographers openly seek to legitimize the struggles of the communities we are invited to collaborate with. Importantly, the dominant political epistemological projects in academia attempt to cast a shadow of doubt on this endeavor. The decolonial rejoinder is to declare, following Rosaldo (1993), that distanced

normalizing observation is part of the colonial gaze we are resisting and our remaking of social analysis draws strength from our commitments to community, self-determination, and social justice. What could be more performative in this sense than the act of growing food in a home garden and participating in the enactment of a dense social network? A researcher's commitments do not have to compromise the accuracy or truthfulness of the ethnographic project; indeed, they can strength the verifiability and empirical quality of disobedient epistemic claims performed by the subjects. The gardeners' narratives have agentic force, and while we cannot assume local groups need our help to get their message out or gain support for the cause, we must acknowledge that they are not simply passive observers. García (2000) argues that the presence of the ethnographer can never be neutral because just our presence influences the outcome, often in a ways that are unpredictable and unanticipated. How and when we choose to act (or not) as researchers will send a political message that legitimizes or delegitimizes the intentions of the group of study. My interpretation and use of ethnography recognizes the power embedded with its use (see Katz 1992) and accepts the condition that, "consciously or not, anthropologists are agents of change" (García 2000, 95). However, while my presence is taken into consideration throughout this study, like Wilson, I believe that "being a participant observer allowed me to take a more action-oriented approach to the research" (2008, 40). If fact, at no time during my period with *La Mesa Verde* did I perceive my actions as either objective or simply observational. While I have taken a step back from LMV, which is mainly a result of changes in proximity due to my own academic work obligations in the Seattle area, I am still deeply committed to the work of the organization and the lives of the gardeners. Moreover, one does not walk away from such obligations

once a study like this is completed; such is the nature of a decolonial commitment to relational accountability.

The participatory action research (PAR) design of this study was in part initiated by my research ethics and by the political motives LMV organizers. As food justice research and urban agriculture has become trendier, LMV has seen several academic institutions and non-profit researchers wanting to conduct research on LMV gardens and gardeners. In hopes to bring notoriety (and money) to their cause, LMV is often obliged to accept. From my first conversations with the LMV director, it was clear that we had similar intentions; for this project to have relevance in the daily lives of gardeners, it had to be research done from, by, and with the community.

The structure of this study contributes to what Montiel et. al. calls "*la resolana*" (2009, 30), which is an ancient form of dialogue common in Indohispano communities in the Southwest. It forms a type of "learning society" where the goal is to critically acquire and uncover knowledge present in everyday life. *La resolana* is conducted as an exercise in the intergenerational transmission not of knowledge per se but of wisdom, which is to say that the knowledge claims are always embedded in ethical normative declarations. It is as much a project of cultural affirmation as it is a form of collective consciousness-raising. The co-production of research in this study calls upon Freire's notion of *conscientização*, which "refers to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contractions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (1984 19). The revolutionary aspects of this project are rooted in the social relations and practices the community collectively undertakes to simultaneously learn about issues while solving basic problems pertinent to their daily-lived world experiences and predations posed by

structural violence unleashed by neoliberal governmentality. Within the LMV community, dialogue is not simply listening to different people; rather, dialogue is an exchange of information (see Harrison 1991). For gardeners, this comes in many ways, some of which are how people balance between experience and received wisdom (also see Gonzalez 2001). *La resolana* is "knowledge from everyday life experiences" (Montiel et. al. 2009, 68; also see David Garcia 2015), which can be transmitted to others in the community. Guided by decolonial research objectives (Gordon 1991) and the delinking of colonial thinking (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2012), the knowledge gained in this study seeks to serve the community as an extended *resolana* on the subjectivity of the urban gardeners as agents of socioecological transformation.

Participatory action research design presents a sticky positionality for the researcher because of the power relationships at play. Yet, for decolonial research, "anthropologists with dual or multiple vision may be uniquely able to convert their 'extra eyes' into useful research tools and efficient political weapons" (Harrison 1991, 90). A decolonial research paradigm mobilizes the multiple and shifting subjectivities that emerge in the course of building relational solidarity between the researcher and the group of study. As Sandoval argues, this shifting allows for a "political site for third meaning" to arrive, which can disrupt "every binary opposition" (Sandoval 2000, 182). Yet, the shifting does not just happen on its own. In fact, Sandoval believes that what allows individuals to cross from one world to the other, is love.

As love informs the praxis of the researcher and allows for doors to open, it complicates the ethnographic endeavor of "objectivity." Yet, perhaps objectivity is a privileged and even delusional position? Romano (1970) believes that objectivity is

influenced by time, place, culture and perhaps even nationality. His point is that objectivity is a perception of the world that only the dominant culture can have. However, for Romano, Chicana/o Studies never harbored pretensions as an objective science but neither were the early anthropological and sociological studies that claimed to be (e.g. Burma 1970; Madsen 1973; Stoddard 1973). After all, the claims of "objective" social science led scholars like Stoddard (1973) to insist that Mexican Americans were poor because they were maladapted to the American core values of competition, aggressiveness, acquisitiveness, and delayed gratification. These assumptions were mired in a culture deficit caused by the presumably effeminate yet patriarchal nature of our culture. Objective scientific norms in such cases were a ruse or cover for the articulation of racist ideological constructs that justified the consequences of structural violence by blaming ethnic and racial "minorities" for having deficient and defective cultures.

The positivist separation of facts from values has long been the bedrock normative basis for the articulation of objectivity claims in social science discourses. The decolonial move inverts this claim and makes the argument that in order to avoid ethnography becoming just another form of systematically-distorted communication (see Eagleton, 1991), the ethnographer must surely understand how values inform, constrain, and redirect the methods we use, the questions we ask, and the standards and rules we adopt to "test" for things like verification, correspondence, replicability, and so on. Instead, decolonial methodology suggests that we take the position of the "post-positivist critical realist" (as Moya 2002 argues) by recognizing the different tasks involved in the critique of distanced normalizing observation (rejection of objectivism) on the one hand and rejection of all except strategic forms of essentialism on the other through a

commitment to the empirical and experiential documentation of the claims of situated knowledge.

Furthermore, for many marginalized communities, it is important that the researcher avoid feigning objectivity; everyone concerned will be well served to have the ethnographer engage a presence that is supportive of the efforts and struggles of the community; otherwise, why be there? As the Zapatistas state, “Lead by obeying” or *mandar obedeciendo*. García insists, “non-involvement in a community is not a neutral position” (2000, 91). The goal of the reflexive anthropologist is to reject objectivity and become part of the agent making process while retaining awareness that the objectivist does this while pretending otherwise. This does not mean that the ethnographer abandons observation or self-critique altogether, but that the researcher must come to terms with the understanding that cultural locations produce worldviews and the researcher cannot escape culture to produce a purely objective science. The rejection of critical research as “value-laden” locates the researcher in a unique contradictory and self-deluded location. As Wilson argues, such a position moves beyond the traditional ethnographic goal of asking unanswered questions to “reveal our unquestioned answerers” (2008, 6). In the decolonial move, this also means we shift from a focus only on the [disembodied] knowledge being produced to the knower who co-produces and transforms this knowledge into practical wisdom, or *metìs* as per James C. Scott.

The love and humility embedded in decolonial research open doors on new ways of knowing and being in the world. This moves us beyond the position of a researcher-centered way of thinking about research questions and project goals. Denizen (2014) believes that the researcher’s principal responsibility is always to the communities we

study. Wilson (2008) takes this a step further and explicates how an indigenous research paradigm is rooted in three normative principles: respect, reciprocity, and responsibility. This forms what he calls "relational accountability," which requires the researcher to form reciprocal and respectful relationships within the communities one studies. Because our relationships construct our realities and our research, we must be held accountable for those relationships. The methodology brought forth by Wilson explains how we live in a world of infinite connections and relationships that are constantly being made and remade. To recognize that our ideas are developed through these relationships is a reciprocal process that returns agency to the people and places we study as a guiding norm of decolonial research.

Cultivating change

The time spent with *La Mesa Verde* gardeners and organizers immersed me in the emotional and cognitive immediacy of other ways of knowing and being that challenged what I first thought of as "glimpses" of their day-to-day lives. This ethnographic and participant action research project provided me a jarring and even uncomfortable context in which I have had to cede my own privileges to realize the formation of this document called a dissertation. Working in the gardens, sharing meals with families, and organizing with LMV organizers proved to produce a space for the co-production of knowledge that transformed my own sense of place and ways of knowing and being in the world.

The decolonial move in ethnography can be applied to all of the adjuvant methods and materials I have co-produced with the gardeners. In the following, I provide details on the use of archival research, participant observation field notes, interview transcripts, cognitive mapping projects, as set of agro-biodiversity surveys, and a photo analysis. I

seek to clarify how these methods contribute to my understanding of relational accountability and how each is informed by the values of decolonial epistemologies.

Archival Research

I began my archival research in the fall 2013. Upon completing my pilot research and conducting several productive interviews and conversations in collaboration with LMV organizers and gardeners, we came to the conclusion that in order to best understand the current conditions of health for LMV families, we needed a better picture of the production of health over time within the Santa Clara Valley. I was pointed in the direction of the Santa Clara Valley Health Trust, whose quantitative and empirical research on the subject proved invaluable. Their health report released in May 2013, "Community Health Existing Conditions Report," helped to illuminate the racialization of healthcare access and health outcomes within the Valley. I also surveyed documents from the Santa Clara Country Food System Alliance, which helped to contextualize the movement of food and bodies in the region. Their recent document, "Santa Clara Count Food System Assessment" published in 2013, proved helpful because the findings in the assessment were written to be a practical tool for positive change within the Valley. In addition to these key resources, the California Room at San José State's Martin Luther King Jr. Library proved to be a great source of information. While visiting the California Room, the volunteers gratefully shared their deep knowledge of the region as we poured through photographs, land surveys, and land grants in the Valley. With the help of *La Mesa Verde* organizers I also examined documents and surveys conducted by the organization from 2010-2014. These sources allowed me to broaden my awareness of health in the region and deepen my understanding of the LMV community.

Participant Observation

For many ethnographic research projects, participant observation is the most effective way for the researcher to spend an extended amount of time with a group to learn about the knowledge, belief, and practices they deploy as gardeners and to understand the unwritten codes and norms associated with everyday life. As David Fetterman states, "participant observation is immersion in a culture. Ideally, the ethnographer lives and works in the community for six months to a year or more, learning the language dialects and witnessing patterns of behavior over time" (1989, 45). His point is that only through long-term observation can a researcher learn to be a participant in the culture of study. Of course, the decolonial move involves the advantage that comes from the fact that the ethnographic intervention is performed by a "native" or "cultural insider." Fetterman also encourages the researcher to maintain a "professional distance that allows adequate observation" (ibid). But what is a professional distance and why must a researcher keep it? Does a researcher break that distance when s/he choses sides? As I have argued earlier, ethnographies are inherently political and thus, whether a researcher chooses to act or not, these actions are not neutral. My use of participant observation it better understood within the context of participatory action research and resonates closely with Wilson (2008), who uses participant observation to take an "action-oriented" approach to research. I still find Renato Rosaldo's (1993) critique of what he calls "distanced normalizing observation" useful since he offers an epistemological basis to reject this as part of a colonialist legacy embedded within much of anthropology, including a fair amount of contemporary ethnography. As Rosaldo notes:

> [D]uring the classic period (roughly 1921-1971), norms of distanced normalizing description gained a monopoly on objectivity. Their authority appeared so self-evident that they became the one and only legitimate form for telling the literal truth about other cultures. Proudly called the ethnographic present, these norms prescribed, among other things, the use of the present tense to depict social life as a set of shared routines and the assumption of a certain distance that purportedly conferred objectivity. All other modes of composition were marginalized or suppressed altogether…In my view, no mode of composition is a neutral medium, and none should be granted exclusive rights to scientifically legitimate social description. (1993, 48-49; brackets added)

Rosaldo's concerns resonate with an observation made by Américo Paredes who states, "I find the Mexicans and Chicanos pictured in the usual ethnographies somewhat unreal" (1977, 2). These ethnographies were written by Anglo American scholars who often ended up being the "butt of the joke". They failed to discern the difference between serious political discussions and the endless verbal jousting and joking that occurs in this sort of context all the time and so they misrepresented jokes as political beliefs.

When I was invited into the LMV community in 2012, I was encouraged to attend as many meetings, workshops, classes, and events as possible. Starting in the fall of 2012 I began to attend many of these LMV organized gatherings. I was there not as a "fly on the wall," but as a welcomed member of the growing LMV community. I participated in garden classes provided to families by the University of California Master Gardeners program through the local cooperative extension office while also helping to facilitate community-led workshops, events and meetings with the organizers. I attended training

events where both community members and LMV organizers learned to model what was termed "popular education." While I clarified who I was at each event, families came to know me not as an outside researcher, but as someone devoted to the LMV community. In addition to the classes, workshops, and events available to LMV gardeners, I participated in the LMV advisory committee meetings from 2013 through 2014. I provided feedback from my home visits with families, other organizations, and my institutional background to the committee. In this capacity I served more like a consultant who provided insight from both inside and outside the walls of LMV. I also attended LMV organizer meetings from 2013-14. During this time I helped to provide information in developing curriculum for their self-created food system workshops and provided insight into their pursuit of a demonstration garden. While I was gathering data, I served as a resource for LMV organizers and the community, which furthered my accountability to my relationships with gardeners and organizers.

While my invitation extended into many of the organizational aspects of LMV, I fostered my own relationships with families and gardeners by developing intimate relationships with them and their families and neighbors. The reason I define them as intimate is because over the course of the project, I visited around seventy-five home gardens. Home visits did not automatically make these relationships intimate; rather, it was how gardeners, family members, and neighbors shared the details of their lives with me that made these visits intimate. Always present was the sharing of food, stories, and labor as I helped garden, weed, harvest, gleam, preserve, and cook. Unexpectedly, eating had become a form of participant observation where gardeners opened their tables and their hearts. This study took on aspects of Perez's (2009) methodology of "kitchen table

ethnography" because food was a central medium for the exchange of meaning. This also meant that the sharing of food became a form of relational accountability as I became steadily enmeshed in the reciprocal gift economy of the community, performing my role as a trusted bearer of gifts.

Interviews and life histories

One of the many benefits of this participatory action research project was that the more I became a part the LMV community; the more interview opportunities presented themselves. Throughout my writing I use pseudonyms to protect the identities of those in the study. While asking for participants, I asked for verbal consent that I could use their words in this study. All of LMV gardeners are low-income and many are recent migrants with and without proper documents. Asking for verbal consent allowed for these interviews and conversations to be informal and as casual as possible. Sacred Heart and *La Mesa Verde* gave me consent to use the organization's name as long as they were able to use this data to help their cause or secure funding. I use the names and titles of only those organizers who have given me permission and consent. All other organizers are addressed only by their title.

During my first set of interviews in the fall of 2013, I was able to interview twenty-five individuals. With each interview, I started with the broad question, "Tell me about your garden." This question provided the discourse to breakdown the researcher/participant binary and was led by the participant in the form of a conversation. I came prepared with a list of general questions and a set of themes, which allowed me to organize my interview conversations in a manner that was unique to each participant. In addition, these interviews allowed the participant to define what was important to him or

her because they did not guide the participant to answer in a certain way. Through these conversations my interviews unfolded organically. This proved to be both insightful and difficult at times because it offered a window into the lived realities of gardens, but there was not a set interview schedule to follow. Many of the interviews occurred at LMV events, while sharing meals with members, working in the garden, and organizing with organizers (see appendix E). Due to the limitations of the environments in which most of these interviews unfolded, I was unable to structure my interviews along the conventional question-answer dialogue. Yet, these same limitations established my role within the community as someone who was also a gardener, organizer, and member. Sometimes the tape-recorder and notepad can create barriers between the researcher and the community, and by removing those instruments at times, I was able to get my hands in the dirt and cultivate change alongside and *with* the community. By providing feedback to the organizers, helping gardeners harvest, sharing and preparing meals with families, I became someone within the LMV community with a broad understanding of the many different types of people growing food in the program trying to make a difference.

Upon returning to fieldwork in the spring of 2014, many different things had transpired, which altered my role within LMV. Typical for non-profits, LMV's organizational priorities and administrative frameworks had shifted. Within a moment, many LMV gardeners who depended on the program to control their autonomy and health saw it heading to an end. After learning this I met with many of the same people for my second round of interviews. I met with new and old staff members who assured me that while things were going to change this program would live on. Over the course of 2014 I interviewed forty-five different families and had countless conversations at events,

meetings, workshops, and in gardens. I interviewed ten in the spring, twenty in the summer, and fifteen more in the fall. My interview rationality was guided by the seasons because I wanted to learn how different people were using their gardens at different moments throughout the growing season. While these interviews were informal and semi-formal, I focused much of my attention on the production of agroecological knowledge and on the self-determining aspects of gardening. I asked questions on how knowledge, food, and resources moved through the community. What made these conversations extremely difficult was that most of them occurred while gardening or eating. In instances where I couldn't write down notes, I made extended journals of the conversation at the end of the day.

I also conducted eight life histories. The stories of these astonishing people are scattered throughout the text. While I conducted eight life histories, four of the eight, two groups of two, were done together. One involved an elderly couple that had been gardening for many years. The others were neighbors who live next to each other and share the garden. Four of the eight life histories were done in Spanish with people who were recent immigrants and the other four were done in English with either second generation Mexican Americans or white Americans. In one instance a gardener was uncomfortable with me tape recording her voice, which made her life history very difficult to present. However, I visited several times over the course of the years and was able to piece the many parts of her life together. The motive for these histories was to take a garden-centered approach to life history. I was interested in learning how, why, and if gardening remained a constant experience in the lives of those I interviewed. Throughout the study, I privilege the gardeners' narratives to convey and present their

stories, perspectives, and truth claims as accurately as possible through self-enunciation as the prime narrative structure of the text.

Cognitive Mapping

Individuals use "mental maps" of the world to make sense of the space around them (e.g., Basso 1996; Peña 1999; Mares and Peña 2010; Kahn 2011). This process helps people turn space into place, but may also serve as source of rationality leading to participation in sharing networks, especially among immigrant households who are actively re-mapping their sense of place in a new locale. My use of cognitive mapping is similar to Jameson, who believes that such maps are survival guides. He argues that an aesthetic of cognitive mapping is a "pedagogical political culture which seeks to endow the individual subject with some new heightened sense of its place in the global system" (1991, 54). Sandoval (2000) takes Jameson's concept a step further to argue that the method helps to understand how people negotiate and transform the world around them. Following Rojas (1991), I elicited the drawing of these maps and used the data to understand the cultural re-inscription of enacted spaces in households and neighborhoods through home gardens across seasons. These maps have been combined with other observational and ethnographic data to describe and analyze the informal mutual reliance networks that gardeners participate in to develop a sense of place and stronger community ties that contribute to household food security and well-being.

Over the duration of this research project, I helped to facilitate the drawing of cognitive maps at LMV workshops, classes, and during home visits. In all, I collected eighteen maps, which are written in Spanish and English. Many of them can be found in various sections of the text. One of the hardest aspects of this method was conducting

them at large workshops or classes. At these events, many people would leave before the event ended and I was unable to collect their maps. Several times people would unknowingly throw their maps away or put them in their purses or backpacks. However, the ones that I have collected and analyzed gave a broad picture of the various gardens in LMV community and proved insightful, informative, and creative.

Biodiversity Survey

Studies of urban agriculture must pay careful attention to agroecology and ethnobotany as dimensions of local knowledge. Biodiversity surveys are one method we can use to collect inventories of the diversity of harvestable crops, shrubs, vines, and herbs growing in LMV home kitchen gardens. The process of conducting the surveys was time consuming as I documented all the plants, what their uses where, how each individual acquired the seed, seedling, or rootstock, how the knowledge to care for the plant was acquired, and what was done with the surplus from each plant. I collected ten complete surveys, and as one might imagine, these were filled with ethnographic data. On average, each visit took several hours, however, on one occasion our conversation led to a discussion of gleaming and the participant and I left to visit several spots around the Valley to collect fruit. I conducted ten of these surveys for specific reasons. First, these ten gardeners were instrumental in providing me insights on the inner workings of LMV and the role of gardening in their lives. Additionally, these gardeners had been growing food with LMV for several years. Lastly, these gardeners were constantly active in LMV as volunteers, leaders, and members.

The underlying assumption about home kitchen gardens is that these plots can only produce a small amount of food. My goal was less about how much is produced and

more about how many different species were being produced and the underlying rationality for those choices. In many cases, the gardeners could not remember the exact varietals but they were aware of the heirloom status of certain crops and were also willing to share stories of how the plants came to be in their possession as gifts from neighbors or as baggage family and friends brought to the U.S. from their origin communities. In the search for participants, I often resorted to the "snowball" method because gardeners would often tell me that their neighbor or friend's garden was far bigger. I also asked LMV organizers about other gardeners that might share an interest in such a project. However, many of my visits grew out of serendipitous engagements and small talk at events, workshops, meetings, and classes. One thing that has remained a constant throughout the duration of this project is that people are proud about their gardens and want to show and talk about it with people who are interested. Home gardens are neglected hotspots of agricultural biodiversity (Galluzzi et. al. 2010) and the data gathered through these surveys presents a snapshot of the biological, cultural, material, and economic diversity that form part of the every day lives of *La Mesa Verde* gardeners.

Photo Analysis

While most people consider photos as a way to capture moments in time, ethnographers use photographs as a window into the breadth and depth of ways of knowing and being in the world, including insight on the shifting subjectivity of persons and groups in relation to others and the environment. Keeping with Rosaldo's own admonishment of distanced normalizing observation, I have followed this advice and throughout the research process involved the participants in actively documenting their own gardens through the use of disposable cameras; in this fashion, the gardeners

documented their own gaze at the environment. It was therefore also deemed important to discuss these photographs with the gardeners themselves in order to locate narrative descriptions and reflections in their own interactive, meaning-creating context. In this way, photographs also serve to assist the researcher become oriented with the field site and as the investigation deepens these images can help guide the focus on certain aspects of fieldwork, including those that the gardeners, in this study, wished to make more salient.

A photo analysis is an open process used to systematize observation and to insure that the data is presented in a complete fashion. According to Collier Jr. and Collier, "fine ethnographic and research photography is like fine interviewing, an attempt to get closer to the view from the inside" (1986, 214). My use of photos facilitated a mutual understanding of how gardens are constructed differently and express ethnic and cultural identities and the shifting subjectivities that inform these. Mares and Peña refer to this process as the construction of "autotopographies" because gardens are a form of "self-telling through place-shaping" (2010, 258). In order to document this dimension of place-making, I asked the difficult question of whether or not the camera forces or influences events to transpire. There is no doubt that people act differently when they are being filmed or recorded, which is why only a few select interviews were recorded. But cameras posed a different problem: I was not seeking to "represent" the gardens from my own vantage point as much as I sought to clarify and enunciate the gardens as the gardeners themselves imagined them. In order to accomplish this, I bought fifty disposable cameras and distributed these among some fifty families during different

seasons and allowed them to choose the snapshots on their own and free from the presence I brought into the field.

The response I received from the gardeners was tremendous. Everyone wanted to participate; yet with only fifty cameras, I was unable to provide enough. Fortunately, most gardeners had cell phones cameras. I passed out my contact information at events, meetings, workshops, and classes and told people to send me pictures of their gardens, meals they prepared from their gardens, and themselves working in the garden. I received countless pictures via text message and email. These pictures helped to reveal the many ways people organize their spaces and construct a sense of place. They also reveal much about the gardeners' complex and nuanced subjectivity, their performance of a way of being in a specific space imbued with a sense of relative autonomy. An analysis of the pictures I received proved to be useful in understanding how people interpreted their gardens, knowledge, beliefs, and practices. Collier Jr and Collier remind us that the camera is a tool that "is a highly sensitive to the attitudes of its operator" (1986, 9). By removing myself from behind the camera, I have given the agency of imagination back to the co-producers of knowledge, the LMV community of home kitchen gardeners.

Conclusion: The Transformative Potential of Garden Ethnography

This study has taught me a lot about humility, trust, and reciprocity. During each step of this research project—from the conceptualization of the central research question, through the activities generating ethnographic and observational narratives, and on through the interpretation of the results—the LMV community has collaborated with me. They have encouraged me to investigate deeper, listen longer, and relay the information to as many people as possible. When I began this research, Malin wanted me to tell the

story of how a group of food justice advocates and a community in need was challenging the common sense logics of capitalism through the subversive act of growing and sharing food. She told me that for the LMV community, my study would tell the world "we exist, and we matter." Along the way these experiences have shaped me by providing an ethical framework to do research *and* live life. Shawn Wilson believes that, "if research doesn't change you as a person, then you haven't done it right" (2008, 135). Well, this research has changed me; whether or not I got it "right" remains to be seen.

Anthropology entails the possibility of producing rigorous scholarly research that seeks to collaborate in movements for social transformation. Gordon (1991) argues for an "anthropology of liberation" where intellectual knowledge can break free from the ivory tower and do work that matters to the community one serves. In a more recent contribution, David Graeber (2014) reiterates an argument first made by feminist and ethnic intellectuals since those heady days back in the 1970s when Octavio Romano and Nick Vaca were offering the first musings by Chicana/os on the problem of coloniality and academic research. Graeber notes how the history of anthropology fits into this epistemological and methodological problematic:

> [I]n the 1980s, it did at first appear to be moving in the opposite direction to most disciplines, where "post- modernism" hovered somewhere between toothless mock radicalism, at worst, and a kind of pretentious and aggressively depoliticizing fin-de-siècle despair. In US anthropology, where the term really took off, "postmodernism" seemed anything but depoliticizing. Exponents of the reflexive moment proposed to dissect and challenge the political implications of ethnographic practice on every level, not even ruling out the possibility of

> rejecting the entire enterprise of anthropology as irredeemably compromised by its history as handmaiden to colonialism. (2014, 80)

In other words, real dialogue cannot exist without the embrace of the decidedly anti-colonial attitude of scholarly humility (e.g. Freire 1984 and Calderon 2014), and there is no such thing as a perfectly formulated research question or a perfect researcher (Wilson, 2008). While I have done the best work possible to present a set of emic-driven verifiable, and perhaps replicable, arguments in this study, I do not claim this research is a perfect exercise in decolonial or alterNative anthropology. This dissertation connects local lives to global struggles and seeks the indigenous and working-class sources of agroecology and ethnoecology, but that does not mean that it is devoid of contradiction, ambiguity, and even lapses into the sense of the incommensurability of individual existence that comes from recognizing the phenomenological complexity presented by this research object that we still call "subjectivity." Throughout this study, my intentions have been guided by the action research ethics espoused by Gloria Anzaldúa, who urges that we perform work that matters, "*que vale la pena*" (2009, 314), because in the end, it is worth the pain.

Chapter 3: Trading Food for Silicon: Situating the Valley's AlterNative History

Considering itself to be "the capital of the Silicon Valley,"[6] San José is a buzzing metropolis sitting in the heart of the information capital of the world. But not too long ago it was a small agricultural town known as the "valley of your heart's delight." The term was first used by John Muir in a visit to the Santa Clara Valley in the 1880s and was used to describe the Valley's orchards in "full bloom." Ever since then, it has been used by residents, politicians, and reporters to evoke the nostalgic past of the region and its people (Alpers 2010). Peach, apricot, plum, and cherry trees once flourished in small and large orchard operations in the Valley. Located forty-five miles south of San Francisco, San José is nestled in the Santa Clara Valley surrounded by the Santa Cruz Mountain range on the West and the Diablo Mountain range on the East. Summer temperatures range from the mid-80s to the upper 50s, and winter temperatures range from low-60s to the low-40s. The average year will see over 300 days of sun and a year-round growing season.

Karla is one of many long-term residents of the region who told me about life in the Valley prior to the booming years of the 1960s. She grew up in South San José on a large piece of land passed down from her great-grandfather. They hunted on the land and fished and swam in the nearby seasonal lakes and streams. "I hated school," she told me. "I wanted to be outside." She told me how her family would often spend the summer months on the Central Coast crabbing and fishing with her cousins and relatives. They

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[6] The City of San José's official webpage refers to the city as "the capital of Silicon Valley." See http://www.sanjoseca.gov/

would even make trips to the Central Valley to sell melons and apricots. "If I close my eyes," she said, "I can still see the Valley as it was. I used to be able smell whatever was growing and know where I was in the Valley, and what season it was." She explained that different parts of the Valley were known for different fruits. Her sense of smell and imagination would take her back to a time before semiconductors and freeways. Life in San José before 1950 was far more predictable. The seasons came and went, but people and traditions stayed. Today, this is seldom the case. "The last time I went by where my house once was," she continued, "it was a subdivision with a golf course." While it was clear that Karla longed for the Valley to be what it once was, one former director of LMV told me, "Some people like to romanticize about the Valley's past, but we have things that we never would have had without the boom. We have to take the good with the bad."

In this section, I will remove the layers of "good" and "bad" through a decolonial lens that reveals the coevolution of the Valley's people, institutions, and environment(s) within the decolonial frame posed by the shifting intersectionality of class, race, gender, and other socially constructed differences impinging on the political composition of the residents. Sidney Mintz believed that "human beings do create social structures, and do endow events with meaning; but these structures and meanings have historical origins that shape, limit, and help to explain such creativity" (1986, xxx). This approach to the history of San José will help us visualize the interrelationships between race, place, and power through time and space in a changing environment.

Contested Terrains of Santa Clara Valley's Ecological Histories

The contemporary voices of *La Mesa Verde* gardeners throughout this text are interwoven with an alterNative history of San José. The narrative is both synchronic and

diachronic and constitutes a discursive historical critique co-produced with the gardeners in the form of enunciations of critical and oppositional consciousness. This works as a critique and sublation of the dominant cultural translation of the subject across the transit of empire (Byrd 2011) and allows the gardeners and myself to articulate a challenge that interrupts, interrogates, and disrupts the dominant framing of the history of a particular settler colonial region. I am the conduit for the recasting of our collective understanding of local environmental, social, and cultural histories. This approach brings the lived experiences of gardeners to the forefront while at the same time demonstrating how the past constantly shapes the present and the trajectory of possible impacts on the future. This includes a challenge to dominant formulations in the privileged interpretations of history that continue to (mis)inform matters of public policy that impinge on the actual biopolitical life and prospects of the gardeners, understood as a microcosm of the Mexican-origin and other diaspora and immigrant people in California, and the environment. While this approach uses the tools of environmental history and historical ecology, it is something unto itself, especially when the type of decolonial methodology I just described above is applied.

My method is less of a history, and more of a re-contextualization of the changing discourses of biopower, public health, and the environment in the Valley. Focusing on the context of the Valley in this manner allows us to further explore how social systems and political systems have changed over time while also pinpointing how the uses and abuses of power have not always prevailed because of the struggles waged by Mexican-origin and other oppressed national-origin groups. The goal is to understand how power/knowledge has been configured and reconfigured over time in contests over class,

race, gender, and sexual privileges that influenced the actual changing biophysical and socio-spatial landscapes of the Valley and the shifting political composition of the various regional sectors and communities affected by and effecting these shifts.

More recently, historians, anthropologists, and sociologists have contributed research by revealing the many hidden histories of the region; especially of people that capital produces as precarious workers – the flexible labor of neoliberal dreams. These new critical histories convey a wide range of stories: On the violence of colonization (Almaguer 1994); the cultural genocide that targeted Ohlone and Tamyen peoples under the Spanish mission regime (Pitti 2003); the exploitation of the working-class under capitalism across various sectors (Szasz and Meuser 2000; Pellow and Park 2002; Pitti 2003); the patterns of environmental racism associated with pollution from the high technology sector (Szasz and Meuser 2000; Pellow and Park 2002); and as a means to peer "behind the silicon curtain" to reveal the drug-addled culture of bored managerial elites (Hayes 1989).

Stephen Pitti (2003) calls this multilayered, long duration assemblage of settler colonial and capitalist relations, the "devil in Silicon Valley." His work examines how the pursuit for growth and wealth by the region's elite social class, puts the lives Santa Clara Valley's minorities and immigrants at the bottom of the social ladder. The region has seen its economy change over time, yet each step toward economic growth has come at great cost and this has usually meant that low-income working-class people in communities of color have been bearing the brunt of change. Each time the region experiences shifts in the dominant economic modes of production the ideology of accumulation further undermines the environment and the conditions of existence of

communities of color. The “devil” has always been present assuring that the dream for a better life eludes many of those deemed non-white. While San José is not the only place where elites have attempted to regulate the “good life” (see Davis 1990), the case of San José stands out because of its unique and rapid transformation from an agricultural town to a global technological city. These histories of the interwoven nature of privilege and neglect may have been silenced, but beyond the blue sky and palm tree-lined streets of the Valley lies the truth of a harsher existence for those living under conditions of poverty as imposed deprivation. Yet, the LMV gardeners today offer an alterNative position, one that sees spiritual poverty in the midst of material over-aggrandizement: As one resident told me, “they say the Valley is growing again… no, it’s dead. They traded food for silicon.”

San José has a long history of environmental, economic, and social inequalities but it also has a long history of struggle. The history of San José was also forged out of the struggles of the dispossessed and displaced, the people who are often forgotten or neglected. That story is inscribed unto the bodies of the people who preform precarious work and live under conditions of structural violence and inequality. This account of San José proceeds by removing layer after layer of historical intersections of race, class, and gender in order to understand the region through the lens of a critical political ecological vantage point. At the forefront this “alterNative”[7] approach are the experiences of those subjects who articulate counter-narratives for a more complete accounting of historical

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[7] AlterNative refers here to an indigenized standpoint methodology, which centers the often neglected and submerged voices and refers to the ways modernity has transformed and altered indigenous and hybrid subjectivities while also seeking to understand how this condition of alterity transforms the multiplex socioecological landscapes of late globalizing modernity.

processes and that confront the structures of oppression with the collective wisdom of their own experiences and stories of resistance. San José, and its surrounding area, is a city of many worlds dissected by freeways, pock-marked by industrial parks, assembled in segregated neighborhoods, and overlooked by governmental and corporate institutions that constantly block access to shared wealth, quality public health, and environmental amenities. This is not an account of victimhood. Rather, this account celebrates workers' struggles and investigates the ways in which so-called minority and low-income people have influenced the changing socioecological landscapes of the Santa Clara Valley.

Historians have made inroads recasting the history of the Valley as a settler colonial region bloodily marked by epochal social conflict and change. Stephen Pitti (2003) is one of these younger historians rethinking the entire fabric of the story. Pitti uncovers the embedded inequalities that defined the trajectory of historical development and urbanization of what became known as the Silicon Valley. He traces the region's transition from imperialism to nationalism and from pre-capitalist to capitalist social formations. David Pellow and Lisa Park (2002) address how environmental injustices involved in urban development are the result of the imposition of a distinctly racialized formation. They take a close look at how immigrants and women of color working in the high-tech industry are impacted by environmental inequality. My goal is not to rewrite these texts or to dispute their claims; rather, I seek to add an additional layer of ethnographic depth to these "revisionist" histories by weaving in the voices and experiences of *La Mesa Verde* gardeners.

The different waves of development of San José are very closely tied to the racial projects that accompanied and shaped them. For Omi and Winant, racial formations are

historical process whereby racial inequality is an outcome. Following their lead, in this study, the term racial formation refers to "the process by which social, economic and political forces determine the content and importance of racial categories, and by which they are in turn shaped by racial meanings" (1989, 71). This chapter explores how the racialization of Mexican and Chicanas/os in San José is connected to broader struggles for environmental justice and, eventually, the rise of the new food sovereignty movements.

In order to understand what the Santa Clara Valley has become as a socioecological landscape, we must first take a step back to examine what the Valley once was. I am taking the transit of settler colonial empires—from the mission colonies to the modern capitalist transformations—as my point of departure. To acquire such a perspective, I use the theoretical and methodological tools of historical ecology. As explained by Balée and Erickson, "historical ecology is a powerful perspective for understanding the complex historical relationship between human beings and the biosphere" (2006, 1). This perspective offers a unique inquiry into the makings of the Valley because it helps to uncover how humans transform and are themselves transformed by their relationship to the environment. By focusing on the landscape of the Valley, we can make inferences into past and present conditions of material culture. In this way, "the landscape is like a text" (Balée and Erickson 2006, 2) because it can be read to understand the effects of human actions and changing patterns of behavior and organization.

At the core of this historical account of the Santa Clara Valley is the concept of landscape. For historical ecologists (e.g. Crumley 1994; Balée 1998), the landscape

represents a multidimensional entity that embodies both spatial and temporal characteristics. Landscape patterns are far from constituting random events and their variations across time and space coincide with the cultures of the people who once lived there. The Santa Clara Valley offers a unique opportunity for historical ecology because of its rapid transformation from mostly rural to decidedly urban landscapes. However, as explained by Beller et. al., "the extremely rapid and early settlement of the Santa Clara Valley is both a benefit and a challenge to the historical ecologist" (2010, 1). In other words, the Valley has transformed from agriculture to technology within the span of a lifetime. So while historical ecology is often used to interpret "deep time,"[8] it must also be able to understand the rapid transformation of the region. This transformation has brought wealth and prosperity on the one hand, and ecological destruction and political disenfranchisement on the other.

This chapter takes what Walter Mignolo refers to as the "decolonial option." Deeping the work of Smith (1999), Mignolo argues that as an anthropologist, you have the option to "suppress the fact that you are Maori or Black Caribbean or Aymara" or Chicano in my case, or you can take the de-colonial option and "engage in knowledge making to 'advance' the Maori [or Chicano] cause..." (2009, 14). I choose that latter. While *La Mesa Verde* is a diverse, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual group of gardeners, activist, artists, cooks, and families, they stem from a long lineage of people who continue to force the hand of systems larger themselves in pursuit of well-being and conviviality.

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[8] The concept of deep time is often used to refer to geologic time and was first used by the Scottish geologist James Hutton in the eighteenth century.

Gerguensun or "The Place of the Oak Trees"

More than nine thousand years before the arrival of Europeans in the Americas, various ingenious groups who lived in what is now the Western United States lived enmeshed with the vast oak savannas that flourished in its many valleys. According to Anderson, "oaks and hands interacted in a myriad of ways as people in each of the many ethnic groups went about their daily routines of gathering, tending, and preparing oak parts: acorns, bark, leaves, and branches" (2007, 1). The ecosystem management of these early agroecologists spanned from the oak-dotted canyons in the Sierra Nevada foothills of California to the oak savannahs in the Willamette Valley of Oregon. Stretching from the Pacific Northwest, to the American Southwest, various native groups used and managed oak trees for food, resources, and guidance.

This part of history is often overlooked by historians, as Leventhal et. al. (1994) acknowledges. Yet, the reality is that Natives Americans were not simply "hunters and gathers," but also managers. While indigenous groups in California did forage for readily available wild foods, mainly shellfish and other small game, they also tended to forests through various agroecological and agroforestry practices, such as fire and tilling (Leventhal et. al 1994; Anderson 2007). In fact, "the production systems of native Californians provided reliable food surpluses for large populations located in the myriad micro-ecosystems distributed around the Bay Area" (Leventhal et. al. 1994, 303). The food surpluses helped to forge strong networks for economic exchange between varies groups in the region and encourage ecosystem resilience. Anderson notes that "native Americans swept the ground under the oaks, kept brush from acting as fuel ladders, pruned back the trees, and promoted widely spaced, large-canopied, long-lived trees with

light, frequent burning" (2007, 1). Over time, he continues, Native's in California influenced oaks on a far bigger scale. "Through burning, Indians affected the number of oak groves, size of the groves, and species composition of the groves" (ibid). Natives managed the forests to produce a consistent surplus of food and resources, while also managing the forests to promote ecological health and increase biodiversity. Similarly to Fairhead and Leach's work on Africa's false forest history (1995), the "misreading" of the landscape by the colonial eye imposes an ideology of knowledge superiority on practices it does not recognize as "science."

The staple food for the Ohlone, who were the first inhabitants of the Santa Clara Valley, was acorns. They were gathered in the fall and stored throughout the winter, but acorns were only part of the vast array of resources available to the Ohlone. In Santa Clara Valley, the Ohlone had access an extremely diverse ecosystem. As Küchler explains, "when the ancestral Ohlone occupied the Tamien Station site,[9] they were surrounded by an environment that brought them in close proximity to habitats that included marine, tidal marsh, freshwater marsh, grassland prairie, oak grassland savanna, riparian, chaparral, mixed hardwood, and evergreen forest communities" (Küchler 1977 quoted in Hylkema 2007, 11).

The protected waters of the Bay Area proved to a great asset to the Ohlone as they traveled throughout the region for commerce and trade in their *lule balsa* canoes. The high grasses common in the South Bay provided cover for the Ohlone, and as they navigated its vast mazes they would hunt and fish for marine mammals like sea otter and

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[9] Tamien station is a light rail stop along the Valley Transit Authority's line in San José and is located less then one mile for Sacred Heart and *La Mesa Verde*. The site where the station sits today was once an Ohlone community and burial ground.

harbor seals that were once in abundance. The California horned snail, bay mussel, oysters, and clams where central aspects of the Ohlone diet and all readily availably in the South bay marshes. Shore birds such as gulls, pelicans, cormorants, egrets, and great blue herons were also common in the marshes and used by the Ohlone (Hylkema 2007).

Yet, in spite of the diverse foods available to the Ohlone, the most important food was the acorn. "Making acorn," as it is commonly referred to by many Native American groups, was largely women's work (Anderson 2007). In many cases, Ohlone women were in charge of the making acorn process by collecting and processing the acorn into mush, which serves both as a diet staple and key component in rituals and ceremonies. The Ohlone also tended oak trees for a variety of medicinal uses. Some of the uses explained by Anderson detail how the Ohlone would use oak bark for treating infections and internal disorders. They would boil down the inner park of the blue oak to form a drink that helped relieve arthritis. They would treat indigestion with a concoction made form the ashes of the green bark of coast live oak soaked in water. The oak served as a key component of heal and to maintain the health of the Ohlone throughout the Bay Area.

While the health and well-being of the Ohlone was reliant on the uses of oak trees, the health and well-being of the oak savannas was reliant on the co-management of humans. "Native Americans in the West were well aware that to have the most diverse, healthy, and productive oak woodlands, they had to intervene and actively care for the oaks and the surrounding ecosystems" (Anderson 2007, 11). They did this mainly through fire. By burning the underbrush the Ohlone could keep the grass from getting too high, which increased the visibility of fallen acorns. This form of agroforestry contributed to the health and diversity of the understory. "These understory plants were in a sense

crops, because they were managed with the techniques of tillage, seedbeating, sowing, weeding and/or burning for many products" (ibid. 15). Tilling and sowing the oak understory provided wildflowers and edible bulbs for food.

Burning also helped to control the spread of disease. Today, the spread of Sudden Oak Death[10] has been reported in the oak savannas throughout the Bay Area, much of it is due to lack of human co-management. The Ohlone, and other Native American groups who made their homes in the oak savannas understood that through agroforestry practices they could manage and restore native landscapes, they could build biodiversity and improve forest health for a variety of different plant and animal species, and they could stop and prevent the spread of disease. Contact and colonialism changed much of the traditional practices of the Ohlone, as natives were forcefully removed from the ancestral land. As Anderson acknowledges, "the decline in the eating of acorn and other traditional foods is closely linked to a rising incidence of health problems among Native Americans in California and elsewhere" (ibid. 5). Hylkema (2007) believed the Muwekma Ohlone, the name of the Ohlone who once lived in what is today the community of Washington-Alma, chose the site for strategic purposes because it is located along Guadalupe River at the convergence of many creeks and drainages, which include Stevens, Calabazas, Saratoga, Los Gatos, Canoas, Silver, Coyote, and Penitencia Creeks. The meandering nature of the Guadalupe River created a natural levee and protected the community. The vast oak savannas that the Ohlone help to manage created what they referred to as *gerguensun*, or "the place of the oak trees" (Hylkema 2007, 17). Oaks provided

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[10] Sudden Oak Death refers to the spread of the plant pathogen *Phytophthora ramorum*. This pathogen has had devastating effect of oak diversity and population throughout California and Oregon. Also see http://www.suddenoakdeath.org/

protection form predators and illness, they contributed to spiritual and physical well-being of the people, and they enabled the biological and cultural diversity of the region. The colonial transformation of "the place of the oak trees," which is today the site of Mission Santa Clara, serves as a repeated theme whereby the loss of access to land inhibits the health of a people the landscape. The leading cause for the decline of the Ohlone population after European settlement to the region was diseases. Smallpox, measles, syphilis, and tuberculosis all contributed to the decline of the population. The second leading cause was malnutrition and starvation (Almaguer 1994, 130). These two interlocking causes demonstrate the inseparability of humans from the land. Through generations the social and environmental health of the Valley was reliant on the co-evolution of humans and their environment, the metabolic rift (see Marx 1990 and Bellamy Foster et. al. 2010) initiated by settler colonialism set in motion a series of events that has continued to degraded the health of the land and its people.

The Santa Clara Valley's never too hot and never too cold weather has always attracted people to the area. Less likely to be acknowledged by historians is the fact that the Ohlone first nations certainly understood this and they created a prosperous network of villages and inhabited wild areas that they managed to enact through their own practices (Bean 1994). M. Kat Anderson (2007) offers a detailed account of the Ohlone's fire culture, a historical ecology that reveals how the indigenous cultures managed and preserved the oak savanna. Today, this knowledge is once again being mobilized with tribal participation to restore the Valley's endangered oak savanna life zone.

The Violent Legacy of the California Missions

Like many early Spanish and Mexican settlements across California, San José has a long history of colonization. Recent success stories featuring high-tech companies making billionaire fortunes in the Santa Clara Valley are touted as the latest silicon-gilded version of the "American Dream." But the lust for wealth, power, and notoriety on display in San José is not a recent trend and the settler colonists who first approached and encroached on this valley were also driven by the lust for wealth and power. Ever since the establishment of El Pueblo de San José de Guadalupe in 1777[11], the quest for accumulation and conquest has remained the apparent directive.

The racialized class warfare and violence of the successive waves of invading settler colonialists presents a continuous thread throughout the history of the Santa Clara Valley. One only has to recall the conditions facing the so-called Mission Indians (the Ohlone in this case) during the 1700s to get a sense of the deeply rooted nature of this assault and the similarities it shares with the conditions and circumstances faced by Mexican workers in the same valley since the 19th century. Leventhal et al. (1994) describe the environmental, cultural, and health degradation unleashed by the mission system:

> As agricultural laborers, missionized Indians were largely separated from the seasonal rhythms of their own food production practices, while the growth of mission farms and rangeland for cattle initiated an environmental transformation of the Bay Area and the entire coast that destroyed much of the resource base of

[11] This was the founding name given to the City of San José by the King of Spain in 1777.

> the indigenous economy…The demographic collapse of the Ohlone populations held captive at Mission Dolores at the tip of the San Francisco peninsula, Missions Santa Clara and San Jose in the South and East Bay respectively, the Amah-Mutsun at San Juan Bautista to the south, and the Esselens at Mission San Carlos on the Monterey peninsula occurred because of the horrendous effects of European-introduced diseases, exacerbated by the unhealthy diet and over-crowded living conditions at the missions. Birth rates plummeted from disease, mistreatment of women, and from a psychological phenomenon now recognized as post-traumatic stress... As the populations of Ohlones both inside and outside of the missions decreased, survivors tended to congregate around the missions, seeking solutions to their seemingly unsolveable [sic] problems from the missionaries who were causing those same problems. Under the circumstance of socio-cultural holocaust, many Bay Area Ohlones identified with their oppressors, who seemed to have overthrown and taken control of all of the old systems of spiritual and earthly power…(1994, 305-6)

Conquest and settler colonialism set in motion a series of socioecological transformations that degraded the health of the land and the environmental conditions facing both native peoples and “arrivants” (Byrd 2011). This is a process at continues to unfold in the present. Ironically and tragically, in this transit of empire the imprint and wisdom of indigenous peoples is mostly recounted by environmental anthropologists like Anderson who laments how:

> The memories of Native American elders, the diaries of early Spanish explorers, old anthropological accounts, and archaeological research all provide evidence

> that native peoples were actually accomplished managers of their oak environments who actively manipulated plants, populations, and habitats to increase yields, sustain production, and improve the quality of natural raw materials. They did so with an impressive breadth of knowledge, keen observational skills, fine-tuned horticultural techniques, and judicious harvesting. (2007, 1)

However, even this account can ultimately obscure *contemporary* Ohlone struggles to intervene as political actors in the protection and restoration of the oak savanna life zone, which retains potential as an essential component of the native agroforestry mosaic, alongside a return to heritage cuisines based on judicious and mindful use of that habitat. Although Anderson notes the presence of Ohlone indigenous elders, who perform acorn flour milling and prepare heritage foods, before rapt Anglo museum goers, she does not consider fully the role of tribal nations in ecological restoration or food sovereignty projects. This, despite that fact that she endorses awareness and acceptance of a

> …new [sic] kind of restoration [that] could be called ethnobotanical restoration [and is] defined as "reestablishing the historic plant communities of a given area and restoring indigenous harvesting, vegetation management, and cultivation practices (seedbeating, burning, pruning, sowing, tilling, and weeding) necessary to maintain these communities in the long term." (2007, 18; brackets added).

The point here is that environmental anthropologists working directly with the methods and materials of historical ecology, even those who are asking us to acknowledge and embrace indigenous knowledge, can overlook how the past keeps shaping the present and how native peoples (and their arrivant or diaspora relations) are actively prescribing the

horizon of future possibilities. A recent example of exactly such efforts is illustrated by the schedule for the 2015 California Indian Conference held in October 2015 at UC-Berkeley. The conference included multiple presentations by Native American doctoral students, many of them Ohlone, working on reconstructing the environmental history of the state through the lens of indigenous experiences while recovering native agroecological knowledge and heritage foodways.[12]

El Pueblo

José Joaquín Moraga was an officer in the Spanish Army and served as second in command for Captain Bautista de Anza's trip to California. The over fifteen hundred-mile trip form Arizona to California helped to map the region and document many Native American groups. When de Anza left Monterrey to return form Mexico, Moraga was left in charge. He set out to map the San Francisco Bay Area and in the process he is credited with founding the Mission and Royal Presidio of San Francisco in 1776, where he served as the presidio's first commander, and El Pueblo de San José de Guadalupe in 1777 located a few miles south of Mission Santa Clara (Brockway 1977). The pueblo of San José was the first non-mission, civilian community located in the territory of Alta California and shared many similar problems as those experienced by other early Spanish settlements (ibid). There were constant struggles between Natives, Missionaries, and pueblo residents. The fertile lands of the Valley were at times claimed by the Mission, and at other times by residents. The Ohlone were forcefully removed from their ancestral

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[12] The conference schedule can be reviewed at: http://nasd.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/general/cic_small_.pdf. (Accessed January 29, 2016).

homelands and forced to conduct labor and religious services within the captive walls of the mission system. Both the pueblo and the Mission were forced to move because of seasonal flooding of the Guadalupe and Coyote Rivers (23). At the time the Spanish arrived in the Valley there were an estimated five thousand Ohlone. By 1842, the number of Ohlone at Mission Santa Clara had dropped to 400. Similar to various Spanish settlements in California, Mission Santa Clara experiences extremely high rights of Native deaths as a result of disease, malnutrition, and conflict (Rawls 1984; Hurt 2002). Over the course of the century of operation of the Santa Clara Mission, some 7,324 Ohlones were baptized but by 1848 all of them had left (Brockway 1977, 16), presumably to return to their remaining communities. Today, in the community of Washington-Alma, Tamien Station, which is part of the local light rail system, is located on top of an Ohlone burial ground; a fact perhaps illustrated by the name of the station which recalls the a local Ohlone community. In 1989 the City of San José collaborated with the California Transit Association to demolish an aging and abandoned warehouse in Washington-Alma to expand their light rail freeway network. Some one hundred and twenty five Muwekma Ohlone burials along with a wide variety of artifacts were discovered under the ruins of the eighty-year-old canning factory (Hylkema 2007). While the city may not be actively trying to cover up this part of Native history, very few in the community are aware of this deeper layer of meaning.

Stephen Pitti shares the story of the constant violence waged in the Valley by missionaries and early settlers. His point is not simply that there was violence in the Valley or that there was constant antagonism between Natives and settlers, but rather that "like later elites, Spanish colonists manipulated work and opportunity to shore up their

political control" (2003, 9). The transformation of the Valley was a byproduct of human labor and the limits of ecological resilience. The material wealth of the Valley included the ways in which people interacted with and transformed the landscape. Development has moved mountains, channeled water, contaminated streams and soil, created freeways, and generated wealth that has always been unequally distributed. But development cannot be separated from the organization of the exploitation of human labor, and while the condition of labor power is something we all share, the labor-management relations experienced by the low-income and immigrant communities of the Valley must also be understood as an essential dimension of the racial projects that have existed in the region since 1777.

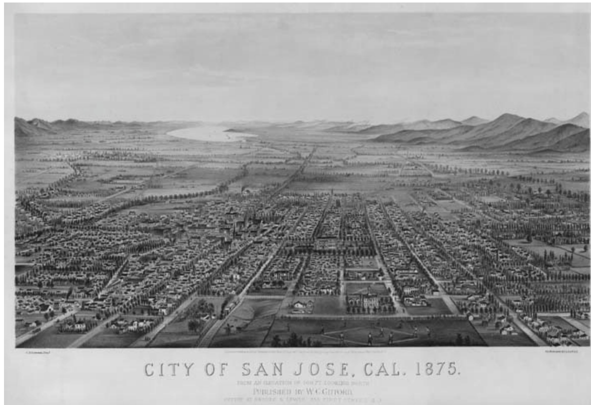

Image 1:
San Jose 1875
(Public Domain Image)

Transforming the Landscape Along "Racial Fault Lines"

John Muir once referred to the Santa Clara Valley as "one of the most fertile of the many small valleys of the coast" (1974, 18). He praised the soil and water of the region for its fertility. "This San Jose sky was not simply pure and bright, and mixed with plenty of well tempered sunshine, but it possessed a positive flavor, - a taste, that thrilled from the lungs throughout every tissue of the body" (ibid.). Muir, perhaps the one of the

best-known conservationists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, saw the landscape of the Santa Clara Valley in all of its settler colonial splendor. He praised the orchards and farms, the cattle and creeks. Left unsaid and perhaps unobserved by Muir was the racialized social class system of the Valley, in which the farms and orchards were owned by wealthy whites while the farm workers were mostly low-waged Mexicans, Chicana/os, and Chinese exposed to pesticides and poverty. This is partly due to the ways "white supremacy" was deployed through the colonial period and internalized into the capitalist market system. In addition, the rapid transformation of the American West during this period provided the "structural foundations upon which further economic and social opportunities were systematically granted or denied on the basis of race" (Almaguer 1994, 24). Part of Muir's "blind spot" was because of the exclusivity of "whiteness" and his internalization of the dehumanized "Other." As this history will demonstrate, perceptions of the "Other" change over time because the culture of the region moves with the ebb and flow of political composition and recomposition. Lisa Lowe, who explored the conditions in which immigrant acts change over time, explains, "it is through culture that the subject becomes, acts, and speaks itself as 'American'" (1996, 3). We must then explore the changing conditions of California in order to understand the changing conditions of the "Other."

California's racial history is unique for several reasons. Unlike the slave history of the Eastern U.S., which based it racial assumptions on the Slave/Owner or Black/White binary, the racial formation that took place in California were based on "free labor." The assumption was that "free labor" would allow for social mobility and meritocracy, which it did, if you were white. For the Native Americans, Mexicans,

Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino how lived and worked in California, that mobility was denied on the basis of racial status (Almaguer 1994). Yet, the "racial fault lines" that existed in California were never static and were constantly being made and remade to support the ideology of white supremacy.

As white Americans settled in California, markets, communities, and landscapes were transformed. Siting the work of Dobyns (1966) and Cook (1978), Leventhal and his colleges state, "the territory now occupied by the state of California possessed the densest aboriginal population of any region of comparable size north of the Valley of Mexico, and a non-agricultural population that numbered between three hundred thousand and one million people" (1994, 302). This is by no means a small population, yet, the Native American populations in California were never seen as viable laboring class because of their "backwardness" and "heathenism" they could never be "civilized." Rather "Indians were generally seen as obstacles to civilization. They became extensions of the untamed territory Europeans confronted in America" (Almaguer 1994, 23). As such, the conquest of Natives coincided with the conquest of nature. Shortly after the Mexican-American War, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo signed over the American Southwest to a growing white population seeking wealth in the newly discovered gold mines in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. In the process white settlers took control of the California legal system and marketplace and begun dispossessing the Californio elite of their land and well-being. Under the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexicans who remained in California after the Mexican-American War were entitled to become U.S. citizens. While California law never questioned the citizenship of wealthy Mexican landowners, it did however, question the ownership status of the land.

Shortly after California achieved statehood, the Board of Land Commissions began to question Mexican land claims. Through various tactics, which included exorbitant legal fees, illegal land squatting, and outrageous property taxes, the newly formed Land Commission began to force Mexican bankruptcy. Many large Mexican *rancheros* soon turned hands and "the destruction of the Californios' land based helped to create a new low-wage labor force in the Santa Clara Valley. In the turbulent 1850s many Spanish-speaking residents entered low-paying jobs, often laboring in season agriculture for the same white settlers who had recently acquired their former Valley lands" (Pitti 2007, 39). Just as the Ohlone before them, the primitive accumulation[13] of settler colonialism dispossessed, disenfranchised, and dehumanized those deemed non-white. This reoccurring theme whereby Mexican-origin and Native Americans are denied equal access to land and to their own well-being has historic roots that can still be felt throughout the Valley.

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo acknowledged the rights of Mexicans as American citizens, but the white population now in control of the legal system and market place selectively chose how, when, and with whom to acknowledge the law (Almaguer 1994). Many Mexican elite families intermarried with white elites as a way to gain access to the levers of power within the new California. This strategy worked for a while as Mexican ranchos employed Native Americans and continued their traditional farming practices, but the political recomposition of California society soon divided the Mexican ranchos amongst the new white settler class and created a new mode of

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[13] According to Marx (1990), the process of primitive accumulation occurs when precapitalist modes of production are forcefully transformed into capitalist. The process often times creates a landless working class.

production based on the new landless Mexican working class. The capitalist transition had radical implications of California society. As explained by Almaguer:

> "The principle difference between the precapitalist economy of the Mexican period (1821-1848) and that which European Americans introduced after the United States-Mexico War was the predominance of a formal free-wage labor system: the coercive and paternalistic class relations of the Mexican period were quickly replaced by the instrumental and impersonal class relations of capitalism and its apparatus of legal enforcement. (1994, 30)

The capitalist transition paved they way for a new white producing class, and by the turn of the twentieth century Mexican rancho system was entirely replaced and California was a capitalist society based on free wage labor.

For a time, landholding Californios and the Mexican elite could make inroads into the new capitalist market. This was in sharp contrast to the Mexican working class who were viewed as other racialized ethnic groups. Many recent immigrants coming from the mining communities of northern Mexico found themselves working the mines located around the region. The new wage system forced miners to work long hours, pay high rents, and "voluntarily" subject their bodies and families to the harsh living conditions associated with mercury mining. Yet, on a cold day in January 1865, over six hundred Mexican employees of the Quicksilver Mining Company in New Almaden organized the first known work stoppage in the Santa Clara Valley (Pitti 2003, 72). While the eleven-day strike had only short-term success, its legacy of a hunger for working-class autonomy holds true today. The employees were residents of "Spanishtown," a shantytown of Mexican and Chilean immigrants located in the foothills just south of San José above

New Almaden. By 1886 the Company had a network of over fifty miles of tunnels, some going as deep as 2,300 feet into the mountain (Brockway 1977, 87).

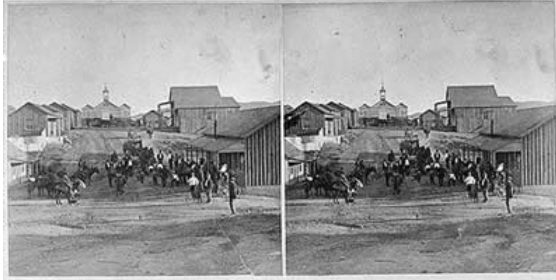

Figure 2: Spanishtown, March 1876 (*Public Domain Image*)

Life in Spanishtown was hard. The climate in the foothills was far different than the comfortable temperatures experience in the Valley and the summer heat and the winter cold were in stark reminder. Summer temperatures reached into the hundreds and rattlesnakes, scorpions, and insects were common. Without proper heating the cold winter nights in Spanishtown were almost unbearable. The segregation of Spanishtown was accompanied by Englishtown, which housed the Anglo workers and was located further down the mountain closer to the more temperate climate of New Almaden and San José. These were two vastly different worlds. The residents of Spanishtown were restricted from using the expensive toll road that connected New Almaden to San José. As a result, residents were forced to buy food from the company-owned general store, creating perhaps the first known "food desert" in the region. In addition, "segregation also made it difficult for local Mexican residents to meet their basic needs, particularly since the neighborhood's nearest water source was located a mile away near the Hacienda, an eleven-hundred-foot decent" (Pitti 2003, 57). The New Almaden mine was one of many

mining operations that transformed the Valley by extracting minerals and exploiting labor.

Spanishtown resembled the *tienda de raya* that typified the Mexican Porfiriato, which was led by Porfirio Díaz and controlled Mexico 1876-1911. A line of credit to buy foodstuffs at the company store was essentially given to workers under the conditions of employment. Employees would use their line of credit to buy foodstuffs at extremely higher rates than they would if they had bought in town. Yet getting to town for most of the employees was a difficult task. Spanishtown, just like the *tienda de raya*, was a system that was strategically designed and organized for total control. As Pitti explains, the town's "segregation, geographic isolation, and poor farming conditions made residents even more dependent on mine owners in may ways" (Pitti 2003, 57). Control over the means of production and reproduction insure the mine owner control over "free wage labor."

The new economy initiated by free wage labor had altered the daily life of those living in the Santa Clara Valley. As the political landscape changed, so too did the agricultural practices. Capitalism brought a new wave of innovation and transformation to the region. Almaguer argues that California's transformation happened in three stages, first was the rapid dispossession of Mexican rancheros from 1860-1870. Second, the transition form 1870-1880 whereby small-scale grain production continued as the Mexican pastoral system crumbled. Lastly, around the turn of the century intensive agriculture was widespread (1994, 90). James Lick, who owned property in what is today the Alma neighborhood, had became one of the wealthiest men on the West Coast by operating a flourmill, which he established in 1852. But Lick did not stop there, he is also

credited with bringing the fruit industry to San José where he brought countless seeds and starters and planted them on his land (Hylkema 2007, 43). Lick's land became Muir's "valley of your heart's delight." The San Jose Canning Company, which opened up shop in 1919 in Washington-Alma was the epicenter of the San José canning revolution. The irony here is that the community of Washington-Alma is literally located on top of Lick's orchards and Muir's valley. Today the community continues this long history of agricultural transformation through their home-kitchen gardens.

As the new capitalist market transformed communities, the landscape experienced this transition as well. In fact, as explained by Grossinger et. al. (2007), the historical period of extreme urban and industrial growth in the Santa Clara Valley has had large implications for the native landscapes of the region. Settlement patterns and urbanization have completely altered most of the native habitats, including the loss of 85-99 percent of wet meadows, oak savannas, and freshwater streams. These patterns have also destroyed alkali meadows and the tremendous willow groves that once flourished in the Valley, and were significant ecological assets to the Native American tribes and to the Mexican and Chicana/o farm workers who later on came to rely on foraging to supplement their diets.

While settlement patterns have been seen as the leading driver of ecosystemic changes, more recent research emphasizes the importance of anthropogenic disturbance of the watershed as such. In the pre-urbanized valley, "no creek maintained a continuous single thread channel between the hills and the Bay" (Beller et. al 2010, 13). While the Spanish and Mexicans used *acequia* agriculture to channel water in the valley (Pitti 2003), the increased urbanization of the Valley eventually led to public works to control seasonal floods and these modernist engineering projects led to the fateful and ill-advised

destruction of wetlands and other habitat. As a result of these changes there are very few meandering streams in the valley. The "decreases in sinuosity have lowered total stream length in the region, while increases in channel connectivity has raised total stream length" (Beller et. al. 2010, 13). In other words, the channeling of these streams has increased water connectivity but altered ground water reserves. This is what is referred to as evapotranspiration, whereby the channeling of water decreases the natural seepages that occurs in streams and increases the likelihood of evaporation. While these channels do increase water connectivity throughout the Valley and help to control flood levels, they diminish the ecosystem's own capacity for natural fresh water storage and retention.

As explained by Alpers, while industrial agriculture sparked tremendous economic and population growth, it also posed a challenge to the region's natural resources - namely land and water. "As farm acreage increased, so did the demand for drinking water in areas near downtown San Jose. Farmers who had never had to worry about the impact of water diversion were now being reprimanded by the Santa Clara Valley Water Conservation District" (2010, 34). By the 1930s entire orchards were town down to make room for housing and infrastructure. The continual struggle between communities and farmers over the access to water continued into the 1950s and initiated a quest to secure a long-term basis of fresh water as San José politicians began to secure the region's reserves.

Located twenty miles southwest of San Jose in the Los Gatos foothills, was the once small mountain town of Lexington. It was a stop on the stagecoach route that connected it to the nearby town of Los Gatos. There was a time when Lexington held an important position as the sawmill industry filled the Santa Cruz Mountains. The winter

rains from the Los Gatos Creek often flooded the town as well as the nearby community of Alma, located about a mile downstream. The town declined when the railroad stopped operating in 1940 and CA State Route 17, which opened that same year, established a route for automobiles to travel to and from Santa Cruz. In 1952 the town was abandoned and Lexington Reservoir was created in its place. While the expansion of the water supply system led to the decline of Lexington and Alma, it would benefit the future capitalist development of the Valley. Two years before the Lexington Reservoir was constructed, the county had created the Anderson Reservoir just south of San José. In the 1930s, the county had first sought to control seasonal floods and enhance freshwater holdings by creating a series of dams, which included Almaden, Calero, Coyote, Guadalupe, Stevens Creek, and Vasona.

While seasonal flooding remained a feature of the modernist human-centered environment of the Valley, control over a secure amount of fresh water remained much more elusive as these dams altered native fish migration patters. As documented by various sources (Leidy et. al. 2005; Smith 2013), the rivers, creeks, and streams of the South Bay continue to see declining steelhead, rainbow trout, and Coho and Chinook salmon since the 1950s onward. What is more distressing, is that many of these fish have very little promise to see an improvement in their near future. As explained by Smith, the future of steelhead restoration looks bleak. "As there is no reservoir with stored water in the watershed, there is no potential easy source of water to improve either summer/fall rearing conditions or spring smolt out-migration" (2013, 18).

Changes in water usage can be seen in light of the effects of a regime seeking to sharpen the "legibility" of the landscape. As argued by Scott, "the more static,

standardized, and uniform a population or social space is, the more legible it is, and the more amendable it is to the techniques of state officials" (1998, 82). Channels may have improved the water connectivity of the Valley as a municipal and industrial resource but this requires that the watershed be treated as a static entity (reduced to the metrics of water volume) instead of recognizing how the watershed is a dynamic nonlinear equilibrium system. They have halted seasonal flooding and reduced wetlands, meadows and ponds. In other words, improving efficiency while decreasing resilience.

Yet, different people experienced the "connectivity" of city services in variety of ways. For many of the city's Mexican, Chicano, Chinese, and Japanese residents, especially recent Mexican immigrants, "the valley of your heart's delight" did not pertain to them. Throughout the region's agricultural boom, many recent Mexican immigrants were welcomed as seasonal or temporary workers, while the Valley's white community, mainly made up of Italian and Portuguese, received the full time and permanent positions out of fear that Mexican immigrants "would threaten the region" (Pitti 2003, 86). The racial stratification that occurred in the Santa Clara Valley around the turn of the century was rooted in the illusion of "free wage labor" and its continued illusion of permeates through the regions racial fault lines by denying consistent and continual access the health and well-being form many of its residents.

Prior to the WWII, the Santa Clara Valley was an agricultural center, but as the war ended the regional economy began to shift from agriculture to defense-related industries (including electronics). In fact, during the Korean War, Moffett Field, located in northern Santa Clara County, was the largest navel air transportation center on the West Coast (Payne 2008). By 1956 Sunnyvale boasted 44 industries and from 1945-65

Santa Clara County had 550 new industrial facilities in the region. All of these new operations required new infrastructure including homes, freeways, and shopping centers. The Santa Cara Valley was ground zero for the post war boom. Santa Clara County's economy in the 1960s was clearly dependent on defense spending, and by 1983 the Valley's contracts produced four billion dollars worth of government projects (Payne 2008). The dramatic changes in the economy greatly impacted the population of the region. In 1940, the population of San José was 68,457. By 1950 the population had risen to 95,280, and by 1960 the population more than doubled again, to 204,196. But San José was not done growing, and in 1970 the population had reached 445,779. In 1980 it was 629,442 and in 1990 the total was 782,225. By the year 2000 the population of San Jose was creeping near one million at 894,943. In half a century the population of the City of San José had soared beyond anyone's expectations.

The Capitalist Industrial Transformation

Too many writers end up mystifying this portion of the Valley's tumultuous history. Chris Benner characterizes the 1990s as an age of flexibility. According to him, "flexible work is an essential component of competitive success in the information economy" (2002, 5). The Silicon Valley was predicated on the flexibility of workers and the ability to adapt, thus the insecurity a worker feels is part of the motivation and inspiration of the "new work economy." The Valley's demand for a flexible workforce that moved the economy toward decentralization of the workplace, was a response to the multi-decadal cycles of struggle waged by workers in the electronics industry. These struggles coincided with the rise of the "micro" electronics sector and the "amping" up to the personal computing and IT revolutions. Of course, often overlooked in these stories is

the fact that the microelectronics industry, while presented as a clean and light alternative to the old smokestack industries, has many unintended consequences. These "paperless offices" improve efficiency and increase consumption.[14] They have proved more than capable of accelerating Valley landscape changes and the spread of environmental inequities. In the 1980s, high-tech companies began subcontracting employees to promote labor flexibility and reduce costs (Benner 2002). Such conventional analyses of the shifting capitalist organizational form overlooks how this process of restructuring was a response to workers' struggles for union recognition, wage increases, pensions, and health care during the cycles of strikes in the industrial and manufacturing sectors over the course of the 1930s-40s and again during the radicalism of the 1960s and early 1970s (see Peña 1980).

The problem with Benner's interpretation of the "new work economy," is that he misunderstands the working class perspective of capitalism. For him, the wage is what defines the capitalist relationship, but for the working class, the wage hides unpaid work. For the working class, capitalism is "a social relation of struggle between those who would impose work as a condition of life and those on whom it is imposed" (Cleaver 1979, 9). Cleaver's focus (as is mine in this study) is not on the "working class" in the traditional sense. Rather he presents a method of class composition analysis for the critique of the capitalist regime of value in a manner that seeks to understand the division

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[14] This is what John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark, and Richard York refer to The Paperless Office Paradox or Jevon's Paradox (2010, 183-191), whereby improvements to efficiency increase consumption and negative environmental externalities. The edited volume of JoAnn Carmin and Julian Agyeman (2011) also helps to illustrate this illusion as the chapters demonstrate how the changing spatial dynamics of environmental inequality produced by modernity.

of labor based on race, ethnicity, class, citizenship status, age, gender, etc. The antagonism between groups is a political relationship to be resolved through the recomposition of the relationships among these different locations in the class composition of a community. From this perspective, it is not capital who imposes "flexibility" on the working class, but rather workers' "substitutability of labour, its mobility which derives from the struggle over the division and redivsion of the working class" (ibid), which allow the working class to resist capitalist divisions such as race, class, or gender, whereby "each time a division is created there arises a working class initiative either to change it against capitalist plans or to refuse to change it when capital wants to" (ibid, 12).

Flexible labor is both a neoliberal strategy of control that fits in with deregulation, extended enclosures, geopolitical dispersion, and just-in-time capital stocks but it is also historically part of the self-willed and deliberate (conscious) withdrawal by workers from the labor market as a form of resistance and self-reduction of work while pressing for increased social wages. In other words, workers have their own way of re-valuing their own reproductive capacity through strategies of differential geopolitical and labor market [sic] mobility and participation rates. This is what Negri meant by "the flexibility is only on capital's side... [and] the wealth of the workers' side is not flexible, but rather rigid" (1991, 186). Time and again, capitalism creates systems and institutions to impose work on the working class that are too rigid and do not meet the diverse needs of the working class. As articulated by both Negri and Cleaver, it is not capitalism that forces people to be flexible, people change only when the want to, but it is the working class that forces capitalism' institutions to change through the substitutability of labor.

The growth of a "flexible" new work economy came about through workers struggle to find value in both the paid and unpaid labor. And while the substitutability of labor supports working class mobility and autonomy, it does not happen without also producing at least a certain level of precarity. We cannot distance ourselves form the biopolitcal reality the working class is confronted by. The postindustrial economy driven by flexible labor is both an enabling and restricting feature of working class struggles (this will be discussed in more detail in chapter seven).

The restructuring of capitalist control that becomes evident in the Silicon Valley included the subcontracting of high paid engineers alongside the mass of "deskilled" low-waged assembly-line workers, building custodians, and outdoor landscape and maintenance staff (Zlolinski 2006). This trend of the coupling of engineers and deskilled mass workers continued well into the 1990s and began to typify the work offered to the many recent immigrants to the Valley. Worst of all, many of the workers with the least amount of job stability also suffered disparate impacts of environmental racism in the workplace from systematic exposure to higher levels of toxic contamination and other health and safety risks that extended from their workplace to their living environments.

The largest contributor to environmental contamination among the sectors of the Valley's new globalized neoliberal capitalist regime is the booming microelectronics and information technology industries, which began with IBM in the 1940s, expanded with Hewlett-Packard in the 1950s, and reached a crescendo in the 1980s. The hazardous materials of the industry have a tendency to bioaccumulate in the body and cause serious health conditions such as cancer and birth defects. According to Pellow and Park, these effects were not only affecting the low-waged workers who handled the materials, the

majority Latina, but it was also experienced in the nearby low-income communities (2002, 67). Santa Clara County has the highest density of toxic wastes sites in the nation, and "more than twenty of the Valley's thirty-one toxic Superfund sites are directly related to the electronics industry's pollution" (94). The Silicon Valley's transnational companies moved away from producing highly hazardous products such as semiconductors and integrated circuit boards in the 1990s by shifting their production overseas and externalized the environmental damages to other countries where regulation is weak or inexistent. Needless to say, decades of minimal oversight of the technology sector, the perfect neoliberal remedy, has led to widespread pollution of the waterways and soils of the Valley. While San José's Guadalupe River Park is touted as the city's central park, the river itself is the "most mercury-contaminated river in North America" (Park and Pellow 2004, 406).

The population boom of the region can be partly explained by the increase in jobs related to technology, but it also coincides with the increased need for so-called "unskilled laborers." According to Zlolniski (2006), Mexican migration into the Valley during this period occurred in two stages. First, during the 1960s and 1970s the demand for immigrant workers was fueled by the need to fill the assembly jobs in the electronic sector. The second boom came during the 1980s and 1990s. During this stage, immigrants supplied the labor for "unskilled" jobs in the service sector. "Mexican immigrants, many of them undocumented, became the bulk of the workers employed as janitors, gardeners, hotel housekeepers, fast-food and restaurant workers, maids, house cleaners, baby-sitters, and elder-care workers" (Zlolniski 2006, 26). Similarly, Hayes notes that "many migrants to the Silicon Valley never stopped migrating – from

workplace to workplace" (1989, 28). The industry is known for some of the highest labor turnover rates in the economy, a fact noted decades ago by Peña (1980; 1997) and others.

In order to meet the needs of the growing population, new homes and communities spread across the valley floor as neighborhoods were carved out of the nearby hillsides and farmland was paved over. Highways 280, 87, and 85 were all constructed to increase transportation to different parts of the Valley. The Santa Clara County Expressway System—which includes Foothill, Page Mill, Central, San Tomas, Montague, Lawrence, Capital, and Almaden Expressways—was originally financed with $70 million dollars in 1961 (SPUR 2013). An areal view of San Jose demonstrates how freeways and streets go around the city in a circular fashion. While this may increase the flow of traffic, it also undermined the planners' vision of a robust downtown San José (ibid).

Capital investment and disinvestment into various pockets of the city continues to be met with acceptance and resistance. Capitalism is never a one sided story, (see Cleaver 1979), it always has multiple angles because people, as this history helps to demonstrate, continue to mold, shape, and transform it to meet their needs of individuals and communities. For members of *La Mesa Verde*, capital disinvestment in their communities, which has created inequitable access to health care and community resources like fresh and affordable foods, is met with the substitutability of their labor to enact change. For these gardeners, the garden enables the mobility needed to achieve a desired level of autonomy and to nourish their bodies, traditions, and communities. The recasting of the history of Santa Clara Valley helps to illuminates the many ways people

push back at the imposition of work to promote the well-being of their communities and environments.

It's not so much what you see, but what you don't

The historical transformation of the Santa Clara Valley landscape is a result of the transition of forest management practices, colonial expantion, changing modes of production, and the struggles of the people how once lived there. These events have culminated to create the current conditions in which the LMV community lives. Their continued pursuit of well-being may be different than those before them, but the need to access the means of their own production and reproduction remains. These histories of LMV gardeners I have collected over they course of this study help to illuminate an alterNative history that centers the voices of the periphery. The following vignettes help to describe the current state and reality of life in the Santa Clara Valley.

Karla has one of LMV's most colorful personalities. Throughout the study, I met with Karla several time to discuss the program and her garden. She loved to talk about what she was growing and what she was cooking. Every time we met there was always food. In the September of 2013 we met to catch up at her home where she had prepared a light breakfast of tomatoes, berries, and cucumber water. We sat at a table in the middle of her home kitchen garden where she told me she could trace her family history back to San José's colonial period. "I've spent most of my life in this house," she told me. Karla's home is located just west of the Guadalupe River in one of San José's oldest neighborhoods where large oak and maple trees line the streets. Karla's home is an old but beautiful two-story house that dates back to the 1930s. She has a small front yard where she has two raised garden beds. Roses line the walkway, which leads up to a small

porch where she spends many afternoons with her grandchildren. While her house is small, she has plenty of space outside to grow several fruit trees, flowers, and crops. Across the street from Karla's home is a renovated mansion. "That house," she told me, "used to be a grocery store. They used to have sausages hanging and cheeses on display. Things you don't see any more." Karla grew up walking distance to a store where she could get locally produced fruit, vegetables, meats, and cheeses. The owners, who lived above the store, had kids close to her age and she explained to me how they used to play in the store and in the streets. Her father even had a "tab" (line of credit) with the owner when he did not have the money to pay in cash. But the community that Karla grew up in is gone. Home values in the neighborhood have skyrocketed since the early 2000s. Yet, Karla and her family remain. She grew up in the home with her parents. When they passed away, she inherited the house and today lives there with her two daughters and grandchildren. In the latter part of the past century people have flocked to the Bay Area in pursuit of wealth and sunshine (see Davis 2006) all along the while pricing the majority of people out of the housing market, and if Karla's family had not inherited the house, they too would have been priced out of the market.

San José has become a city of suburbs, and the development patterns that influenced the landscape of those suburbs can be felt in the low-income pockets of the city. Development does not inherently create centers and peripheries, but rather, as explained by Eric Wolf, "capitalist development created peripheries within its very core" (1997, 296). San José is no different. In fact, today, the gentrification occurring in the upscale urban areas of San Francisco and San José, have "suburbanized poverty" (Soursourian 2012). Hidden amongst the wealth of the Valley are countless people living

in poverty. In fact, the country's largest homeless encampment, which prior to its removal in December 2014 was estimated to have around 300 full-time residents, sits within miles of some of the wealthiest people on the planet. Santa Clara County hosts companies such as Google, Apple, Cisco, Adobe, SanDisk, and yet also has what has been nicknamed, the Jungle, "a shantytown that stretches over 68 acres through central San Jose along the Coyote Creek" (Emmons, *Mercury News* 12/4/14). This encampment was located only a few blocks from Sacred Heart and the community of Washington-Alma where the majority of this study takes place. The recent removal of people from this site has spread fear that those removed will simply end up somewhere else along the river (Emmons, *Mercury News* 12/23/14). Recent pictures released by the *Mercury News* show men and women in white HazMat suits removing people, possessions, and debris from the encampment. Over the course of this project, I have spoken with several people who have either been homeless in the last few years or who fear it could be a real possibility. According to the *Mercury News*, the average cost of a home in Santa Clara County as of July 2013, was $1.05 million (Carey *Mercury News* 8/9/13). "Its not so much what is in this community that sets it a apart," a director at Sacred Heart told me one day, "it's what is *not* here that does." Trash cans, well-lit sidewalks, clean parks, grocery stores, bike lanes, things that are common in other areas of San José often are absent in the streetscapes of Washington-Alma and other similar communities where LMV gardeners live, work, and play.

In the fall of 2012, I met with Jessica, who is one of the longest standing members of *La Mesa Verde*. Jessica lives in East San José. While today East San José is a multi-ethnic community made up primarily of Mexican and Chicana/o residents, its history of

struggle and community determination goes back to its Mexican past (see Pitti 2003). We met at the Mexican American Heritage Plaza on the corner of Alma Rock Road and South King Street in East San José. This vibrant corner was well documented in Art Rodriguez's novel, *East Side Dreams.* The Plaza stands as a tribute to the community's deep Mexican roots and as a place of celebration of culture and tradition for dance, music, theater, and the visual arts. When I met with Jessica, we were to discuss her history of advocacy in East San José and how she brings those experiences to share with those in Washington-Alma, where Sacred Heart is located. As we talked, she reflected on the 2008 recession as if it was yesterday. "Within a matter of days we [her and her husband] lost both of our jobs, our health insurance, and almost our house" she told me. Like so many middle class families, Jessica and her husband were living on their debt. They had to pay off their house, their cars, pay the bills, and buy food. And just like that, everything came crashing down. "*La Mesa Verde* saved us. Without them, who knows where we would be," she said. The 2008 recession forced many middle class families to make dramatic changes in their lives. Raul, a former director of LMV, told me that for many low-income families the recession did not change much, it was simply another hurdle. But for many middle-class families, this was the first time they did not have what they needed. "Many middle-class families simply don't know how the system works, they don't know where to find things." He was referring to food banks and community centers where many low-income families find aid. "One family," he told me, "was out of work for three years." The husband was a teacher and his wife a social worker, with the widespread budget cuts both their jobs were lost. They took a second mortgage on their home, looked to friends and family for help, and eventually, contacted *La Mesa Verde*.

Growing food provided them a social and economic safety net by connecting them to a network of people in similar situations.

While the family eventually found jobs and were able to pull themselves out of the precarious situation, this, unfortunately, is all to often not the case. Juanita, a forty-five year old immigrant from Mexico, explained to me how the recession changed very little for her and her family. She told me that while it made work harder to come by for her husband, a day laborer, they simply needed to be more resourceful. Juanita was poor before the recession and she was poor after the recession, the only thing that changed for her, was that she saw longer lines at the food bank.

While Juanita's comments may sound defeatist, this is far form the case. Every *La Mesa Verde* family with whom I have interacted over the course of this study is participating in the program because they believe they can make a difference - even if only in their own life. The history of the Santa Clara Valley is full of vibrant and colorful individuals, groups, and institutions that worked together to make a positive impact of the lives of the region's residents and environments. The recent publication, "Building Healthy Communities from the Ground Up," which was a publication in collaboration with the Asian Pacific Environmental Network, Communities for a Better Environment, Environmental Health Coalition, People Organizing to Demand Environmental and Economic Rights, and the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition/Health and Environmental Justice Project, help to share the both the struggles of success of environmental justice struggles throughout California. The findings in this document emphasize two critical aspects of environmental justice: 1) "protecting human health and the environment in places where people live, work, and play; and 2) developing grassroots leadership and

community-based planning and policy approaches that meet community needs" (Matsuoka 2003, 10). While LMV was not a collaborator in the study, they too actively work to address these to critical aspects of environmental justice.

Further studies in the regions highlight the stark reality of environmental inequality in the Bay Area. In another recent publication, Manuel Pastor, James Sadd, and Rachel Morello-Frosch (2007) analyze the current conditions of low-income and minorities living in the Bay Area. They find that immigrant and low-income communities in the region still suffer form health issues associated the environmental inequalities. The document provides depth into how air quality impacts communities on a cumulative basis, and that "the failure to consider the cumulative impacts from multiple sources and the factors that enhance community vulnerability to the adverse effects of pollution exposures may undermine the fundamental regulatory mission to protect public health" (ibid. 11). Their central argument is that "those residents least likely to have access to adequate health care because of income shortfalls, language barriers, and other impediments are finding themselves confronted with the worst environmental conditions in the region" (ibid). The "social vulnerability" encouraged by environmental inequality is continually experience through a variety of interactive and reoccurring process.

The historical legacy of the environmental justice movement clearly demonstrates that most struggles have taken either take the distributive or procedural equity approach to frame the movement. This is clearly the motive of studies listed above. Yet that does not grasp the complexity of the environmental justice movement. *La Mesa Verde*, is on the one hand seeking equity to gain access to fresh, affordable, and culturally appropriate foods, and on the other, they force us to rethink exactly what sustainability is. As

explained by Peña (2011), this branch of the environmental justice movement "is not just about ending toxic racism or strengthening community-based participation; it is perhaps more importantly about how we define 'sustainability' itself, and how communities are already organizing self-determined or autonomous pathways to a just, sustainable, and resilient society" (2011, 204; also see Peña 2005). Similar to other histories brought forth in this chapter, *La Mesa Verde* gardeners question both production (where, when, and how their crops are gown) and reproduction (where, when and how the gardeners socially and culturally reproduce themselves, families, and communities). The long history of social, economic, and environmental struggles in the region paint a complex mosaic of how, where, when, and why people accept and challenge the racial projects they are confronted with.

While the Santa Clara Valley is a globalization hub of information technology, microelectronics design, and engineering, it is also a montage of unequal neighborhoods and an altered and less resilient ecosystem. This brief historical sketch of the Santa Clara Valley pointed to some of the key processes and transformations that have made the region what it is today. These processes of change demonstrate the ways in which people and local environments coevolve and not always along pathways that are sustainable, equitable, and resilient. The continual transformation of the Valley and its resources and people demonstrate how "culture is physically embedded and inscribed in the landscape as nonrandom patterning" (Balée and Erickson 2006, 2). But what exactly is it that seems "nonrandom" in these processes? Behind this word, a decolonial approach to the subtext argues that the lack of randomness in the patterns of change is always a matter of racial and class projects in specific historical and cultural contexts. The non-randomness of

events simply reflects the local transit of empire and the fact that the settler colonial modes of production and their peculiar forms of legal and socio-spatial organization were demonstrably and deliberately framed as exercises in biopolitical power privileging specific race and class interests. As layers of history are peeled aside, and we begin to reveal the race, class, gender positions of actual distinct political projects in a given place, we can also begin to discern repeating themes of enclosure, displacement, racial inequality, and environmental exploitation.

In Eric Wolf's classic, *Europe and the People Without History*, he provides a historical backdrop to understand the current class structure and composition of the world system. In the process, Wolf moves through time to demonstrate how different modes of production transformed the world and its people. This framework allows the reader to understand how different modes of production have transformed the world at different times and how people have confronted these modes depending on their circumstances. Wolf's purpose is to demonstrate how our current relationships to work and place are not a given; they have contested histories; disputed context. In this chapter, I have presented a similar context of dispute, change, and struggle in the Santa Clara Valley as a historical ecological and political ecological backdrop for this dissertation.

I have presented key benchmarks of change to demonstrate how power and privilege have influenced the landscape of the Valley and how that landscape is both challenged and accepted by modern environmental justice movements as a means to understanding the context in which food security, food justice, and food sovereignty have emerged. Each one of these movements holds particular importance for members of *La Mesa Verde* for different reasons, which will be discussed throughout the text. This

alterNative recasting of history clearly demonstrates that marginalized people are not marginal, they are in fact drivers of history because in their pursuit of well-being larger systems are forced to adapt. Capitalism needs to impose its negative externalities onto someone or something and the biopolitical reality is that those externalities are all to often experienced by those most vulnerable. But that is not the end of the story. We do have a choice and our actions do matter. We will either shape or be shaped by our food system. Yet, the risk associated with those two choices weighs differently on people. In this study, it is important to understand the many different uses, meanings, and ethical frames attached to the act of growing your own food, providing for the community, and contributing to the politics and subjectivity of self-determination.

Chapter 4: Cultivating the Seeds of Change: Food, Health, and the Body in the Rise of Urban Agriculture in San José

The historic center of old San José runs along First Street between East San Fernando and East Santa Clara Streets. In this section of town one can find buildings dating back to the 1870s and 1880s. The three story Italianate Oddfellows Building on the corner of Santa Clara and Third dates back to 1883, and the Pomeroy Building, known today as La Rosa Pharmacy, on South First Street, was built in 1870. Originally, the old core of the town ran up and down Market Street, one block from First. Slowly, as the town expanded, it shifted commerce toward First Street and eventually moved southward along the Guadalupe River, located just a few blocks west of First Street. Old San José was sandwiched between the Guadalupe River on the west and the Coyote River on the east. In the past, these rivers served as a vital source of water for the residents of San José and their farmlands. As San José expanded, these rivers, and their seasonal flooding cycles, were subject to both legible control and extreme pollution. Today, the City's water no longer comes from the same sources used by the Ohlone, but rather pumped in from various sources including San Luis Reservoir, Hetch Hetchy Watershed, and deep water wells from the Santa Clara Valley Groundwater Basin.

Following South First Street south of historic downtown, one arrives at the Paseo de San Antonio where the late Ernesto Galarza[15] is commemorated in a public monument

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[15] Ernesto Galarza was a Mexican-American writer, poet, professor, and labor activist. He was a central figure in the Santa Clara Valley and greatly influenced the history of immigrant farm worker organizations in California. He believed that education was an important path to empower and inform the next generation of Chicana/o activists. Along the Paseo de San Antonio, many of his famous quotes about education and equality are inscribed on the sidewalk.

installation that includes some of his words of wisdom inscribed in stone. A glance to the west, just past the Fairmont Hotel, reveals La Plaza de César Chávez. Continuing south on First one arrives at the SoFa district. This renovated art district is lined with outdoor dining, live music, and historic landmarks such as the California Theatre. Continuing south for two more blocks, South First Street merges with South Market Street at the Parque de los Pobladores. Adjacent to the park is the Movimiento de Arte y Cultura Latina America (MACLA), City Lights Theater Company of San Jose, San Jose Museum of Quilts and Textiles, and the San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art. Just past this lies Highway 280. Highway 280 acts like a concrete curtain that blocks direct access to the cultural and historical amenities of the historic downtown for the Mexican, Central American, and working-class neighborhoods and districts.

Continuing south on South First Street past 280, the streets widen, the trees become fewer, and auto mechanics, car dealerships, and fast food become the norm. Sacred Heart Community Services is located on the corner of South First and East Alma Avenue, a little over a mile south of the historic Oddfellows building in downtown San José. While only about one mile separates these two establishments, they are worlds apart. One volunteer said, “most people never come south of downtown, and if they do, it’s on the freeway.” While there are many communities in South San José, the community of Washington-Alma, just south of highway 280, remains hidden to the majority of those living in the South Bay. This is the community that invited me to provide research and counsel.

There are many reasons why such a place would remain hidden, and much of that has to do with the historical patterns of disinvestment and uneven development that

occurred in many low-income communities across the county since the post-war period. According to McClintock, “understanding the historical and structural roots of this urban landscape is fundamental to understanding the individual and collective agency that adapts to or resists its development” (2011, 93). It is not a coincidence that organizations such as *La Mesa Verde* have come about in recent years. The South Bay, perhaps more than anywhere else in the greater Bay Area, is a region where location is everything, including a household’s health prospects. This chapter presents an account of why an organization like *La Mesa Verde* emerged at this point in time and place. The ethnographically rich account of LMV’s history simultaneously provides an exploration of how the organization’s goals, motivations, and challenges are specific responses to the political and class composition of Santa Clara County. This perspective will help to better understand and “map” the newly emerging trend of alternative food movements in the region and how they seek to challenge race, class, and gender modes of subjectivation and governmentality while expressing new forms of revolutionary subjectivity.

The Roots of Environmental and Health Inequities in the South Bay

In an ideal world, one could safely assume that the temperate weather and natural landscape of Santa Clara County encourages most people to engage in outdoor physical activity. With close proximity to the Pacific Ocean and the Santa Cruz Mountains and an abundance of sunny days, there are endless opportunities for people to lead active lifestyles that are associated with improved health outcomes. Yet, we know that that “calorie-in and calorie-out” approach to health determinants is seldom played out in the living and working conditions faced by overworked members of the working classes (Ludwig and Friedman 2014). A focus on physical activity, especially as an amenity

mostly afforded by people from the professional-managerial classes, distances the discussion of health equities away from the structural conditions and political economic forces that result in unhealthy outcomes and imposes the burden for a healthy lifestyle solely on individual willpower and choice (Guthman 2011). For many working-class people in Santa Clara County, there are numerous compounding structural factors like racially segregated labor markets and associated income inequality that prohibit such positive environmental interactions.

Lisa Park and David Pellow refer to this condition as "environmental privilege." While much of environmental justice scholarship focuses on environmental injustices shaped by the politics of race, class, gender, and citizenship, fewer studies address the "privileges" that other groups may have (see Pulido 2000). According to the authors, environmental privilege is an expression of "economic, political, and cultural power that some groups enjoy, which enables them exclusive access to coveted environmental amenities such as forests, parks, mountains, rivers, costal property, open lands, and elite neighborhoods" (Park and Pellow 2011, 4). Through a historical and contemporary analysis of Aspen, CO, Park and Pellow discovered that in spite of the outdoor culture of the region, the outdoor recreational amenities are more accessible and thus more often enjoyed by the well-to-do. While the Santa Clara Valley is not Aspen, the image of the "California lifestyle" often depicted on TV and magazines is presented and sought after in a similar fashion. The Silicon Valley is as much an idea as it is an actual place. In order to maintain the idealized image of the Silicon Valley, the city must be organized in such a way as to sustain the illusion of a pristine agrarian environment first imagined by Muir's romantic soliloquy to the "valley of heart's delight."

For David Harvey (2012) the organization of the city is very similar to the organization of the workplace. In fact, because the factory, which was one of the original terrains of struggle for the working class, is outdated in the traditional sense, we need to focus on the organization of the city as the most effective site of working-class struggles, an idea first championed by Manuel Castells in *The City and the Grassroots* (1983). Castells was also among the first to identify the city as the terrain upon which neoliberal capitalism first experimented with space, place, and political power, especially in the earlier book, *The Urban Question* (1977), which expands on arguments first made in the famous essay, "The Wild City" (1974). One interlocutor on this distinctly subversive tome, is Andy Merrifield (2000) who deftly notes how "the urban question for Castells was a question of reproduction; the urban crisis for him was a structural crisis of consumption…" (169).

What I find intriguing is that Castells is unabashedly Marxist in his approach to the study of urban social movements, while Park and Pellow retreat into more of a reformist equity-based argument that seems to pale by comparison as a framework for critical decolonial work. The careful synthesis of the two, however, offers a new approach that includes the struggle for environmental amenities as part of the collective and public sector assets that have long been sought and fought for by working-class and other marginalized urban communities.

The point is that the distribution of environmental privilege is not only experienced in towns such as Aspen but in all major urban centers around the world. Environmental privilege that coincides with access to parks, skiing, or going to the beach, are linked to the same structural conditions that limit access to medical care and health

benefits. In fact, "for nearly every measure of health, affluent residents in Santa Clara County tend to be healthier than residents at or near poverty levels, and White populations have better health outcomes than Latinos, African Americans and Asian populations" (Community Health Existing Conditions Report 2013, 1-2). Without the ethnographic accounts of community residents or an understanding of their alternative practices of self-provisioning, the findings of the Community Health Existing Conditions Report prepared by the County of Santa Clara, assumes the "social determinants of health" to be predetermined based upon social status, race, income, and education. Extrapolate those finding on to a map of the region and what is presented is the depiction of a city in which the neighborhood you live determines your health, ethnicity, and income.[16]

While there exists significant health disparities between various ethnicities and neighborhoods in the Santa Clara Valley, the report does not account for the Latina/o health paradox[17] whereby recent immigrants arrive in good health and the advantages of which significantly decline the more time immigrant households spend in the U.S. and assimilate to mainstream food and physical activity patterns. The report does acknowledge the "healthy migrant effect," which is essentially the Latina/o health paradox, but they do not have a mechanism to account for it. Furthermore, the findings in the report demonstrate that citizenship is also a factor to determining health, with just over fifteen percent of the non-citizens survey report excellent health (2-22). But the

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[16] See Santa Clara County Existing Health Conditions report for more details and maps available at: https://www.sccgov.org/sites/dpd/PlansOrdinances/GP/Pages/Health.aspx
[17] The Latina/o health paradox is also referred to as the immigrant health paradox or the healthy migrant effect.

report does not clarify the duration of time spent in the country. Furthermore, the empirical findings of the report cannot account for the epigenetic factors including the intergenerational effects of historical trauma and structural violence. The multiple sociocultural stressors of poverty, malnutrition, and hunger are now shown to be inherited as epigenetic factors (Montoya 2011). For LMV gardeners, this is key and fundamental to their quest for healthy living because they are engaging in struggles on two fronts. While simultaneously engaging in civil disobedience and utilizing the presence of NGOs to access political power, LMV gardeners are carving autonomous spaces of conviviality through garden networks to engage in "epistemic disobedience" (Mignolo 2009). While their civil disobedience works to restructure the system (i.e. growing home kitchen gardens to address the lack of fresh, healthy, and culturally appropriate food in their neighborhoods), their epistemic disobedience works to participate in the knowledge-making process by cultivating fertile ground(s) for autonomous action (i.e. encouraging a third-space where new subjectivities may emerge). This existing balance is somewhere between cooperation and resistance.

In the process they are "de-linking" themselves from coloniality[18] and encouraging participation in the knowledge-making process to heal the wounds of intergenerational trauma and structural violence. The complexity of LMV gardeners is that they see no contradiction between the charity driven non-profit industrial complex and the politics of autonomia. They seek "in-house" institutional reform and the autonomous space to cultivate new subjectivities that encourage well-being. As Mary told

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[18] The term "*coloniality* of power" was first used by Anibal Quijano (2000) to refer to the structures of power, control, and hegemony that have their roots in colonialism but have emerged in the modernist era.

me, "*La Mesa Verde*, the green table, is a metaphor for having and sharing." While the Country of Santa Clara wants to address the institutional and structural hurdles faced by "vulnerable populations," LMV gardeners collectively engage in the knowledge-making process to rethink sustainability at its core through cooperation and resistance.

The County of Santa Clara might not have the capacity or desire to address intergenerational trauma caused by structural violence, but several local NGOs, including the Santa Clara Valley Health Trust, have stressed the need to address the barriers of improving the overall health of the County. To improve the environmental, physical, and mental health of an entire community means less emphasis on individual intervention and more emphasis on the broader institutional circumstances in which health inequality has come to be and how these inequalities can be challenged and overcome. This is because the health of a community is impacted by a variety of complex and interrelated variables. In some cases, these variables are dependent on individual agency i.e. free choice, and in other instances, these variable are dependent on the socio-historical context in which they have come into being. In other words, while there are individual determinants of health, there are also social, political, economic, and even epigenetic determinants that appear to be perhaps less salient but more fundamental as drivers of public and individual health outcomes. Determinants such as social status, ethnicity, income, wealth, and education cannot be reduced to individual instances, which is one reason why the evolving field of epidemiology is increasingly in serious discourse with medical anthropologists.[19]

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[19] This has been the case since the 1980s as illustrated by the work C. Janes, R. Stall, and S.M. Gifford in their interdisciplinary study, *Anthropology and Epidemiology: Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Study of Health and Disease* (1986).

According to the County's report, the determinants for negative health in Santa Clara "often disproportionately affect vulnerable populations such as young children, the poor, and the elderly" (ibid 1-2). Under the current neoliberal conditions of governmental policy, NGOs are presented as if they arise out government's inability to meet the diverse needs of a population. As such, those needs are met through the privatization and reduction in investments in the public social sector. Under current conditions, "vulnerable populations" fall through the cracks and into spaces of neoliberal neglect. NGOs do not take up where government could not, but rather where governments *would not*. Social, political, and environmental patterning occurs through deliberate investment and disinvestment. These existing inequalities are a result of the institutional inequalities in the region, and the deliberate biopolitics of governmentality.

Santa Clara County is unique for many reasons, one of those being its demographic makeup. The 2010 County Census report shows 35 percent of its residents as White, 32 percent Asian, 27 percent Latino, 2 percent African American, and 4 percent as other.[20] Two-thirds the County's residents identify as "non-white," and according to Santa Clara County's "Existing Health Conditions Report," these same residents who identify as "non-White" or "Hispanic," are defined as a "vulnerable population" (Community Health Report 2013, 2-10). The County's statistical maps of income, education, crime, obesity, ethnicity, and diabetes demonstrate high densities in the same locations. The same area codes with high diabetes and obesity rates are the locations with lower incomes and education levels. These areas are predominately Latina/o and have the

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[20] The U.S. Census data comes from the Santa Clara County Existing Health Conditions Report released in May 2013

highest levels of reported crime in the County. The detailed study of health trends of Santa Clara County demonstrates that the location of the city one resides is strongly correlated with economic mobility, educational attainment, and the probability of being obese and developing diabetes. This report emphasizes the political economy of health in the region by calling attention to the correlation between negative health outcomes and its relationship to race, income, education, and geographical location.

The Santa Clara County Health Trust and the Santa Clara County Food System Alliance are two organizations seeking to change these circumstances. The Health Trust is an organization that helps to secure funding for other health related organizations. They have teamed together with Americorps to form the Silicon Valley HealthCorps. Their goal is to inform families about healthy eating and living habits as well as provide a garden-based education. They employ Americorps volunteers to work in the ten organization that make up the HealthCorps. These organizations include: the Community Alliance with Family Farmers, Collective Roots, CommUniverCity, Rocketship Education, Sacred Heart Community Services (which houses LMV), Santa Clara University Bronco Urban Gardens, Schmahl Science Workshops, The Health Trust, Valley Verde, and Veggielution. The Santa Clara County Food System Alliance is a collaborative group of organizations working together to respond to health inequities and concerns interlaced with the structural deficits of the regional food system.

These organizations have contributed to the changing atmosphere around health inequality and food access in the county. The speedy urban transformation that occurred in the county driven by the technology sector, which lasted up until the 2000s, forced residents to form innovative means to challenge the burgeoning inequalities. Issues over

air and water quality, struggles against toxic chemicals used in the workplace, and the negative externalities faced by low-income and communities of color were constant sights of contestation (Pitti 2003). The Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition emerged in 1982, during the region's booming computer chip manufacturing era, but the trend of challenging the persistent structural inequalities in food and health has developed more recently. The political, environmental, and social atmosphere of the South Bay has progressed in such a way that the future health of the county is now being led by a progressive minded, justice oriented, youthful generation of leaders and organizers who seek to link food, place, and health together in a more holistic vision of social change and ecological resilience.

La Mesa Verde: **Cultivating the Seeds of Change**

When I spoke with Raul, who spearheaded the creation of *La Mesa Verde* in 2009, he told me that at the time, he was not trying to do anything revolutionary. Raul is Chicano who was born in the Central Valley and moved to San José when he was five. Over the years, he has seen the Valley change dramatically. As an active member of the community, Raul was the executive director of the Latino theater company, Teatro Visión, even before he began to play with the idea of *La Mesa Verde*. For him, it was common knowledge that Latina/os have home gardens, and that the home kitchen garden was a perfect place to start challenging the existing health inequalities in the region. I would often meet LMV organizers at Roy's Station Coffee Shop in Japantown and see Raul mingling with other activists and politicians. Raul told me that before he presented the idea to Sacred Heart, he visited the Santa Clara Valley Health Trust to present a simple idea: "Teach people to grow food in their own backyard." The Health Trust loved

the idea and provided him some funding, but he still needed a place to house the organization. Raul was hesitant to present the program to another non-profit because he feared its philosophy and goals of encouraging an inclusive space where knowledge about growing food could be gained and shared would be co-opted. However, he needed more funding and eventually presented the project idea to Sacred Heart Community Services and the non-denominational charity agreed to the flexibility and autonomy needed for such a community-based program. Raul told me that the reason he was so attracted to the project was because it was the only one of its kind in the South Bay. When he began the program and attended various meetings around the region he was the only non-white voice. He felt that there was a clear difference between those who have knowledge and those who do not, and this program was a way to address that gap. "Low-income families," he told me, "are priced out of the ability to learn." His goal was to give the knowledge back to the community while at the same time providing a space for that knowledge to be shared.

Raul is a visionary, and just like him, *La Mesa Verde* took on big aspirations. In the first year alone, *La Mesa Verde* worked with one hundred families. The second year was the same. The goal was to teach the highest number possible of low-income families in the San José area how to grow their own food. LMV and Sacred Heart provided each of its new members with the supplies to build raised garden beds and included irrigation equipment, soil, seeds, and seedlings for one year. The gardeners were also offered the opportunity to attend scheduled workshops led by University of California Master Gardeners. These classes offered the LMV members a chance to learn everything from soil health and seed propagation to seed saving and harvesting. The goal was that after

the first year gardeners would continue to grow food and become more self-sufficient. "The key point in learning to grow," Raul said, "is to make an impact on the first year growers. They need to grow what they like, what they want. It must be a positive experience."

Raul left Sacred Heart after only a few years because he had different ideas for the future of the program. While the first years of LMV taught many people how to grow food, the success of the program was limited because it was unable to retain gardeners for multiple years. Raul left not because he was disappointed in the program, but because he was unclear on its long-term sustainability. He saw the possible future of the program as being self-sustaining and revenue generating, which was a direction Sacred Heart was unwilling to go most likely due to the nonprofit status of the charity.

"Backyard gardens have gone on for years, this is nothing new," Raul told me. "We are only giving and fostering a knowledge-space." He has recently taken on a new project in the South Bay, called Valley Verde. He told me that the vision is much the same, but he believes that because it operates as an autonomous 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, it will have more freedom and creativity to bring about positive change.

La Mesa Verde emerged at a time when many middle and low-income families in the South Bay had lost their jobs and homes. Gardening is a means to alleviate the pressures of income and to improve the lifestyle and sociality of the grower. Once before we ended our conversation, Raul told me that, "Growing food is a win-win, there really isn't much to lose. The ability to grow is great, but so many families simply see it *as a move away from the daily grind*" (emphasis added). Embedded within the garden subjectivity of LMV members are multiple layers of transformation and renewal of what

we might call the "social-cultural self." This is evident in Raul's articulation of the standpoint epistemology that views a garden as refugia—a socioecological space that offers protection and shelter from the "daily grind" of an otherwise heartless neoliberal sprawl city. While some LMV members see growing food as an act of personal agency, others see it as a subversive act of resistance and autonomy. Perhaps the early struggle of LMV was not how quickly it developed, but rather that the organization was unable to know what it was or what it could be. Raul's initial goal was to teach gardening to those who did not know how. Once they learned they to be more self-sufficient in growing food, it would reduce their dependence on over-priced corner stores, which make up the majority of shopping locations in the community of Washington-Alma. LMV growers began to transform this inclusive knowledge-space with relationships of reciprocity. Gardeners with great agroecological knowledge began to share both knowledge and resources (i.e. seed) with beginning gardeners. *Chilacayote, chayote,* amaranth, and *epazote* are only a handful of seeds that migrated between hands. Recent Mexican immigrants interacted with U.S. born Chicanos, African Americans, Asian Americans, and white Americans to encourage new garden subjectivities. I often think that the model of *La Mesa Verde* was ahead of its time because it existed as a liminal in-between place. The program may have meant many different things to different people but one, perhaps unintended result, was the formation of independent informal networks of LMV gardeners who went on to create autonomous zones of food sovereignty.

While this liminal state poses the possibility of future troublesome and disruptive complications, it also means that the continual transformation of the struggle for food sovereignty within LMV and its successors will continue to provide its members with the

means to pursue autonomous forms of self-organization. Manuel Castells argues, "networks are open structures, able to expand without limits" (1996, 470). In the early stages, LMV was exactly what it needed to be, "innovating without threatening its balance" (ibid). As the program grew, it developed from an urban agriculture program to an urban agricultural network of gardeners. It transformed alongside the members and organizers while at the same time keeping its dynamic structure. The program itself addresses the resilience of both people and places, and because of the dynamic nature-society interactions that occur within it allows gardeners to reduce vulnerability by encouraging diversity (this is discussed in greater detail in chapter seven).

Today, *La Mesa Verde* is comfortably located within the Advocacy and Self-Sufficiency branch of Sacred Heart. Louise Benson founded Sacred Heart Community Service in 1964. One of the agency's early homes was located in the old school house of Sacred Heart Community Church, which is where the agency gets its name, and today, the agency serves as a non-denominational not-for-profit organization. A recent *San Jose Mercury News* article referred to Benson, who passed away in 1986, as "Sainte Louise" because she became known as the "Mother Teresa of San Jose" (Gottshalk 2014). In 2014, the organization celebrated its 50th anniversary. From its humble beginnings in Benson's Willow Glen home in 1964, to their current location on South First Street, the agency has helped countless people meet their basic needs. In spite of the fact the agency has moved several times, it has always remained an important institution for the working poor in the community of Washington-Alma. In fact, the agency estimates that it serves approximately 75,000 people each year (ibid). Sacred Heart provides low-income

families with the essential services such as emergency food, clothing, childcare, technical training, and financial coaching among others.

When I first became acquainted with *La Mesa Verde*, Raul had left and passed the program on to his successor, Malin. Her passion for community empowerment and social justice informed everything she did. Malin is Chicana and a self-identified "eco-*guerrera*" in her mid-thirties. She spent time learning various agroecological farming methods in Mexico, New Mexico, and Center for Agroecology and Food Systems at the University of California Santa Cruz. When she took control of the program she wanted to build off the program's earlier successes by allowing for more community ownership of the program. During my first months with LMV I became familiar with its mission and action framework. In 2012 they were beginning to develop innovative ways for gardener participation and ownership. By 2013, the program had two distinct parts. It had moved away from its earlier model, which was to teach as many people as possible, and now sought to retain gardeners for multiple years to reach the agency's goal of encouraging program and member self-sufficiency. The program still included the first-year garden program as conceived earlier, but it had now had a graduate program as well. While the goal of the first-year program was to teach people to be successful gardeners, the graduate program was designed to be a space to support and share the knowledge and experiences of agroecology. In addition, it capitalized on the gardeners already existing knowledge of agroecology and self-provisioning. The 2013 framework sought to reconnect with gardeners from the early years and to establish "a leadership network of

urban gardeners who build access to healthy food in San José."[21] They reduced the amount of new recruits and emphasized the retention of members.

One of the many difficult aspects of working in the non-profit sector is that while organizations are driven by numbers, they often take on projects with goals that are intangible. "The agency and their funders want to see numbers, but so much of this can't be measured," Raul told me one day. In 2013, LMV shifted its direction to attempt to meet those so-called numbers. Under Malin there was Patty, a young Chicana in her early twenties, who led the graduate program, and Hector, a Chicano in his mid-twenties, who led the first-year program. Both Patty and Hector have California roots and chose to work at Sacred Heart because they wanted to make a positive difference in the community. *La Mesa Verde* also received two Americorps volunteers, Tawna and Jacky. Both young and energetic, these two underpaid volunteers worked in collaboration with the full-time staff. All of the LMV organizers spoke fluent English and Spanish and had meaningful relationships with the program's many families. By 2013 LMV incorporated cooking and nutrition classes in the first-year program. Many of the earlier recommendations raised by gardeners included calls for the distribution of seeds and "starters" for crops that many of them were unfamiliar with (e.g. kale, kohlrabi, chard) in the packages usually given to families. The stories I heard from families either not knowing how to cook a crop, or not liking the taste of a particular crop were very similar to Teresa Mares' (2012) ethnography of community gardening in Seattle, Washington. She found Michael Pollen's "food rules" (2009), such as; "Don't eat anything that your great-grandmother

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[21] The mission state of LMV reads: "*La Mesa Verde* is a leadership network of urban gardeners who build access to healthy food in San José."

wouldn't recognize as food," to be inherently ethnocentric. Similar to Mares, many of the grandmothers I worked with in this study did not recognize kale, but they did recognize *verdolagas* and *chayote*.

LMV has attempted to answer this by integrating a "Cooking Matters" curriculum to teach about some of the seasonal varieties available to families. Cooking Matters is an educational tool funded by the Walmart Foundation, with the goal to inform families how "to shop and cook healthy meals on a budget."[22] While there are many contradictions in the use of this program, perhaps the most obvious is teaching a culturally diverse community that learning to eat healthy really means learning to "eat White" (also see Harper 2011). As articulated by Mares, "While food rules like these are increasingly gaining traction with thousands of Americans who are committed to going local organic or slow, they undoubtedly carry a different meaning for immigrants whose foodways, traditions and material realities are bound up with transnational flows and spaces" (2012, 351). LMV organizers have taken this into consideration and now integrate cooking recipes and eating healthy lessons from actual gardeners as an educational tool and as a means to foster social interaction and community ownership of the program.

By 2013 the graduate program initiated a community guild framework. Borrowing the concept from permaculture design (see Holmgren 2002), a guild is a collective artisan crafts group working toward a common goal. For permaculture, this means integrating and acting with all aspects of an ecosystem that can contribute to continued integrity and resilience. For LMV this meant an association of gardeners

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[22] This is part of the mission statement of the Cooking Matter curriculum used by *La Mesa Verde*.

working together for the betterment and continued health of the community. The guild model was a response to the lack of attention earlier models had focused on the existing farming and gardening knowledge that many gardeners already had, especially recent immigrants from Mexico and Central America. The guild provided a space where existing knowledge and resources could be shared and circulated within the community.

While the first-year gardening program included participation of a Master Gardener, the graduate program sought to provide a space for the exploration and sharing of traditional knowledge. LMV created guilds on the Eastside, Westside, and Central areas. Each of these guilds had different English and Spanish counterparts, as a means to localize knowledge and resources where people actually lived. While the passion of the organizers was there, the practicality of the guilds was not. Some guilds met regularly while others almost never did. Many contributing issues, including member motivation, distance to meetings, added time away from home, the separation of English and Spanish speakers within the same community, the added workload for organizers, and many other factors contributed to a lack of effectiveness. These compounding issues did not allow the model to flourish. Although this design did not work, it changed the way many at Sacred Heart saw *La Mesa Verde* and its role as part of the agency.

In 2014, the program changed once again. This time it moved away from the guild model and toward a membership model. The previous guild model was based on geographic location and gardeners were assigned to a specific guild. The membership model focused on individual interests and participation, gardeners assigned themselves based off of those interests. The first-year program now included a food systems curriculum component, which stressed a "popular education" model to food justice. The

organizers sought to increase individual awareness of the person's role in the food system by collectively working together in a problem-solving mode of education. Together we created a food system curriculum, which allowed community members to contribute their experiences and knowledge about the obstacles they face and their position within the food system. The graduate program now included three areas: 1) continuing education, 2) program management, and 3) community projects. The goal was to begin transitioning more power over to the community. As Malin told me one day, "we need to give community gardening back to the community." The continuing education feature included food systems classes, Cooking Matters, gardening workshops, and participation in research studies, which as a matter of disclosure, included my own as well as a food production and water usage study done by colleagues from Santa Clara University. The program management feature asked people to contribute to LMV in a variety of ways, which included tasks and assignments for office management, planting day and raised bed building volunteers, demonstration garden committee, recruitment, co-leadership of classes, mentoring of new gardeners, and participation in gardening education. Lastly, the community projects aspect asked members to participate in planning, developing, and implementing a community project, which was to be chosen by the advisory committee. In this model, gardeners went from being LMV *participants*, to LMV *members*. The goal was not to have every person be a part of all of the different features in LMV, but to provide a variety of different tasks so that gardeners could develop and contribute to a wider set of skills and expertise while remaining involved in something they felt passionate about. These program changes helped to pave the way for where *La Mesa Verde* is today.

Toward the end of 2014, LMV went through some dramatic changes. Malin left in the summer and Patty and Hector both left in the fall. On top of that, the contract was up for both Jacky and Tawna. While Sacred Heart was able to offer Jacky a full-time job, Tawna left to pursue other interests. In addition, the director of the Self-Sufficiency program, who had helped launch the LMV program back in 2009, left Sacred Heart by the end of the year. I moved to live closer to San José in the spring of 2014, and by the end of the year, LMV had a completely different set of actors. Jamie, an Asian American female in her mid- to late-twenties was hired in place of Malin as Program Director. Sacred Heart originally hired Jamie to work with a variety of Sacred Heart families to help forge political participation. Her interests and background in food justice and community development proved to be a valuable asset to Sacred Heart as she collaborated with families to direct the future of *La Mesa Verde*. I assumed the transition would be difficult for the agency and families, but the program's continual community-centered focus assured that LMV would leave a lasting imprint on the institutional framework of Sacred Heart. In the late fall of 2014, under the influence of the membership model of LMV, Sacred Heard had changed its mission statement to read: "Our mission is to build a community free from poverty by creating hope, opportunity, and action. We provide essential services, work together to improve our lives, advocate for justice, and inspire our community to love, serve, and share."[23] The language had changed from helping "them" to helping "ourselves." In addition, the agency now

[23] Sacred Heart Community Service's mission reads: "Our mission is to build a community free from poverty by creating hope, opportunity, and action. We provide essential services, work together to improve our lives, advocate for justice, and inspire our community to love, serve, and share."

included mutual support systems as part of their core strategies. While many of the changes to Sacred Heart's strategic plan are a result of a variety of factors, many of them are a direct response to the innovative and flexible framework embedded within *La Mesa Verde*. LMV still provides basic introduction and support for kitchen gardeners, which continues to include supplies to build raised garden beds, irrigation equipment, seeds and seedlings, and garden classes led by University of California Master Gardeners. It still seeks to make gardening a "positive experience," but what the program actually provides to its members, is so much more than a gardening program. Malin told me one day, "the garden is the carrot, and once we have people hooked, the possibilities are endless." The continual transformation of the program highlights a shared cultivated subjectivity. For LMV gardeners, the garden in an entryway into a vast network of shared values. The garden and its informal networks encourage the solidarity and conviviality of those who participate. Gardeners have influenced the program's structure just as much as the organizers. The autonomy of gardeners exists by being innovative without threatening the balance of the network.

Harvesting the Valley

As I have explained, the Santa Clara Valley is unique in a variety of ways. In spite of the illusion of a clean global city, the underlying social, economic, and environmental inequalities embedded in the landscape are a result of many compounding factors. McClintock (2011, 93), cited earlier in the chapter, argues that in order to understand how people either adapt to or resist the inequalities of urban development, we must first understand the historical and structural roots of inequality embedded within the city itself. Urban agriculture is a distinctive tool used by low-income and immigrant peoples

to address urban inequality because it is both adaptive and resistant. I believe a critical realist view of this context reveals how the food justice movement accepts the logic of urban development as the extant actual reality of life for most people on the planet, but it also rejects the inequalities and structural violence of the capitalist city as something that must and can be challenged. Instead, urban development is seen as an inescapable fact of daily-lived experiences and therefore, urban agriculture is deployed as a method used by a variety of actors seeking a wide range of goals and objectives, some of which are quite radical and even revolutionary (see Reynolds 2008). While the history of development practices in the Santa Clara Valley have tended to negatively impact low-income and immigrant communities, these same communities open new spaces for the exercise of autonomy and self-organization, which eventually attract the attention of governmental, philanthropic, and corporate interests.

The community of Washington-Alma is comprised mainly of single-family homes, most dating to the 1950s and 1960s. According to the Santa Clara County Existing Health Conditions Report, most residents in this neighborhood are non-white and low-income. In addition, most are renters, and in my experience visiting LMV homes in the neighborhood, most live in multigenerational homes or with relatives. In spite of the fact that these homes are often neglected by landlords and have outdated plumbing, heating, and electrical systems, they often provide large back and side yards. The continued disinvestment in the neighborhood has reduced land values (but not necessarily rent) and diminished esthetic values such as trees, parks, outdoor dining, and "walkabilty." Willow Glen, located just on the other side of Highway 87, has the closest grocery stores and consists of a charming downtown with outdoor dining and large oak

trees providing shade to its residents.[24] Washington-Alma has very few large shade bearing trees. While shaded trees promote walkablity and increase home values, the lack of trees in Washington-Alma provides much-needed sun exposure for intensive home gardening. One would be hard pressed to find a home without grass in the front yard of a Willow Glen home. In Washington-Alma, on the other hand, it would be difficult to find a home *with* a grass front yard. Lawns are an expression of the "American Dream" (see Robbins 2007), and they to contribute to the image of the Silicon Valley. But many people in Washington-Alma disrupt that image out of choices conditioned by necessity. In Washington-Alma home-kitchen gardens are "enacted" spaces whereby people are the creators and users of such spaces. These "enacted environments" occur as a result of the interactions between physical space and social space and encourage shared subjectivities (Rojas 1991). While such enacted environments often occur in the spaces of neoliberal neglect and can actually encourage further neglect, they can also offer the possibility of the spontaneous grassroots transformations of urban ecology.

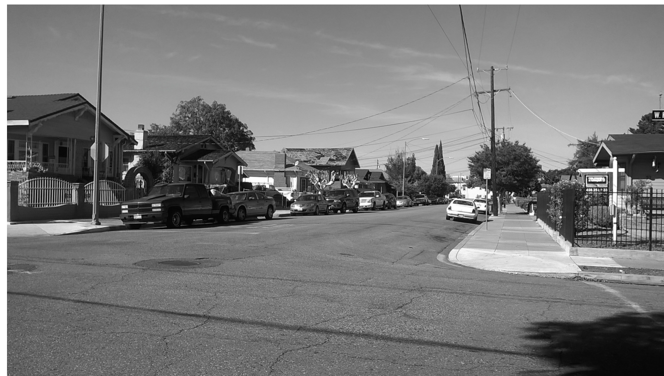

Figure 3:
Washington-Alma neighborhood

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[24] This is due to change in the coming months as a Walmart has set to open a "Neighborhood Market" nearby. Many in the community are split between whether this is a good or bad addition to the community.

(*Source: Author's Photo*)

Elizabeth Povinelli (2011) argues that "late liberalism" has created a world in which endurance and exhaustion have come to normalize the terrain of struggle for a "life worth living." She acknowledges the socio-political context of how liberal governmentality creates one world while abandoning the possibilities of others (also see Hardt and Negri 2000). However, she also acknowledges that spaces of social abandonment can be transformed into new areas of possibilities. Similarly, in an ethnographic study of the *maquilas* in Juarez, Mexico, Devon Peña uncovers how the women who work in the *maquilas* use their marginality as an "inventive force." In fact, he views "marginals as liminal beings full of creative and transformative potential" (1997, 217). The women not only understand their marginality in highly sophisticated ways, but they use it to undermine and challenge dominant views and ideologies. While LMV recruits families into the program, the majority of people that engage in informal networks of exchange are women. These women gardeners are well of aware of their marginality, but they use that marginality to create highly complex networks of informal exchanges derived from the cultivation of new subjectivities that are themselves linked to alterNative epistemologies of place and mutual reliance.

One of the reasons for the emergence of organizations like *La Mesa* Verde is the growing awareness among activists, advocates, and policymakers across the Bay Area about the urgency to improve the health of minority communities. It could be argued that NGOs like LMV have emerged by philanthropists, other funding sources, and state agencies desire to alleviate the structural and institutional inequalities faced by many low-income minority communities. On a deeper level, it could also be argued that

organizations such as *La Mesa Verde* have emerged because members (not just the organizers or organizations) are using them as a means to challenge the existing systems of inequality. Under this logic, urban agriculture is less of an adaptive strategy and more of a strategy of resistance and transformation. People use gardening as a means of self-help and as a means toward self-determination, autonomy, and enhanced sociality and mutual aid. *La Mesa Verde* helped to create a large network of urban gardeners in the San José area. They have provided irrigation, seeds, and seedlings to hundreds of families. In many ways, they have been the center of a larger social network, which is good for funders and meets the goals of Sacred Heart. However, beneath the social networks created by LMV lies a far larger, far more complex, "rhizomatic" network of garden economies that offers a multiplicity of alterNative norms, values, and worldviews as well as spaces of agroecological and social innovation. This hidden network connects neighbors and families; it connects San José, CA to cities around the globe. This network is built upon layers of moving bodies, knowledges, and seeds, and in spite of over three years of ethnographic field work, interviews, and oral histories, I have only began to understand the complexity of this organizational form and the shifting political subjectivities associated with it.

In my last conversation with Malin, she told me how many non-profit organizations go wrong by assuming that everyone wants to challenge his or her social position. "People don't go to workshops to learn how to be revolutionaries," she said, "they are forced into it." They are not forced by other people, but by their lived experiences. Malin was referring to how NGOs often use communities to fulfill their own objectives, and in the process, they assume that everyone going to a workshop wants to

change the world. This is unfair to individuals and it also undermines a community because its logic assumes that the NGO not only knows what community members want, but also what is best for them. While it is true that *La Mesa Verde* was born during a period in which NGOs were trying to develop more participatory and community-directed program strategies to help the poor help themselves, the organization still exists today because of an alterNative form of flexibility evidenced by the malleability of organizers to respond to the articulation of the diverse needs of its members.

Chapter 5: Gardening with Marx and Mauss: Gardeners Remaking the Praxis of Value

"Sharing food is a celebration," Diana told me one day. We had spent the afternoon working in her garden where she grows forty-five varieties of harvestable crops. We had harvested *chayotes* and *tomatillos*, worked the compost pile, tended to the weeds, fed the chickens, and watered the roses. Diana had told me several times about how her garden was a special space for her because she shared it with her neighbor. "Growing up, I didn't know the first thing about growing food, but Grandma knows a lot." In fact, much of the knowledge that Diana knows about gardening she learned from her elder neighbor. "We have been neighbors for almost a decade, but we never really knew each other until we started growing food together." Diana learned about LMV in 2010 when she visited Sacred Heart. She contacted them not so much for herself, but for Grandma. "LMV helped Grandma start what she always wanted," she told me. While Grandma and Diana have been neighbors for over ten years, their shared garden has helped them to collectively forge a relationship of mutual reliance.

Grandma, as I have grown to know her, is Diana's neighbor. She is an eighty-year-old woman who lives on her own and has spent the past forty years in the Santa Clara Valley. Growing up on a small *ranchito,* in rural Jalisco outside of Guadalajara, Mexico, Grandma spent her childhood learning how to work the land. On a small piece of land, her and her parents did not have a lot of money, but they always had enough to eat. Throughout our conversations, Grandma continued to refer to the how the three sisters provided her family sustenance. "*No comimos mucho carne, pero había maíz, calabaza, y frijol... siempre/*We didn't eat of a lot of meat, but there was corn, squash, and beans...

always.” When Grandma married, she moved to the U.S. with her husband, who was part of the *bracero* program and worked in the lettuce fields of northern Santa Clara County. After her husband passed away, Grandma’s garden declined. There was a time when her garden produced much of what her and her family would eat. She would even harvest *nopales* and sell them at the nearby flea market every Saturday for extra money, but as she aged her body spent less and less time in the garden.

La Mesa Verde provided Grandma with raised garden beds, irrigation, seedlings, seeds, agroecology classes, and a means to regain some sense of her past experiences and heritage. Like so many others in the program, the move from Mexico to the U.S. resulted in a loss of self-sufficiency. The perception was that things were supposed to be easier in the U.S., food was cheaper, work was more prevalent, and streets were safer, but this did not necessarily mean life was easier. As Dohan (2003) discovered in his study of the region, poverty in San José is caused by underemployment, not unemployment. The social conditions of poverty in the region is constructed and maintained because jobs are so poorly paid and the cost of living so high that one can barely survive, let alone get ahead.

Grandma’s house is a small, two-bedroom home situated on an oddly shaped, rectangular lot. The lot is no larger then forty feet wide, but it extends close to two hundred feet from end to end. Her and her late husband bought the land many years ago and grew crops that her husband had collected through seeds and starters that friends and neighbors eagerly shared; this was well before the existence of *La Mesa Verde*. But as time went by, her backyard was forgotten and fell into neglect and disrepair. While she continued to grow some food in the backyard, most of what she produced was herbs.

However, today her garden is back and beaming with bio-complexity. Chickens, compost, flowers, crops, birds, insects, are all in constant movement in her garden. “I’m a cook,” Diana told me with a smile as she self-consciously looked over at grandma, “but until now I had never grown my own food.” Grandma laughed in astonishment as Diana continued, “I will never forget the first salad I made from our garden. The taste, the experience… everything.”

As our conversation continued it became evident that part of the reason the salad was so good was because of the underlying social relationships that framed Diana’s experiences in the garden. The food tasted better to her because it was fresher and, perhaps subjectively, it tasted better because of the company she ate it with. Growing food had attached her to Grandma as a mentor, to the land as a provider, and to her own food as a means of extending her diet beyond subsistence to the re-embracing of many heritage crops and foods. The labor she put into growing and producing her own food is the validation of her social relationships to neighbors.

According to David Graeber, “value… is something that mobilizes the desires of those who recognize it, and moves them to action” (2001, 106). As articulated by Graeber, the value of an object is really a recognition of actions because its significance has been, “absorbed into the object’s current identity – whether that emphasis is placed on the inspired labors of the artist who created it, the lengths to which some people have been known to go to acquire it, or the fact that it was once used to cut off a mythical giant’s head” (105). For Diana, the value of her salad is not measured by what Marx called “socially necessary labor time,” but by the creative activities that allowed her to grow the ingredients for her salad and the knowledge of what this represented, a socially

meaningful act of conviviality. In this manner, a home kitchen garden is a political statement because it is a self-reliant activity that is an act against the industrial food system that alienates us from our social relationship to our food; by growing food people can mend the wounds caused by a food system that damages our bodies, environments, and communities. Their collective response to alienation is conviviality. The families in LMV are not a politically driven revolutionary army rising up against racist neoliberalism. Rather they are people whose lives (and bodies) are enriched through a newfound connection (or reconnection) to the production of food. In essence, their revolutionary acts are that they are recovering human dignity through the fruits of their labor. Their collective subjectivities give rise to the transformed potential of the "common man."

In this chapter, I place the LMV community at the center of a grounded analysis of the theory of value. In doing so, I discuss the works of Karl Marx, Adam Smith, Marcel Mauss, David Graeber, Chakravorty Spivak, and many others. The goal of this chapter is not to provide a rereading of any of these complex arguments, but rather to offer "textuality" (see Spivak 1990) to the context of *La Mesa Verde*. As Spivak argues, value "can never appear on its own" (1990, 96), it is important to uncover how and why value becomes visible and how and why its origins are so often obscured. While there are those who argue that global capital has reached a point where value can no longer be measured (Hardt and Negri 2000), I argue that not only can value be measured, albeit, not as Neoclassic economics might recognize, but it can be experienced through self- and communal-valorization (see Valle 2015). People make choices within circumstances not of their own making, and while at times, those choices might appear to contradict their

individual positionality, the choices themselves cannot be separated from the contexts which they arise. Marx argues that, "value… does not have its description branded on its forehead" (1990, 167), and thus "value is not self-evident" (Henderson 2013, xxv). This chapter explores the many ways that the LMV community uses the garden as a form of praxis that continually transforms and reinvents value and challenges the very nature of commodity exchange relations.

A Discussion of Value(s)

The labor theory of value

A discussion of value cannot begin without the labor theory of value. In *The Wealth of Nations* (2003), Adam Smith outlines the concepts of the gross domestic product as a measure of wealth and views the contributions of labor specialization as the key to the growth of productivity and the future of the market ever-tending toward automation for improved efficiency; this view has continued to shape many other core neoclassical economic principles. Embedded within the Smithian argument is the idea of "free will." In other words, when people have the ability to engage in free trade, both the buyer and seller both benefit from the exchange. According to this view, when governmental regulations interfere with the free trade among peoples and between nations, it is the people who ultimately suffer and become poorer.

While Smith saw freedom in this model, Marx saw servitude. A Marxist dialectical analysis argues that it is not freedom that is achieved in neoclassical economics, but a "freedom in a double sense" (Marx 1990, 272). In this instance, for the capitalist to transform money into capital, the worker must be found on the free market.

The first freedom occurs when the laborer has the freedom and control over the commodity, in particular one's own labor. Thus, the laborer is free to sell his or her labor in the marketplace for a price. In doing so, the laborer now incurs a second freedom because he or she is now free from his or her means of production. That is, the laborer is now free from control over the individual means of production for subsistence. For this transformation to fully occur, workers must be "free" to sell their labor-power for a price and in doing so, they must also be "free" from the means of production. The willingness to sell one's own labor for a price assures the worker's position in the system of commodity exchanges. This implies the closure of other options beyond the servitude of having to continually sell one's labor in order to make money to purchase commodities. The original act of freedom has created a servant enslaved to the production and accumulation desires of the capitalist. While Smith and Marx have different ideas of the "free market," they both understand the role of labor in the production of value. In fact, Smith argues quite clearly that wealth is not money, but the amount of labor one can control. According to Smith:

> Labour was the first price, the original purchase money that was paid for all things. It was not by gold or by silver, but by labour, that all the wealth of the world was originally purchased; and its value, to those who possess it, and who want to exchange it for some new productions, is precisely equal to the quantity of labour which it can enable them to purchase or command. (Smith 2005, 31)

Smith's argument is that, "labour remains the real price" (Butler 2012, 15). While it appears that in this statement Smith may have confused value with price, it is clear that he understood the importance of labor. Marx's analysis does not dispute the idea that

labor is a source of value, but he does complicate Smith's theory by recognizing the underlying mystification of the commodity form and related extant contradictions between labor and capital. Thus, it is not, as Smith argued, individual labor that is the measure of value, but *socially necessary labor time* as the measure (Cleaver 1979, 119). Marx defined this as the average amount of labor time that must be expended by the average individual to fulfill the needs of biological, cultural, and social reproduction, given a certain level of development of the productive forces of the society. As Rubin argues, "every individual commodity is not sold according to its individual value, but according to the average social value" (2008, 174). Rubin is also clear that social value does change over time as capitalist enterprises move between high, average, and low levels of productivity. The specialization of the workforce, which Smith argues contributes to the efficiency and productivity of industry, is what ultimately reduces the value of individual labor. Rubin continues by stating, "socially-necessary labor determines the value of commodities only to the extent that the market puts together all producers of the given branch and places them in the same conditions of market exchange" (175). While Smith would argue that the free market creates such an environment for the conditions of equal exchange, Marx's analysis concludes that capitalism obscures labor as the primary driver of value because individuals are removed from ownership and control over the means of their own production and reproduction. This occurs because beyond socially necessary labor time, Marx also posits the existence of what he calls surplus labor time, which can come in two forms, absolute and relative. Absolute surplus labor time occurs through the increased length and intensity of the working day, while relative surplus labor time occurs through increased proficiency or

the “deskilling” and specialization of the labor force. The capitalist extracts surplus value from the time and productivity that goes beyond socially necessary labor time, and this is obscured by the separation of the immediate producer (the worker) from the means of production.

The class theory of value

Marx was very careful with his words, and as such, a “vulgar Marxists” reading of *Capital* would assume a level of economic determinism. Yet a closer reading of Marx - a “political reading” of Marx - offers key insight into the transformative power and potential of the working classes. Cleaver was well aware of the limitations of reading Marx’s *Capital* as a political economy. In such a reading, he argues, revolutionaries and reformers “were bound to seek (either reform or revolution) the cure for these bad aspects of capitalism in socialist planning (either the central bureaucratic or the workers’ council variety) and the end of private property” (1979, 34). In other words, while this “misreading” of Marx offered great insight into mystification of the commodity form, it misunderstood the working class perspective. This is important, because, as Cleaver helps us to understand, “in Marx’s view capital was above all a social relation, more specifically a social relation of struggle between the classes of bourgeois society: capitalists and the working class” (81). That is, Marx *did not* hold a labor theory of value, but a class theory of value.

So while Marx is often credited for the labor theory of value, his interest was less in labor itself, and more in how class struggle constantly restructures the value of such labor. Marx believes that it is only through class struggle in which workers were able to establish the eight-hour working day. For according to him, “Capital asks no questions

about the length of life of labour-power. What interest it is purely and simply the maximum of labour-power that can be set in motion n a working day. It attains this objective by shortening the life of labour-power, in the same way as a greedy farmer snatches more produce from the soil by robbing it of its fertility" (1990, 376). A labor theory of value recognizes that capital is always trying to squeeze every bit of value from labor power "by robbing it [life] of its normal, moral and physical conditions of development and activity..." (ibid.). But a class theory of value recognizes that the only way in which the working class regains its "normal, moral, and physical condition" is through class struggle.

The point here is that in a labor theory of value perspective, one would assume that relative and absolute surplus value is ascribed onto the working class because they are "helpless victims" caught up in capitalist competition to lower wages and increase profits. However, a class theory of value would interpret relative and absolute value as capital's response to workers struggles for the means of their own (re)production because it is only through class struggle in which the working class can initiate and precipitate the capitalist crisis. This is articulated in Marx's *Capital*, chapter ten, "The Working Day," in which he adds ethnographic depth to the struggles of workers. This is a key moment, and one that Foucault would take up much later, whereby Marx makes insight into the biopolitical nature of work. He recognizes capital uses workers as a "reserve army," and he also draws attention to their potential for transformation. "Capital therefore takes no account of the health and the length of life of the worker, unless society forces it to do so" (381). Marx's class theory of value insists that value occurs through struggle. "The establishment of the normal working day is the result of centuries of struggle between the

capitalist and the worker" (382), and it is here that a class theory of value can help us to better understand how people, and not just systems, influence positive value transformations.

The social value of the "gift"

Embedded within the neoclassical theory of commodity exchange is the idea that value has two meanings – use value and exchange value. The price of a commodity (its nominal exchange value) is expressed in its use value (the need it fulfills in human use). Marx's critique is that this theory works within utilitarian neoclassical economics only as long as the *surplus* value of (unpaid) labor is hidden through the organization of the process and social relations of production. This describes Marx's understanding and critique of the commodity fetishism governing the presentation of value in the capitalist regime.

In his study of gift-giving (precapitalist) societies, Marcel Mauss (1990) observes how the process of gift-giving in a given culture operates as a moral and economic institution that produces and affirms societal norms. Gift-giving creates and sustains strong social bonds. Through the process of gift-giving, one is sharing a part of oneself. Mary Douglas (1990) argues that Mauss' theory of "the gift" might threaten the Western myth of individualism. Her point is that gift-giving produces an exchange network that binds people together through norms of reciprocity. Mauss presents an ideal construct of a society that emphasizes "social security" over the needs of individual security. In such a social milieu value cannot be reduced to "price" because one's gift is part of a broader project of community security. "Social security, the solicitude arising from reciprocity and co-operation… are of greater value than the mere personal security that the lord

afforded his tenant, better than the skimpy life that is given through the daily wages doled out by employers, and even better than capitalist saving" (Mauss 1990, 69). While gift-giving reproduces itself through norms of reciprocity, it also creates strong social bonds because they are embedded in norms of social obligation. The receiving of a gift coincides with the obligation to give a gift. It is here where the system of gifting produces social security because wealth is not measured in how much one accumulates, but by how much one gives.

Mauss is not motivated by the pursuit to destroy capitalism, nor is he seeking to mimic a gift-giving society. Rather, he emphasizes the need to "humanize" work by envisioning what might exist outside of capitalism (69). Mauss does not create a labor or class theory of value nor does he critique Marx, however, he does stress the importance of the *social labor* underlying the exchange of gifts. He argues that in gift-giving societies, "everything passes to and fro as if there were a constant exchange of a spiritual matter, including things and men, between clans and individuals, distributed between social ranks, the sexes, and the generations" (14). His point is that the value of an object is not a given and as the object continues to circulate, its value is continually remade as well. In addition, the object itself is continually remade because it embodies a different meaning and place in a given family, clan, or society. At the core of his work is the idea that, "the brutish pursuit of individual ends is harmful to the ends and the peace of all" (77). For Mauss, value cannot be reduced to individual self-interests because the true value of labor is the assurance of a more just society.

Mauss; meet Marx. Here is part of what Marx argues about precapitalist societies that actually clarifies much of what Mauss is arguing about gift-giving. In his 1857-58

notebooks for self-clarification that were published posthumously as *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations* (1964), the "old Moor" notes:

> Where [value] derives from the individual families which jointly constitute the community, they are independent owners co-existing with him, independent private proprietors. The common property which formerly absorbed everything and embraced them all, then subsists as a special *ager publicus* [common land] separate from the numerous private owners…In both cases, individuals behave not as laborers but as owners — *and as members of a community who also labor*. The purpose of this labor is not the creation of value, although they may perform surplus labor in order to exchange it for foreign labor — i.e., for surplus products. Its purpose is the maintenance of the owner and his family *as well as of the communal body as a whole*. The establishment of the individual as a worker, stripped of all qualities except this one, is itself a product of history. (1964, 67-8; emphasis added)

Here Marx is alluding to the *communal form of property* as relationship rather than as possession, which it seems to me, is a necessary precondition for the rise of any gift-giving system of reciprocal exchange. Mauss ignores the property relation in precapitalist societies and so, ends up obscuring the dynamics of the very institutions of collective action that sustain such a system.

In the same set of notes, Marx also argues that, "An isolated individual could no more possess property in land than he could speak. At most, he could live off it as a source of supply, like the animals. The relation to the soil as property always arises through the peaceful or violent occupation of the land…" (81). Here Marx is pointing to

the *social* quality of labor in precapitalist formations, a point he shares with Mauss. Moreover, he recognizes that the violent process of primitive accumulation disrupts the communal nature of the social bonds that holds this precapitalist system in place. The loss of the social embeddedness of labor is obscured and devalued in the transition to capitalism and the tyranny of the commodity form of labor it imposes.

A post-colonial critique

Chakravorty Spivak's study of value refocuses attention on labor through a post-colonial critique of value theory. According to her, value means two separate things each with a given context. First, in the context of human consciousness, value refers to beauty, truth, and goodness. This approach coincides with an axiological interpretation of value because it is within human consciousness where we find "the home of the values" (Spivak 1990, 95), and where we can "site" the best fulfillment of such values. Spivak argues that through consciousness humans navigate between right and wrong and it is here where one finds fulfillment. While she acknowledges this can create the so-called "idealists" predication, she finds "consciousness as the defining predicate of the human being" (96).

The second context is referred to as "materialist," and is predicated on the subject of work. Following the lead of Marx, Spivak argues, "the worker produces capital because the worker, the container of labor power, is the source of value" (96). While this argument might simply be a rehashing of Marx's original argument, what she adds to the theory of value is quite profound. Marx argued that socially necessary labor (the measure of value) "is the labour-time required to produce any use-value under the condition of production normal for a given society and with the average degree of skill and intensity

of labour prevalent in that society" (Marx 1990, 129). What Marx did not account for and what Spivak brings forth, is that in the process of colonization and globalization, markets have created global hierarchies to which there is no "normal condition" for the worker. The value of labor in Third-World countries will always be less than those in the First-World. Thus, "it is possible to suggest to the so-called 'Third-World' that it *produces* the wealth and the possibility of the cultural self-representation of the 'First World'" (Spivak 1990, 96). Eduardo Galeano, who makes a similar argument, states;

> Latin America is the region of open veins. Everything, from the discovery until our times, has always been transmuted to European - or later United States - capital, and as such has accumulated in distant centers of power. Everything: the soil, its fruits and its mineral-rich depths, the people and their capacity to work and to consume, natural resources and human resources. Production methods and class structure have been successively determined from outside for each area by meshing it into the universal gearbox of capitalism. (1973, 12)

This post-colonial critique allows us to deconstruct value theory by disrupting the chain of value hierarchies. Spivak's goal is to use the concept of use-value to deconstruct the normalization of such hierarchies. In short, she argues that use-value, "is both outside and inside the system of [capitalist] value-determinations" (Spivak 1985, 80). It is outside the labor theory of value because it cannot be measured in a universally applicable manner and may reside outside the circuits of capitalist exchange (i.e. trade and barter, the myriad forms of self-valorization). However, it is not altogether outside because it can take on the value form of capitalism (i.e. labor-power). Whether use-value resides inside or outside the system of value-determinations, it is highly dependent on the circumstances

and context of the person or community in question. Thus, "Marx's value chain in fact continually enacts its own deconstruction" (Castree 1996, 71). As Castree argues, "for Spivak value is the 'prism' through which a complex, intersecting, but often discontinuous array of individual and group identities and activities in production and place are brought into a social relation" (72).

Spivak's central point is to add "textuality" to the theory of value because people make choices that are reflective of the interpretive frameworks they adopt and these comprise both materialistic and idealistic horizons of labor's subjectivity – an example for me being the Santa Clara Valley settler colonial formation that long has segregated immigrant and diaspora peoples into precarious labor. In other words, Spivak makes visible the many different ways people negotiate their social relations to fulfill valued needs, despite any "structural" position in the given regime of value creating relations of power/knowledge. While such an analysis may make new worlds visible, Castree believes, "those worlds can never be perfectly brought into presence" (1996, 68). Spivak's contribution to the theory of value offers insight into the importance of acknowledging alterNative positions on the concept of value and to the paradoxes that exist in attempting to make them visible and surmountable.

The theory of value and the anthropological machine

From an anthropological standpoint, the theory of value helps us to see how different people in different places and times have come to rationalize what is beautiful, worthwhile, and important. As anthropologist David Graeber suggests, "value… can best be seen in this light as the way in which action becomes meaningful to the actor by being incorporated in some larger, social totality" (2001, xii). Value, as Graeber sees it, is an

elusive concept because it is always in the process of being remade, thus, "everyone tends to lose track of the way their own actions contribute to reproducing and reshaping themselves and their social contexts" (258). Graeber suggests that the elusiveness of value theory is what might actually offer the possibility of producing an alternative to the market theory of value, or it may simply reaffirm economic hegemony. Graeber's point is that how we conceive of value is ultimately what makes up the context and norms of a given society.

Graeber contributes a key insight into the theory of value. According to him, the dominant social determination of the meaning of value helps to construct the foundation of societal norms: What we perceive as value and what we do with value can be liberating, because it may offer new subjectivities, and it can also be constraining, because it may obscure and mystify the construction of value via commodity fetishism. Where it appears that Graeber moves away from Smith, Marx, and Spivak, is in his theory of value, which is not predicated on labor, but on the creative potential to transform value. While there appears to be great distance between these ideas, there is actually also much in common. Marx recognizes the alienating aspects of work, and he explains, "labor as a liberating activity" (Marx 1993, 611). He also acknowledges that life is made through human actions. Value does not exist on its own, rather it is called into being by the human potential to transform it and that this is a political struggle rather than some universal and deterministic iron law of economics at the end of history. This idea is very similar to Nancy Munn's (1986), who belives, "actors create value through effecting positive value transformations" and through the navigation of these transformations a "community creates itself as an agent of its own value creation" (20). Munn's work helps

us to come to terms with the *continual struggles faced by communities to enact positive value transformations in the face of outside, often antagonistic, forces.*

This takes us back to the creative possibility of human action to transform value and society along with it. Bruno Gullì argues for the ontology of labor, in which "labor is being" (2005, 23). His point is that labor is a basic human activity that defines human history, although environmental anthropologists might argue that this happens in a manner that is never de-linked from the interactive reality of shifting relations to the natural conditions of existence at a given point in time and space. Marx referred to labor as the "living, form-giving fire" (1993, 361) because the "world is nothing but the making and the having been made of labor" (Gullì 2005, 6). This proposed ontology of labor describes labor as "neither-productive-nor-unproductive, but creative" (61). The creative aspect of labor is what allows it to transform value into something that is socially meaningful. Graeber believes that "creative action is to some degree revolutionary; but to be revolutionary to any significant degree, it must change that larger structure in which it is embedded" (249). The creative potential of labor to transform orthodox notions of value only exists as far as it is recognized as socially meaningful.

An anthropological understanding of value theory sheds light on the transformative potential of labor. But Agamben assures us that we must be careful of a human-centered approach. He refers to this approach as the "anthropological machine," and his reservation is "...precisely because the human is already presupposed every time, the machine actually produces a kind of state of exception, a zone of indeterminacy in which the outside is nothing but the exclusion of an inside and the inside is in turn only the inclusion of an outside" (2004, 37). "The open," or the separation between animality

and humanity, is produced by the anthropological machine and can create a state of exception for non-human beings and also force them into “bare life” (38), or subject to the domination of the sovereign human (Smith 2011). The anthropological machine can only be dismantled by rethinking the agency of more-than-human beings (also see Kohn 2013). After all, even Marx recognizes that the bee outperforms even the best human architect (see Marx 1990, 284). So while an anthropology of value recognizes its liberating potential, it must also question the same potential when it is restricted to only human freedom.

While I have not developed these theories in complete detail, which is out of the scope of this study, my goal is bring these theories into the discussion of value to highlight how the garden contributes to “the practical politics of the open end” (see Spivak 1990). A grounded analysis of the value theory as it pertains to the LMV community provides insight into how the actions of the community help it to navigate and make practical uses of the theory of value.

Cultivating Use-Value(s)

On a bright, fall afternoon I sat with Mary at a park near her home. She had brought with her some snap peas, grape tomatoes, and fuyu persimmons from her garden for us to snack on while we talked. Mary is an elementary school tutor and a community organizer, but as she always reminded me, “I’m first and foremost, a grandmother.” Unlike most of the others members of *La Mesa Verde*, Mary never talked much about her garden. She enjoyed her garden and appreciated the new abundance of food she was now able to grow, but there was always something else on her mind. Mary never had much interest in growing food but as she got older, her income declined and her diet related

health conditions increased. Like many others in the program, growing food had become a necessity, not a novelty. Her recurring statements about being a grandmother have profound implications for the phenomenological exploration of the forms of subjectivity emerging in the LMV community and its extended networks. Her comments also illustrate commitment to belonging to something larger than oneself and thus, an epistemology that is collective rather than individualistic.

As we sat in the park watching her granddaughter play, she explained to me how LMV had created a community filled with individuals and families guided by similar goals. She praised the LMV program because it had the potential to erase victimhood. She said, "all you have to do is be willing… and you can be successful." But for Mary, "successful" extended far beyond the ability to grow food. For her it meant the ability and desire to transform the community and strengthen social bonds. "Community control requires community support," she informed me, outlining in effect what is a common refrain in food justice and food sovereignty theoretical discourses. Over the course of this study I have visited countless gardens, each with its own personality. Mary's was basic upon comparison. She grew only the crops provided to her by LMV not because she did not want to grow more, but because she saw the program as an opportunity to create change. Eric Holt-Giménez (2011) argues that the transformative power of food sovereignty resides in its ability to be enacted as a social movement. He acknowledges that these movements are fragmented and only through recognition and acceptance of the diversity of these movements, can they then be united. In spite of the fact that each movement may take different paths, they all seek the same ends. Mary understood this. The value of the garden and its potential transformative power was predicated on its

ability to meet the diverse needs of each gardener. In Mary's estimation, this then opens the possibility for more collective action toward the creation of an alterNative world.

Gibson-Graham et. al. (2013) contend that "community gardens offer a simple vision of interdependence among the gardeners, other people, and the natural world" (xvi). They point to five ways in which gardens improve community economies. Gardens: 1) serve as a common property resource where goods and labor are shared, 2) contribute to individual and collective survival, 3) assure that individual and collective needs are meet, 4) share surplus, and 5) allow people to invest in them through their own labors. The traditional community garden often discussed in urban agriculture discourse involves one location that gardeners go to. LMV's difference is that it is organized as a loosely coalescing network of household plots. Nevertheless, LMV embodies many of these attributes because the praxis of the gardeners' networks allows participants to recognize and value their interdependence. Mary's goal as a gardener is two-fold. On the one hand, she wants to improve her health and become more self-sufficient, and on the other, she would like to use food to transform the community itself.

In many ways, Mary is not alone in this endeavor. In a discussion with a different gardener, Jessica, I was informed of the practical uses of growing food. "LMV saved my life," she told me. She meant this figuratively and literally. Jessica told me that many of the people she has met in the program are low-income and undocumented. The year 2008 was a hard one for everyone, but as she said, "this is reality, this is where we are headed." She was referring to the reality of life in the low-income communities of the Santa Clara Valley. While the Valley's wealthy residents are getting richer, the valley's poor, are getting poorer. For her, the garden is an instrument, which allows one to navigate

inequality. What became evident in this conversation was that Jessica believes one's ability to grow food coincides with their wellness and ability to transform the value of their food through their own labor's "creative fire." The decoupling or de-linking by Jessica's of wealth and happiness is an example of a revolutionary subjectivity enunciating epistemic disobedience whereby she *values* sociality over material accumulation. In this conversation she informed me how her community also uses her garden. She produces food for herself and her husband, and she also shares much more that just surplus with her neighbors as they too use its resources. This reminds me of how Mauss demonstrates that gift-giving societies are tightly woven together through responsibility and obligation. Mary is a "precapitalist" gift-giver precisely in the sense that the fulfillment of mutual social obligations is also experienced as the source of her own personal well-being. However, her sense of responsibility is not based on the obligation to give back, but on a conscious decision to do so in order to strengthen community solidarity.

The Moral Economy of the Home Kitchen Gardener

Several months later, I received a phone call from Jessica asking if I would like to accompany her and a neighbor to go gleaning for fruit, a process in which fruit is taken from the property of vacant homes, city streets, and public parks. This was a great opportunity to learn how people made practical use of urban spaces as a commons. Obviously, not everyone can have an orchard in the backyard, which is what makes gleaning a rational adaptation by anyone seeking to improve self-sufficiency in an environment territorialized through enclosures that block such efforts. The first house we stopped at had two peach trees. The house was on the market and looked as if it had not

been lived in for years. When we got out of the car we walked up to the house and took out our plastic bags that we had brought along with us from her home. Immediately, I reached for the peaches on the ground assuming that we should not take hanging fruit from someone else's tree. "Don't take those," Jessica said, "they might make you sick. Who knows how long they've been there?" Together we began taking peaches from the tree until we had our bags full. She taught me how to tell when the fruit was ripe enough to pick. From there, we moved onto the next house and harvested plums. Again, we left once we had full bags. Next, came figs. By the time we were on our way home we had more plums, peaches, and figs than any one of us could eat in a season. "What are you going to do with all of this," I asked her. "Freeze, preserve, and share," she said. Throughout the summer months, Jessica gleans from these unattended trees. She believes that keeping trees healthy and not letting their fruit waste on the ground reflects an important social value.

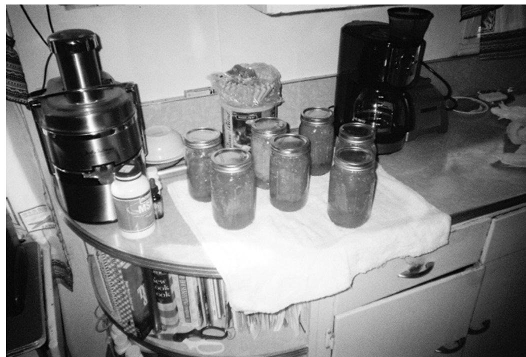

Figure 4:
Jessica's canning
(*Source: LMV gardener*)

The housing bubble forced many foreclosures, and in turn created an opportunity for other people to harvest fruit from vacant houses. Littered across the Santa Clara Valley are countless vacant houses and many have an abundance of fruit trees. After my

trip with Jessica and her neighbor, I became keenly aware of the waste that the numerous unattended fruit trees produce. Unused fruit is commonly found all over the city. Village Harvest, one of many formal organizations that operate throughout the greater San Francisco Bay Area, gleans unused fruit from backyards and small orchards and then distributes them to local food agencies to help feed the hungry and improve food security. Even still, there are plenty of trees that go un-harvested within the Valley. For this reason, Jessica and her neighbors go gleaning every few weeks. Jessica learns the location of these trees through websites and listservs, but mostly, through word of mouth. Every few weeks Jessica collects pounds of fruit to share with her family, friends, neighbors, and the larger community. When I asked her why she shares so much food, she simply said, "It's my role as a community member to do what I can to help my neighbors." Jessica does not have much, but what she does have, she willingly shares. The sort of agency that gardeners like Jessica and her neighbors enact seems quite different from the idea that Mauss proposes in his notion of "the gift" because they give without expecting to receive. When I asked Jessica why she gave so much, she said, "Because I don't want my neighbors to go hungry. We can't do this [survive] alone, we have to work together." Her and her close-knit community gives to maintain the survival of themselves and the community. While the garden subjectivities articulated by Jessica and others are similar to those presented by Mauss because they do progress the community to create stronger social bonds, they align closer with Wilson's concept of "relational accountability" whereby relationships (with humans and more-than-humans) create our realities and our accountability to those relationships sustain those realities (2008). The world that Mary hopes to hold together through her extensive sharing

network challenges the precarity imposed on them by neoliberal capitalism while influencing positive value transformations through acts of sharing. The value they see in food is part of the practical politics of the open end (Spivak 1990) because the sharing of food is a practical strategy for survival and resistance to the commodity form and the waste it produces.

There is an assumption that within the market economy, one can purchase all that is needed in order to live. In his study of Southeast Asia, James C. Scott (1976) uncovers a contradiction embedded within the market economy. He finds that the market economy passes the burden of economic unpredictability on to the most venerable. Scott's study takes place at a particular moment in history when the governments of Southeast Asia were imposing the market economy on rural peasant communities. This transition sought to "civilize" peasants while also making the nation-state more competitive in the global market. In these instances, peasants were forced to grow crops to sell in the marketplace; however, if the crop failed or did not sell, the burden of the economic loss was on the peasant. Scott argues that this logic goes against the peasant subsistence economy because their traditional economy is based on "risk avoiding behavior" (15). In other words, the subsistence economy is an ethical lifestyle that brings together a range of networks and institutions that act as "shock absorbers during economic crisis" (27). These strategies range from trade, craftsmanship, casual wage labor, and in some cases, migration. Scott's study demonstrates that while the market economy may place the burden on those most vulnerable, the moral economy protects the most vulnerable.

In a similar manner, the moral economy of the home kitchen gardener operates to maintain social solidarity and improve health outcomes for the most vulnerable in the

face of structural conditions that increase precarity. A LMV gardener, Luís, informed me, "Your garden is a reminder of how to live well." Not only does it produce food, but it also produces a sense of shared values and goals sought and accomplished. "When you share the food from your garden you greet your family, your friends, your community – you greet life!" he concluded. Luís' words strike resemblance to Mauss because in living well he is assuming the ability to share. His words extend beyond Mauss because he is embedded himself into the "metabolism" of the land and community. By greeting his garden he is confronting the "anthropological machine" and collapsing the "openness" between humans and non-humans by engaging in the "open whole." Luís' garden subjectivity is forcing us to "rethink human language and its relationship to those other forms of representation we share with nonhuman beings" (Kohn 2013, 14).

LMV gardens share for various reason, but the recurring theme that many gardeners feel is the relational accountability to other gardeners. Generosity operates as a core value within the community, but people do not give simply to give. Rather, they give because they feel that in giving they can sustain the "politics of the open end." As these gardeners have demonstrated, growing food reminds us of our place as mothers and fathers, as daughters and sons, as nurturers, and as community members. The radical subjectivities bring forth the moral economy of the home kitchen gardener and happen as a result of relational accountability. As Diana informed me, "Food is a happy medium, it is something we all share." Her ability to use food as medium coincides with her acknowledged responsibility to others in the program. Food as a medium also contributes to the recomposition of the working class because by growing and sharing food, gardeners are contributing to their own self-valorization. Upon entering the LMV

program, “You are not only given a bed,” Hector explained to me, “you are given access to a network.” Sharing food in the LMV community is part of a larger project of relational accountability because, as Marx, Mauss, Spivak, and Graeber help us to understand, value is always contested and only through the collective self-valorization of the working class can its political recomposition actively work toward positive value transformations.

Uprooting Labor

Labor is an instrumental aspect in human life, yet whether it occurs organically as life’s “form giving fire” or as an extension of estrangement and alienation, depends upon peoples pursuit of self-determination. People have always, and will always, continue to use their human labor for a variety of projects. However, how that labor is perceived is often called into question. According to Marx, labor “is a condition of human existence which is independent from all forms of society; it is an eternal natural necessity which mediates the metabolism between man and nature, and therefore human life itself” (Marx 1990, 133). As I have discussed, Marx believes that labor was and is the source of value. However, in drawing attention to this phrase, it is not my intent to discuss the source of value, but rather Marx’s use of the metaphor of “metabolism.” Marx believes labor to be a natural condition of the human experience, which exists independent of the particular social forms in which this necessity is organized and controlled. Throughout Marx’s work, he is careful not to confuse labor for work (also known as labor power). While the two are closely related, they are also drastically different. Labor is what sets in motion the metabolism between humans and nature because it involves transforming the world and the self in ways that alter the conditions of human existence. Work, on the other

hand, generates a system of social control, which alienates the worker from the means and results of his or her own productive activity. This is a key moment to invoke Marx's famous, but often overlooked, distinction between the working class *in itself* and the working class *for itself*. A working class *in itself* sells its labor to capital, and thus becomes labor-power. A working class *for itself* "asserts its autonomy as a class through its unity in struggle against its role as labour-power" (Cleaver 1979, 83). How and why one exerts labor not only helps to structure one's position in society, but also allows people the creative potential to enact their own agency in everyday lived "escapes" from the power and control of capital.

With this in mind, we can begin to see how the labor of the home kitchen gardener is quite different from the labor of the factory or office worker. While the factory worker is forced to sell his or her labor to the capitalist in order to survive, the home kitchen gardener asserts his or her own autonomy over work to produce his or her own means of subsistence. Over the time I spent with the LMV community, I had countless conversations about the labor used in gardening, and never once did anyone say they did not enjoy it. Sure, there were days when someone was too sick or too tired to be in the garden, or perhaps there were parts that they did not enjoy as much as others. But every person I spoke with enjoyed the labor of gardening. "You know," Laura, another LMV gardener, told me, "the garden is hard work, especially at my age, but it really is therapeutic to weed." This statement sums up much of the experiences of many gardeners. Weeding is one of the most disliked tasks of gardening, yet it offers an opportunity to get on your hands and knees and get your hands dirty; to be closer to the land as it is. "Working in the garden allows you to think," one gardener told me. "It

allows me to be outside," another said. Much of the alienation imposed on the worker by work can be replenished by the garden. As Silvia Federici (2009) argues, capitalism must conquer the body. She positions the body and the labor-power of the body as the original site of primitive accumulation. What she finds is that, "the body had to die so that labor-power could live"(141). Through the imposition of work, the body was disciplined and denied its creative potential so that labor-power could live as the object of capitalist desire. Marx often refers to this process as "vampirelike" (see Marx 1990; 1993) because being forced to become labor-power slowly destroys the body.

LMV gardeners counter the "vampirelike" aspects of work in at least two distinct ways. First, by confronting the biopolitics of work through the substitutability of their labor, gardens offer "escapes" from the industrial capitalism and have the opportunity to heal and nurture their bodies and communities through the growing, sharing, and consuming of healthy, nutrient dense, and culturally appropriate foods. Second, they extend upon Federici's argument of privative accumulation whereby, "the body had to die for labor-power to live." Federici does not mention that land also had to die - it too had to be conquered and deemed disposable. In the case of LMV, gardeners confront the historical legacy in Santa Clara Valley whereby industry positions the land as expendable. Through agroecology and bioremediation LMV gardeners are healing the land by healing themselves. The coevelness and co-production of health further engrains *La Mesa Verde*'s revolutionary subjectivity of relational accountability between land, people, and food.

Early one morning, I had a cup of coffee with Oscar, a thirty-four-year-old, Chicano single father. His hands were rough and callused. He wore a long-sleeved

flannel shirt, blue jeans, and thick boots. He drove up in a white Ford F250. Tools neatly lined the bed of his truck. He explained to me how his grandfather had taught him how to farm. "I love the smell of wet soil," he told me with a smile, "it reminds me of him." The memory of Oscar's grandfather lives on in his garden and in his actions. "I know he would want me to teach my daughter how garden" he said. Oscar attends LMV agroecology classes, but much of what he knows about gardening he has learned from his grandfather. The aspects of intergenerational learning and teaching are key components to the strength of the LMV program (see appendix B). Oscar is a landscaper by trade and as one master gardener told me, "He truly has a green thumb." His hours are long, and sometimes they extend into the weekend. But he always finds time for the garden. "I don't like counting on the government for anything," he told me. "If I can do it myself, I will." Oscar told me about his neighborhood and how he knew there were gangs and drugs around, but he always felt safe. Almost all of his neighbors had home kitchen gardens. Oscar laughed as he described the most unlikely of gardeners – the twenty-something-year-old bachelors, the gangsters, the children, the single moms, and even the elderly. He painted a mosaic of diversity that was connected through food and the stubbornly fierce, form-creating fire of emancipated labor.

Value Rationalities

One evening after an interview, I walked through the neighborhood toward my car. It was a warm September evening around eight. I expected the streets to be quiet and empty, but they were full of people, bikes, kids, and music. Ranchero music blared from house to house, dogs barked, the warm smell of roasted chiles and *carne asada* permeated the air. I paused for a moment as a rooster crossed the street. I could have just

as easily have been back in rural Mexico. In this instance I witnessed what Scott referred to as “thick” cities and neighborhoods (1998, 261). Places where people wanted to be, able to make and partake of life together. Scott argues that in order to understand why these mundane settings are so busy, one only need to look at the kitchen. His analogy is that the kitchen is “the most versatile setting – a place of food and drink, of cooking and eating, and hence of socialization and exchange” (137). This analogy not only works well for describing the community, but also for understanding the role of LMV and the growing of food in facilitating such exchanges, ultimately as acts of love.

Later that week I saw Oscar at an LMV event, and I asked him about the community. I was interested in the role food played in what I witnessed. He explained to me that growing food promoted self-sufficiency not just on the basis of food production, but because it helped to facilitate trust, and what I took to imply conviviality. “The only way to know I’m a real human, is to share,” he told me. My conversation with Oscar has led me to believe that his sharing of food is not part of a gift-giving society, nor does it follow the rational choice model where people give only with individual self interests in mind. Rather, part of the value of food is the gardener’s ability to be an agent in the value transformation of the community.

Michael Taylor (2006) argues that rational choice theory (RCT) is an overbearingly economistic way of thinking of the world. In the RCT argument individual interests are pursued in all contexts, even in the group or collective action setting. Therefore, what appears to be a selfless act is really an act to protect the group’s numbers and its overall safety, which ultimately benefits the individual. But as we see in news accounts everyday, the race and gender of the person suffering distress is filtered by

ideological presuppositions and dominant constructions of the “Other” and can precondition one toward action or the refusal to act. Taylor argues that RCT is an ideology that “denies to its subjects capacities and dispositions that are part of what makes us human” (55). If this were not the case, we would be as receptive to the health needs of the shelterless (homeless is a problematic category) as we are of the wealthy Silicon Valley barons with second, third, and even fourth and fifth homes at their disposal. Are the gardeners’ actions of gift-giving based on the assumption that they have something to get from it? Are Oscar, Jessica, and Mary assuming that someday they may need help so they might as well help others now? Or, do their actions remind them that they are a particular kind of human being?

While we might not ever truly know these answers, Juan Estevan Arellano believes that growing and sharing food is what has allowed Indo-Hispano communities in New Mexico and southern Colorado to survive for generations. *Convide* is a concept that merges the Latin *con* (with) and *vite* (life) to express the sharing of food and life. “Conviviendo, helping each other as community, instead of simply ‘sustaining’ to save and then invest somewhere else, is what has blessed us with ‘*una vida buena y sana y alegre*’ [a good and healthy and joyful life] because we have followed the simple philosophy of sharing the water, food and work and that has made our lives festive” (2010, 3). These sentiments are deeply felt by Oscar because it is through his actions of sharing that remind him of his humanness. Sharing offers “escapes” where gardeners live well and heal from a variety of historical traumas. This emerging revolutionary subjectivity is not one-dimensional, but multi-dimensional because it is an intersubjective experience that connects people like Oscar to his past, present, and future. In the same

way that Jessica shares with her neighbors out of relational accountability, Oscar maintains his relationships through the convivial experience of sharing.

According to Ivan Illich, "individuals need tools to move and to dwell. They need remedies for their diseases and means to communicate with one another" (2009,11). His point is that people need tools to validate their existence, certainly, but also to change society in ways that allows them to meet their needs. He refers to these as "convivial tools." He uses the phrase convivial because he believes it to be the complete opposite of industrial productivity. Conviviality is considered to be an "individual freedom realized in personal interdependence and, as such, an intrinsic ethical value" (11). Within the LMV community, the growing, enjoying, and sharing of food is a convivial tool that provides the "greatest opportunity to enrich the environment with his or her vision" (21).

Within the practical and mundane activities and uses of homegrown food, the LMV community of gardeners takes the "decolonial option" by de-linking themselves from colonial epistemology (i.e. materialist accumulation), cultivating relationships, and maintaining accountably to those relationship through the revolutionary subjectivity embedded in moral economy of the home kitchen gardener. "Food has ecological, social, economic, cultural, spiritual, and technological dimensions to it. Industrial agriculture has reduced it to a commodity… rendering it devoid of meaning" (Wilson 2011, 89). The confident voices of LMV gardeners testify that the value of growing food lays in its creative potential as a tool of conviviality. This is a rational response to the conditions of precarity imposed by the regime of neoliberal governmentality. And, finally, this may prefigure the appearance of more radical (actively political, even perhaps militant)

subjectivities which are likely required if we are to collectively challenge and transform the food system and society along with it by re-rooting and re-routing our labor.

Chapter 6: Keeping hand in the Earth: Steps to New Beginnings for Precarious Life

The first time I met Lucy was directly after LMV's annual summer harvest festival in August of 2014. We had been exchanging emails, phone calls, and text messages for several months, and when we finally met, Lucy gave me a hug. That is the way she is, inviting, humble, and warm. She grew up in Manila and moved to Singapore before finally ending up in California. She learned everything she knows about gardening from her grandmother who supported her and her family on their garden. Lucy is many things; she is a gardener, an artist, an activist, a mother, a grandmother, and a cancer survivor. When feeling healthy she spends much of her free time in the garden and when she falls ill, she spends the majority of her time trying to be in her garden. "When I was sick," she told me, "keeping my hands in the earth was like stepping into a new beginning. I thought, if this soil can squeeze out life, so can I." Lucy has been up and down with her health for many years. She helped organize a women's support group of cancer survivors. In addition, she encourages others in the group to use their gardens to help ease expenditures and to gain access to the most nutritional food around. Lucy has directly politicized gardening by merging her cancer survivor work with the promotion of the wisdom of having the personal space of a home kitchen garden and kitchen.

For Lucy, gardening is about two things – sustainability and women's empowerment. But her definition of sustainability is complex. It is not simply sustainable development (as per the World Commission on Environment and Development 1987) or the triple bottom line (e.g., Elkington 1998). Rather for her, sustainability is a mindset that requires a complete restructuring of priorities. This mindset, she told me, "changes

our perception of food." Lucy did not simply happen to stumble upon this mindset; rather, her life circumstances of precarity and the threat of cancer overturned her life and led her to make significant changes in her diet, livelihood, and most importantly, relationships with others. "Cancer, changes everything," she said. "What most people don't understand is that often times women [who need to buy costly prescription drugs to control cancer] would rather die than let their kids starve."

Lucy is not the only person I have talked with who was informed by doctors to go on expensive prescription drugs to control their illness. In fact, many LMV members were told to take prescription drugs to control blood pressure, intestinal and heart diseases, arthritis, and diabetes. The life histories of these LMV gardeners suggest a variety of ways in which they deal with their precarious financial conditions and demonstrate the elusiveness of Western biomedical remedies. While some gardeners may choose to take prescription drugs to control diet related diseases, this choice often comes with a variety of risks that often overlooked by health care professionals.

As a result, many participants in this collaborative ethnography reported having to turn to food as their first line of defense against the dissolute inequalities in access to health care and fresh and affordable food. I am by no means a medical doctor or nutritionist, nor do I claim to be offering a definitive statement about such a complex subject. I use previous empirical studies to confirm my findings, and I seek no further lab or test results to verify what I have been told. The findings reported here are based on the personal narratives and validated by lived experiences of the gardeners as engaged participants in multiple formal organizations (including LMV) and multiple, and often

overlapping informal networks, that appear to share the burden of a civil society's response to the spaces of neoliberal attack and neglect.

Before we can begin to unpack the articulation of a set of epistemologies about the healing aspects of food, we must first address the sociocultural and historical context of illness. Because everyone I spoke with in the LMV program either was diagnosed with type-II diabetes or knew someone who had been diagnosed, I focus attention on the classification and normalization of the disease. With this basic understanding of the political, ecological, and social construction of the disease, I explain how LMV gardeners are challenging diabetes prevalence through their own holistic practices of self-provisioning and sharing of food, especially with fresh organic fruits, vegetables, and tubers that lack availability and affordability in the segregated food junkyards of the Valley.

Beyond the Cultural Construction of Disease: Biopolitics and the "Bare Life"

Joan Gussow argues, "food is simply a lens through which the connections between other problems can be understood" (1991, 88). For this reason, food, diet, and taste are highly political (Allen 1999; Nestle 2002; Andrews 2008). The politics of food helps us to understand how trade, immigration, and economic polices produce vulnerability (Stone 2009; Brown and Getz 2011); to these, we should add agricultural and environmental policies as part of the imagining public policy gauntlet.

Vulnerability and the hierarchies that generate it are often hidden in plain sight. In fact, Seth Holmes (2013) argues that vulnerability is systematically produced and the "naturalization" of the hierarchies associated with vulnerability reinforces inequality. Food justice is not just about food security. It also challenges the persistent inequalities

that produce the conditions impinging on our biopolitical lives and well-being. Giorgio Agamben (1998) calls such a state of being the "bare life" because the body has been stripped of all rights and is rendered devoid of a political life (*bios*). Lacking a political life, the "homo sacer" experiences a condition of diminished biological life (*zoe*).

Mark Winne (2008) believes that income and education are at the heart of the "food gap." Less income often correlates with less education; but it is more than that. Education and income are mutually reinforcing. This means that the less income and education one's parents had, the less income and education one is likely to attain. It also means the less income and education one's children will likely have. The cycle is systemic and perpetuates itself. What makes Winne's contribution important is that he finds that health is also tied into this systematic process. Less education equals less income, which equals bad health. While this is not always the case, we must be attentive to the historical context in which the "food gap" is produced. While Winne's work does not directly discuss the Latino health paradox, his findings offer insight into how the health advantages many recent immigrants and their children have upon arrival begin to diminish the longer they stay in the U.S. and are forced into consuming the "American diet," consisting of nutrient deficient, highly processed, cheap food (see Winson 2013). The so called "food gap" reflects how the current conditions of "bare life" are faced by many low-income and communities of color in the U.S. This argument is furthered by Julie Guthman, who believes that "individual bodies are absorbing the so-called externalities of the production process" (2011, 181). Companies do not pay the real price for cheap food. They are essentially excused from accountability for so-called "negative externalities." It is individuals and communities that internalize the costs of the

discounting of environmental and public health harms of private investment and disinvestment decisions. Inequality means these harms are disproportionately distributed across geographic space, following the lines of income inequality.

Medical anthropology emerged in part to help explain how health and sickness were culturally constructed (Joralemon 2006). However, recently the field has exposed the political economy and ecology of wellness. For Mexican-origin people, this demonstrates the racialization of health. Michael Montoya (2011) argues that new epigenetic research on diabetes has shown that the risks associated with the disease are both environmental and biological. The current methods used to survey large ethnic populations take individuals as equals, as if they all live in the same conditions and are exposed to the same risks; but we know this is not true. The social, cultural, and economic environment of the barrio is far different from that of a predominantly white suburb or gentrified inner city. Thus, when we use population studies of Mexican-origin communities without attaching that group to the socio-historical context in which they live, we contribute to the racialization of the disease and naturalize the patterns of the distribution of disease as if they were unaffected by the environment or the contingent sociopolitical forces compelling changes in both social (class, race, gender) and spatial hierarchies that structure privilege at one end of the inequality spectrum and vulnerability (precarity) at the other end. The Mexican community is then deemed at higher risk of diabetes for biological reasons since the environmental aspects of the disease, which are at least as if not more important to developing type 2 diabetes, are silenced and erased. Montoya reveals that the silencing of the social and environmental risks of the disease

has racialized it as “Mexican,” while at the same time normalizing the social and environmental inequalities that have contributed to its existence.

The body, argues Montoya, must be understood through, “biology, history, experience, meaning, and context” (2011, 109). Without context, the genetic approach to diabetes research is reduced to a kind of anti-politics because it does not attempt to understand how the conditions for such a disease were created in the first place. In addition, Montoya insists that the “blame the victim syndrome” can only further distance the disease from its context and solidify its racialization. Under these conditions we need to unpack the historical process of urban development (as was done in chapter three) to understand how structural factors impact the health conditions of the urban poor. As Holmes argues, “health inequality is a form of structural violence” (2013, 44), and while we cannot undo the past, we need to address the conditions that support this inequality in order to find ways to challenge it.

Structural violence is a critical term used to understand how social and economic conditions both intentionally and unintentionally encourage certain behaviors that can have great implications on public health. According to Paul Farmer and his colleagues, “the term ‘structural violence’ is one way of describing social arrangements that put individuals and populations in harm’s way... The arrangements are structural because they are embedded in the political and economic organization of our social world; they are violent because they cause injury to people” (2006, 1686). The reality is that structural violence is “a mostly hidden, mostly unacknowledged form of violence having to do with the everyday, normal functioning of institutions and policies of society” (Dorworth 2001). The complex, often under acknowledged, conditions of structural

violence, perpetuates the existence of health inequalities in our country. Physical conditions like high blood pressure and blood sugar, are not just social constructions, they are biochemical realities that exist and are influenced by, and influence in return, the social constructions that help to produce them and continue the often overlooked realities of structural violence.

Diet is one way in which people experience and challenge structural violence. The right food can either heal the wounds of violence or continue its legacy. But diet is a highly political matter because what we eat affects our health on the one hand, and food sales on the other (Nestle 2002). The constant restructuring of "healthy food" is a result not simply of science, but of the motivations of science and the political influence of corporate agribusinesses. While the science itself may be "objective" – in the sense of an empirical measurement of data to test hypotheses, how it is used to inform the public is often highly political (e.g. see Oreskes and Conway 2010). But the racialization of scientific methods has also been analyzed and criticized for several decades, starting with the exemplary work of Sandra Harding on *The Racial Economy of Science* (1993). How risk plays out in the studies of food and diet comprise one the most controversial spheres of public policy debate today and accounts for the type of research that Montoya (2011) and others are conducting.

The politicization of the production of food is as old as capitalism and more recent developments have led to the rise of industrialized capitalist operations increasingly concentrated among a shrinking set of corporate actors that now dominate the entire food system. This is especially apparent with the rise since the early 1990s of the so-called "Gene Giants" (Monsanto, DuPont, Dow, Syngenta, Bayer) who dominate

the commercial agricultural biotechnology sector. Yet, the food system is "something that we do rather than as something that we objectively acquire" (Carolan 2011, 6). Easily said for those who control the food system. This leads Ackerman-Leist (2013) to recommend that we need to reexamine embedded inequalities as links between our globalized and national food systems and dietary patterns in vulnerable communities. The existing inequalities in these communities, i.e. lack of access to healthy and affordable foods, are part of a broad structural problem that was brought on by "white flight," according to Julie Guthman (2011, 84). Thus, the same development practices that privileged suburbia during the era of "white flight" have contributed to the declining quality of life and health conditions of the urban poor and working classes. As Montoya points out, the existence of diabetes in Mexican communities can be partially attributed to "radical lifestyle disruptions, dispossessions, [and] poverty (2011, 49). Worst of all, it has become easier to fortify foods with synthetic additives rather than addressing these underlying inequalities in access to fresh foods (see Nestle 2002; Pollen 2006).

Following the lead of Marion Nestle, Julie Guthman (2011b) believes that the discourse about health must not deny the existence posed by race, class, or other social projects that directly tie the inequalities associated with the decline of well-being. The problem according to Guthman and DuPuis, is that neoliberalism creates a particular subject, and in the process, neoliberalism "both produces obesity and produces it as a problem" (2006, 429). The neoliberal subject must be both over-indulging and self-controlling. But this subject was not created of her own free will. In fact, McElroy and Townsend (1979) found that over time the dynamic fluctuations and changes in our environments can affect the rates and patterns of diseases. While this view of the urban

environment might not be conceptualized as an ecosystem perspective as we in political ecology and resilience theory understand it, the authors found that current conditions that produce diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and asthma are a result of our underserved urban ecology (e.g. Sze 2007; Kurtz 2010; Guthman 2011). This "structural vulnerability" (Quesada et. al. 2011) is what systematically places low-income communities at greater risks of negative health outcomes.

While the urban poor continue to suffer from these inequalities, they also assert their own forms and practices of autonomy in seeking to improve their health outcomes in an environment steeped in the disparate impacts associated with the spatial politics of the dominant actors and agencies. For example, Kumar and Nair (2006) found that many Mesoamericans suffer from poverty, but their home gardens have helped them survive financial hardships while improving their well-being and livelihoods. Similarly, Bachmann (2009) found that the home gardens of Cubans in Havana do not provide the staple foods, i.e. corn or wheat, but they do provide nutritional complements that are culturally relevant. This is one of the reasons that the Slow Food Movement sees food as a "complex science" (Petrini 2006, 155), which takes an interdisciplinary approach to the study of health, culture, food safety, diet, farming, and history. A traditional knowledge perspective moves the discussion from disease prevention to wellness promotion, because embedded within the practices of traditional knowledge is the authentication of culture and tradition (Unnikrshnan and Suneetha 2014). This has also been illustrated by scholars working with the South Central Farmers in California (Mares and Peña 2010, 2011, 2012; Peña 2005) who emphasize the importance of the ability for Mesoamerican gardeners in

the U.S. to recreate a sense of place through their agroecological and ethnobotanical knowledge and practices.

Knowledge/Power Dynamics: Home Kitchen Gardening and Self-Healing

In the early stages of this study, many LMV gardeners I spoke with said that they wanted a venue where they could share their experiences and knowledge with other gardeners. When I asked if the workshops provided such a space many said it did, but they wanted a space that was less formal and more of a celebration. After three months of research in 2012, I went to Malin and told her about my findings. She thought it was great idea, but did not quite know how to integrate such an idea into the program model. By the spring of 2014, LMV created what they called a "community projects" program, which was influenced by Jamie, LMV's new director, and consistent with Sacred Heart's mission to create engaged community members. The goal of the community projects committee is to find and define an issue each year that members are passionate about and then to address the issue as they see fit.

When the community projects committee first launched in 2014, Malin told me how Sacred Heart administrators thought that the members would choose something like school lunches, and they would start a campaign in the Washington-Alma neighborhood to have healthy meals for students. Malin explained how it was through programs like this that Sacred Heart was able to influence what they think is important for the community. However, when the community projects committee got together to discuss their interests, they moved in a completely different direction, further illustrating how these member-led efforts gained an autonomous existence of their own.

Figure 5:
Health Eating Fair 2014
(*Source: Author's Photo*)

In the spring of 2014, I flew from Seattle to San José to attend the advisory meeting and to listen to the community talk about the project the committee wanted to host. Through consensus, the committee decided to host what became known as the Healthy Eating Fair. The goal of the fair was to share and spread knowledge about healthy eating within the community. They wanted the fair to have dancing, music, food, cooking, games, and information tables.[25] In other words, they valued opportunities for conviviality and sociality and not just the sharing of agroecological and ethnobotanical knowledge. The committee wanted to have community members, health providers, and garden experts attend the event and give away free information about everything from worm composting to the USDA "my plate" initiative. They wanted cooking demonstrations that would be both healthy and affordable and to give away fresh fruit

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[25] A similar fair was implemented by the South Central Farmers in 2005 during the lead up to the anti-eviction movement at their 10-acre urban farm site in South Los Angeles; see Peña and Mares 2010. This SCF fair included the sale of local artisan crafts, food tents offering decolonial recipes with produce from the farm, musical performances and poetry readings, and visits with medical students and nurses from the University of Southern California for blood pressure and other basic health screenings.

and vegetables to all that attended. Attentive to the politics of diabetes, they insisted that instead of gifting traditional candy bags to the kids, they would provide bags filled with sweet seasonal fruits.

On a warm June day in 2014, over two hundred people attended the first Healthy Eating Fair. The event was a huge success and everyone I spoke with was enthusiastic of the overall perception of the fair and how it was received by the LMV community. People of all ages came to show their support for what this group of gardeners was able to do. "I never thought they would have chosen to host a fair," Malin would later tell me, "but it was a success. And we have to celebrate those small victories, because that's what this is all about." *La Mesa Verde* organizers secured the venue, but other than that, the community itself did all of the actual organizing – procuring supplies, fresh food, tables and chairs; making arrangements with musicians and artists; acquiring city permits; arranging for speakers and transportation; conducting publicity and outreach. They chose who would be there by making the connections and calling to ask for professionals to host information tables. They decorated, found food donations, created the games, and invited a local youth *baile folklórico* group to preform. In addition, everything was done in both English and Spanish to assure that the event was inclusive. The event was a celebration of food and community and the *fiesta* spirit of conviviality was palpable and central.

While this event was successful, and I agree with Malin that we must celebrate these "small victories," my intent is not to romanticize the community's desire to engage in a form of self-determined collective action. The event itself had hiccups – like most such matters – and there were times when it appeared as if the fair would not even

happen. A handful of members stepped up and worked far more than others; this too is the case in most grassroots organizing campaigns. What began as a twenty-person committee, slowly dwindled to about four or five members who led the way in getting the organizing work done. But on the day of the event, everyone was there to help. Had I not been part of the internal workings of the committee before the event, I would have never known these facts. I have been urged by the organizers to share the story of this little victory in the struggle for environmental and food justice. This event is important because it illustrates how the community persevered and because it was the first time that the LMV community actually convened itself to discuss what they thought was important for people to know about food, health, and gardening. It was a time for community knowledge and experiences to be given a privileged and prominent space.

Decolonial methodologist Linda Smith argues that, "by naming the world, people name their realities" (1999, 157). While Smith is more specifically discussing the use of indigenous geographical names, I extrapolate from Smith's suggestion and couple it with both Esteva's quest to "celebrate the common man [sic]" (1992, 22) and Aguirre Beltrán (1967) who believes marginalized communities name their needs by creating "regions of refuge." Esteva argues that these regions are constructed when men and women collectively work towards the recovery of needs rather than wants, which is dismissed as the imploding subject of the neoliberal hyper-consumer construct. Many in the LMV community started gardening because they needed to, not because they wanted to. These gardens allow people to survive and flourish in spite of the damaging effects of the structural violence associated with the neoliberal organization of the biopolitical life under late capitalist modernity. The stories that follow are only a handful of the many I

have collected throughout my time with LMV gardeners. They expose the common sense logic of self-provisioning and how the garden allows people to name their needs and the act on those needs to improve their well-being. By linking the concept of need to well-being, the gardeners are in effect remaking the concept of value, perhaps in part by extending and enriching our understanding of value, a contingent aspect of health and well-being.

The Common Sense Logic of Self-Provisioning

One of my original interests in conducting research with *La Mesa Verde* was to understand the many ways in which the community uses the garden as a form of self-provisioning. I was interested in learning how resources move around, how labor and knowledge were shared, and how food allowed people to gain a measure of control over some of the apparent conditions that affecting their own health. But when I took to the field my questions about health and healthy living did not get me anywhere. My initial reaction was that LMV gardeners seemed to care more about how pretty their squash looked or how tasty the tomatoes were. One of the principal reasons LMV has been able to secure funding through the Santa Clara Valley Health Trust is the continuing increase of diabetes in the Latino community, but when I asked about diabetes, I received blank faces. There were parents who were concerned about their children and what the schools were feeding them, but there seemed to be little urgency to address health problems of adult onset diabetes.

I felt lost and almost dropped the discussion of health altogether. Then I had a discussion with Laura, who has been able to control her type 2 diabetes without going on medication. I asked her what healthy living and eating was, and how or if, her and her

husband were living such a lifestyle. She did not say anything for a while; she just looked at me as if she was looking beyond me. Then she turned to her garden and said, "Healthy living is when you can go outside and pick a few blueberries off a bush in your own yard, put them in your yogurt and eat it right then and there." She said it so confidently, so matter-a-fact, that it has always stuck with me. I began to think of this entire study in a manner that seemed similar to that of Gary Nabhan (2002) and his project of "coming home to eat." In the text, he says he "realized that food should be valued less for its caloric content and more for what it expresses about our relationships with the world" (ibid 18). I was slowly becoming aware of the subtle ways gardeners were taking control of their health by restoring traditional foods and healing practices

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Figure 6:
Blueberry Harvesting
(Source: LMV Gardener)

For many of the LMV gardeners in this study, food is a "healing agent" (Shmid 1997, ix). This means that food contains more than just calories, but also social and cultural meaning. Similar to Nabhan's realization, the physical health of LMV gardeners coincides with healthy relationships with their food and community. Developed countries

face large-scale chronic lifestyle-related diseases[26] and the developing world is not too far behind (King et. al. 1998). While the medicalization of disease has benefited pharmaceutical companies, many low-income communities have been priced out.[27]

Embedded within traditional knowledge are practical ways to improve health that span across a variety of dimensions including "medicines, food and nutrition, rituals, [and] daily routines and customs" (Unnikrshnan and Suneetha 2014, 14). As Gregory Cajete believes, we remember in order to remember. "Once people break the cycles of remembering they forget essential life-sustaining relationships and behave in ways that have led to the ecological crisis we see today" (1999b, 12). Cajete believes that modernity is materially rich and spiritually poor because these cycles have been broken. All of the gardeners I am about to discuss are low-income and several are recent migrants to the U.S. Some of their self-provisioning practices are ancient and others are new. Yet, what remains central to their practices is their passion to share what they have learned with those who want to listen.

Lucy

During one of my first trips to San José, Malin told me about Lucy. She told me how she had reoccurrences of cancer and had been in and out of the hospital several times. It took me almost a year before I made it to Lucy's home to see her garden and learn how she was using it to improve her well-being. Lucy is a Filipina in her mid-fifties. She has lived in the U.S. for almost two decades in several different locations in

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[26] "National Diabetes Statistics Report, 2014." The data in the report was completed by the National Center for Chronic Diseases Prevention and Health Promotion

[27] This data comes from the National Association of Community Health Centers in their report, "The State of Unmet Need for Primary Health Care in America."

the South Bay. She is talkative, friendly, and always smiling. She leads by example, and in spite of the fact that she has gone through several cancer treatments her spirit is always high. “If my garden can support me,” she said, “than I can relax.” While there have been many hard times during cancer treatments, she told me that she attributes much of her survival to the knowledge and social bonds she has gained through gardening. She was born in Manila and later moved to Singapore, and informed me that as a kid she remembered that all of the old people were always healthy because their garden provided them with life, both figuratively and literally. “Living here in the U.S.,” she told me, “was the first time that I felt insecure with my health.”

Lucy’s experience confirms the existence of the immigrant health paradox. She spent much of her life in so-called “third-world” countries, yet when she moved to one of the richest countries on the planet, she was unsure about her ability to protect her health. She told me that the problem in the U.S. is that it is very hard to live healthy if you are low-income. When explaining what health meant for her, she said, “It’s not about making more money, or moving from seven to ten dollar an hour. It’s about changing a lifestyle.” But there is very little space for such a lifestyle for her in the U.S. Even the recent trend of home gardening has been under scrutiny (e.g. Siegel 2012, Kurutz 2012). People do not have opportunities to create sustainable lifestyles, which is why Lucy believes gardening encourages sustainability and empowerment. Lucy is offering a significant insight because this suggests that the gardeners are fully aware of how biopolitical power affects their status as U.S. residents and members of the working class. They also recognize that gardening is a way to directly resist the effects of biopower and to embark

on the politics of self-enunciation by transforming the meaning and value of food through self-provisioning as part of the struggle for a more autonomous life.

I begin with Lucy's story because of her practices of self-provisioning, and more importantly, how her garden subjectivity allows her to see herself as she sees the garden. Lucy follows the biomedical recommendations of her doctor to treat her cancer, but she uses her garden to heal from the cancer treatment physically, physiologically, economically, and spiritually. She told me how it took almost a year to get her hands on a durian tree (*Durio zibethinus)*. The fruit, she informed me, originates from Southeast Asia and holds spiritual and physical healing powers. "Fruit of the Kings" is how it was often referred to in the past because of its large and formidable thorns. She also told me that she uses several antioxidant-rich foods (mainly berries, which she grows in her yard) to help purify her system after radiation treatments. What and how Lucy eats allows her to create a sense of self *in place*. Lucy has spoken at San José City Hall about the need to support low-income cancer survivors, using her garden as a platform to talk about the importance of eating and living well. She holds survivor group meetings in her garden and teaches about gardening. Her goal is to teach women how to use the garden to help lower bills, create community support, and alleviate the pressures imposed on people who take medication to survive. Her garden is a space for the conviviality of the alterNative moral or social economy.

Luís

Luís is a perfect example of how food carries more than calories. "When I first started, all I wanted was organic foods," Luís told me the first time we met. Luís is a Chicano male in his late fifties and was told by his doctor that he was overweight, had

high blood pressure, and that he needed to change his diet before he developed diabetes. He grew up in the Santa Clara Valley and remembers the farmworkers' struggles of the 1960s and 1970s. The first time we met was at his office in North San José. His office was filled with pieces of the Chicano movement. Pictures of the United Farm Workers were on tables and filing cabinets. A black, red, and white *viva la huelga* poster stood behind the door with the UFW triumphant eagle perched high. Behind his desk was a picture of César Chávez, and as we spoke, it became apparent to me that Luís was a determined and passionate man. When he found *La Mesa Verde* he thought it was a perfect program to simply grow, as he said, "organic foods." The problem with that, he would later tell me, is that "everything branches out." This means that what begins as a simple act of trying to gain access to organic foods is connected to a variety of other aspects in our daily lives. Today, Luís is part of the advisory committee at LMV; he leads the food systems workshop, and is an active participant in several other areas of the program. His garden has transformed how he sees himself within the community.

"You see," he said as I listened to him talk one day, "the plot in your yard is a reminder." The reminder Luís is referring to is more than his personal pursuit of eating better, but also living better in a community context. Luís's garden is neither the biggest nor the most diverse of the LMV gardens, but his garden allows him to be one of the most connected of all the LMV gardeners because he sits on various committees and speaks fluent English and Spanish, allowing him to attend and lead workshops in both English and Spanish. He enjoys the program because it helps him to become more aware of what he is eating and how his diet affects his health.

One of the goals of LMV is to raise consciousness about the social issues concerning food. Through dialogue and discussion LMV members discuss health related concerns. This is where Luís has made his biggest impact on the group. When he met with his doctor, who told him about his high blood pressure concerns, Luís made small life-style changes that turned into big improvements in his health and sense of well-being. Coinciding with growing food in his garden, he began doing his own research on traditional diets. He moved away from processed foods and refined sugars and he now eats less meat and bread. The garden is a reminder to eat what is in season. With this, he found a new appreciation for what he eats, and because he is able to grow much of what he eats, he feels like he is in direct communication with his food. “The health side,” he told me, “brings in the spiritual,” and it is within this spiritual side where Luís has found his place as a person who shares what he has been able to learn with others in the community within and beyond LMV.

Reflecting on Southwestern tribes, Gregory Cajete offers the following observation: “Pueblo gardening involved direct experiential learning about plants and their natural relationship to humans, to each other, and to their habitat” (2000, 128). As Luís connects more directly with his food, he participates in experiential learning by participating in the “biological synergism” (131) between plants and humans. In fact, “in most traditional cultures, health equates with physical, mental, social, spiritual and ecological balance (Unnikrshnan and Suneetha 2014, 17). Luís told me that gardening is about “watching and witnessing,” and being part of LMV’s “shared food cultures.” He told me that gardening “needs to fit into the everyday life of people.” Luís has found a place for gardening in his everyday life and he shares that with his community. Since

taking on gardening he has seen his stress levels drop, his blood pressure lowered, and he has lost fifty pounds. When I asked him what the limits to a program like LMV are, he was unsure. Luís never wanted to be a part of the "food thing," as he said, but today he is a leader and spokesperson in the community. Malin told me one of her pursuits was to "meet people where they are at." If someone only wants to grow organic squash, great, that is a worthy first step, or the "carrot" as she used to say. But as Luís's experience demonstrates, growing food has the potential to stimulate curiosity and cooperation through experiential learning and can drastically improve health and well-being.

Grace

Grace has been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. She is a soft-spoken Chinese immigrant who appears to speak only when she feels she has something important to say. Her warm smile encourages other LMV members to converse with her and share knowledge. Grace is in her late fifties and has spent the past fifteen years living in the Santa Clara Valley. She once told me that she developed diabetes over time, but did not realize it until she started losing her eyesight. "Diabetes," she said, "is just one of those things that happens." The way that she said this gave me the impression that it was just something that everyone had. I asked her if she knew anyone else with the disease, and she said yes. In fact, at a recent *La Mesa Verde* event, Malin asked if anyone had a family member with diabetes, and all forty-five people in the room raised their hands.

When I interviewed Grace, she invited me over to her home to eat lunch with her in the garden. I arrived around eleven-thirty in the morning because she likes to eat outside before it gets too hot. Her home is nestled in an old neighborhood in north San José. I entered her yard through a side gate where mint, thyme, rosemary, and goji berries

lined the side of the house. When I arrived, she had our meals waiting for us on a table in her large back yard that contained a concrete slab in the center. At the far end of her garden she has large fig and persimmon trees. She had two raised-garden beds and some crops directly planted in the backyard soil. She told me that she grows blueberries along the south side of her home so that she can make jam when the season gets late. She had several types of cucumbers, squashes, melons, and heirloom tomatoes. She also had an herb garden, which she used almost daily. As we ate lunch we talked about her life, health, and LMV. She made me homemade kung pao chicken, fried rice, roasted carrots, and an arugula and tomato salad. All of the vegetables we ate that day came from her garden. Because she is able to produce a large quantity of vegetables, she is able to spend a little extra cash on good grass-fed or free-range meats and diary products. She told me that her diet now makes her feel like she has more energy, and because she produced it, eating the food feels more rewarding.

Before Grace was diagnosed with diabetes, she told me that she never really felt right; something was always off. Then one night, she got into her car to drive home and her eyesight was blurry. She was frightened and unsure about what was happening to her. She saw a doctor who informed her that she had developed a severe case of diabetes and that blurry vision was a side effect. Grace lives by herself, so losing her ability to see was tragic. She took quick action and began looking at ways she could change her lifestyle. She said that it must have been fate, because soon after her diagnosis LMV volunteers, who were out canvasing door-to-door looking for people to join, visited her home to tell her about the program. She signed up on the spot. Within a year Grace was growing most of her own vegetables, she was using the fruit trees in her backyard, and she shared her

surplus with her neighbors. In addition, her doctor took her off prescription medication, and her vision returned to the point of allowing her to drive again.

Grace told me that she typically does not eat fried rice anymore, but she wanted to make me something that she remembered from growing up. She has moved away from white rice and today eats more brown rice and other whole grains. She also grows herbs for tea and bitter melon to help lower blood sugar levels. For people with diabetes, one of the biggest concerns with processed foods is that they digest quickly. In fact, in many cases, they digest too quickly. Traditional diets, like the one that Grace has moved towards, are full of whole grains that digest slowly (Schmid 1987; Nelson 2008). As the stomach digests carbohydrates, it coverts these into glucose, a type of sugar, to fuel the body's energy needs. The faster something digests the higher levels of glucose someone will have in their stomach at a given time. As glucose or blood sugar levels increase, the pancreas release insulin. Insulin is used by the body to allow glucose to enter into the cells and provide the body with energy. The type 2 diabetic, on the other hand, often has fat deposits, which limit the insulin's ability to allow glucose into the cells. The cells then send a signal to the pancreas to produce more insulin and to the liver to release more glucose. Eventually the body reaches a point where both the insulin and glucose levels are so high that the body crashes. The inability to absorb glucose results in high blood sugar and high insulin levels, and overtime the overworked pancreas may stop functioning and create insulin deficiency. The individual may then become dependent on insulin injections. While this is an oversimplified version of what happens in the digestive system, the important point is that traditional foods tend to digest slower. This means that by eating a traditional diet a person retains the sense of feeling full (satiated)

because the food is digested into glucose slower, which requires less insulin over time. Traditional low-carb foods are in this sense the original "slow food." For many in the LMV program, slow food is not about dining at an exclusive restaurant with a well-known chief using locally sourced produce, but rather, eating with intention and cultivating awareness of the body.

Karla

I will always remember Karla's warm smile and her heartfelt laughter when I first met her. She continues to amaze me, in part, because of her genuine humility. Karla is in her late fifties and has spent her lifetime in the Santa Clara Valley. She descends from a long line of people who were born and raised in California and have continued to work the land. With relatives in Santa Cruz, Salinas, Modesto, and Soledad, her family genealogy is deeply rooted in California history. The home that Karla grew up in is now part of a country park in South San José. She used to spend the summers on the coast fishing and crabbing with her uncle and family. That home is now also part of the California park system. "Growing up," Karla told me, "I didn't care much for school. I liked working in the fields." Karla explained to me how working in the fields when she was younger was great because she got to spend time with her family while enjoying the outdoors. Before the tech boom in the Valley, she knew the Valley terrain so well that she could simply smell the air to know what part of the Valley she was in and what season it was, illustrating how a sense of place involves all of the senses. She explained to me how the Valley had different things growing at different times, cherries, apricots, plums, etc., and she knew exactly where the orchards and fields were, and when they were in bloom or maturity.

As the Valley changed, Karla and her family were forced to become more urban. While they once lived off the land, her father soon became a gardener for wealthy families. Over time, her urban life had caused her several diet related health conditions. Most recently, Karla was injured while at work, but because she was working off the books, she did not receive worker's compensation. She was bed-ridden and would often be sick. Unable to pay the high cost of medical bills, Karla was forced to use the healing techniques of her grandmother, who was a *curandera*, or traditional healer. Karla has always had a garden but when LMV provided supplies to build raised garden beds along with seedlings and drip irrigation, gardening became much easier. She quickly remembered her grandmother's healing remedies while exploring other remedies through the LMV network. Similar to what Shava et. al. (2010) suggests, by (re)gaining access to gardening, Karla has revived traditional healing and nutritional knowledge. Today, she helps supply her neighbors and the LMV community with milk and water kefir starters, which provides the body with beneficial bacteria that has probiotic properties (Fallon 2001, 86). She also makes tonics with her plants and herbs to stay as healthy as she can.

When Karla walked me around her garden, she said, "These [herbs] are more than plants, herbs are life." She continued as she explained the importance of food in her life, "Gardening is like bringing back part of my past." The modernization of the industrial food system has removed many people from their past traditions of gardening. "It's a dying art," Karla explained. As we continued to talk it was clear to me that growing food is a central part to Karla's life history and while she grew some food before LMV, the program enhanced her ability to grow food and connected her to other urban gardeners seeking similar goals. According to Michael Milburn, for many traditional cultures,

“there is no clear distinction between food and medicine” (2004, 411), which is why Karla’s story is so important. By practicing and restoring traditional methods of eating and growing, Karla and her family have found ways to heal physically and psychologically from the violence associated with the imposition of industrial and processed foods.

Lupe

I first visited Lupe’s home with one of the Master Gardeners. I was invited to follow the Master Gardener to observe and record how she interacts with the LMV community. On that day, we visited three homes and Lupe’s was the last visit that day. She had a magnificent garden with an abundance of diverse crops. She had heirloom sweet corn growing along her back fence and she had created a trellis for her *chayote* to climb and provide shade for strawberries, arugula, mustard greens, and red leaf lettuce. . She told me that this is what her mother did back in Mexico, so it was only common sense that she do it as well. On the day I visited Lupe, she had only been with *La Mesa Verde* for one year, which is why she still had a Master Gardener visiting her garden once a month. The irony is Lupe does not, nor did she ever need a Master Gardener, but, as she told me, “I like the Master gardeners because they help me out with things I don’t know about. They also show me new things.” Like many other recent immigrants in the program, Lupe benefits more from gaining access to resources such as drip irrigation than she does from the knowledge of a Master Gardener.

After touring Lupe’s garden, she prepared us a meal of *chayote,* onion, tomato, with stuffed *jalapeños* (see recipe in appendix C) and homemade *limonada* made the “Mexican way” from her lime tree. She walked us through her step-by-step process

because she wanted to be sure that we understood how to follow the recipe and gastronomical practices required to prepare this delicious treat for our families. She explained to us how hard it is for her family to stay healthy. She makes almost every meal and snack from scratch and uses few processed ingredients. Throughout the summer she makes traditional Mexican *aguas* from strawberries, melons, hibiscus (referred to as *jamaica* in Mexico), lemons, and limes grown in her backyard. “That way,” she told us, “it has no added sugar.”

Just over a year before I met Lupe, she had developed an intestinal condition. She visited the doctor on several occasions, but they could not pin down what exactly was occurring in her digestive system. Over the course of several visits she was prescribed different medications and even antibiotics, but none of them worked. She was then told to change her diet and begin consuming low-fat dairy and whole grain bread. Still nothing. She grew irritated because she was spending money on drugs that she thought had no effect. So, she simply stopped taking it and, although she did not inform her doctor, returned to a similar diet she had before crossing over to the U.S. She integrated *chayotes,* tomatoes, and chiles into meals almost everyday; she stopped buying soda and juices. Within a few short weeks, her intestinal maladies were resolved. When she returned to visit the doctor, he told her the medication must have worked and what was surmised to be an infection was gone. When she told him she had stopped taking the medication several weeks earlier he was shocked and asked why. She told him that with medication her body was always off and only through food could she achieve some sort of balance. Satisfied with her answer, he said, “Whatever you’re doing is working, so keep doing it.”

Lupe's experience with health professionals was very similar to the Mixtec migrants farmworkers documented by Holmes (2013) in Washington State whereby their marginality encouraged further vulnerability and the silencing of that vulnerability. Immigrants confront health care differently, and experience the structural violence embedded in the health system at different levels than many Americans because immigrant health care often operates as a form of socialization (see Gálvez 2011). The power/knowledge relationships experienced by immigrants in the medical setting can challenge ancient traditions of healing and well-being by forcing immigrants to negotiate between the received knowledge of medical professionals and the passed down wisdom of elders. Lupe was forced to make a choice of what was best for her at a given time. Gálvez explains that this negotiation is present in many immigrants because the U.S. health care system is seen as a model of modernity, and the quest for modernity (whether job or well-being) is often one of the many reasons people end up in the U.S. in the first place. Lupe's case provides insight into the failures of modernity. As Lupe finished telling me her story she looked to my plate and said, "*come sus jalapeños, especia es saludable*/eat your jalapeños, spice is healthy."

Ronald Schmid, following the wisdom of age-old *curanderas*, argues, "nature cures." However, "for nature to cure, one must understand what nature is – what is natural – and live by it" (1997, 1). While determining what is "natural" and what is not can sometimes be difficult, for Lupe it was simple. As she told me, "When I eat from my garden, I feel good." She told us that when she eats food from her garden, she knows where it comes from, how it was produced, and that it gives more meaning to her food. Among LMV gardeners, Lupe is considered to be one of the best cooks. She attributes

this reputation to the fact that she combines what she has in her garden with harvest techniques based on the seasonal cycles. She knows when a particular crop is ready for a particular recipe and the decision about when to harvest is a choice made with the vital gastronomical or culinary qualities in mind. The best-known example of this is "green tomatoes," which can be the same varietal as any given vine-ripened tomato plant but are selected at an earlier stage for culinary reasons. She experiments with food and crops because she wants to grow and eat as much as she can from her garden, and she does this in a mindful way, tuned into the life-cycle of the various crops.

When talking about Lupe and her restorative and seasonal approach to gardening, cooking, and eating, I often get a bit too "romantic" about self-provisioning and forget how hard it is for her to maintain such a lifestyle. Lupe does not work for a wage; she looks after her two children and a few other kids in the neighborhood. Yet, just because she has time to work in the garden, does not mean that her children want to eat from the garden. "I don't know what my kids eat at school," she told me. She makes them a homemade meal everyday, but her son often informs her that he trades things to get soda or candy. Lupe is one of the most outspoken people in the LMV community about addressing school lunches. Lupe's passion is very similar to the view championed by Janet Poppendieck, who believes that "schools are the place to influence children's eating habits," (2010, 12). Alice Waters, the owner of Chez Panisse Restaurant in Oakland, is an advocate for educational experiences in the garden. Her edible schoolyard program at Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School in Oakland sparked international interest and continues to spread throughout many U.S. cities (see Waters 2008). The relationship between schools and the family are mutually reinforced; a school can only do so much in

the development of a child if the family does not follow through on its obligations. Likewise, Lupe's actions only mean so much if her children go to school and are then provided with cheaply processed and unhealthy foods.

Nancy

When I first met Nancy in 2012, her and her husband lived close to Sacred Heart and were among of the first families to join the LMV program. Over time she had become extremely vested in the program and volunteered as much as she could. Nancy and her husband are both in their late fifties and are white. When they began the program they both suffered from what medical experts term "social anxiety disorder." A doctor never officially diagnosed Nancy because her anxiety prohibited her from leaving the house. She did her own research and felt that the symptoms presented were very close to how she felt. The only person that would stop by was their son, who would drop off groceries and talk with them every few days. Both her and her husband were out of work, depressed, and lived almost entirely on disability. One day, LMV organizers came to her door to ask if she wanted to be a part of the program. At first she wanted nothing to do with the program, but her son thought it would be good for them, so they joined.

"Within months," Malin told me, "I could see a difference in her." For the first time in a long time Nancy wanted people to see her garden and what she was growing. She started a blog and when news reporters wanted to do stories on LMV, Malin would often showcase Nancy. "The smallest of changes, can have lifelong implications," Nancy told me one day while we talked at a nearby coffee shop. "You have to understand," she continued, "this is more than a garden." Nancy explained to me how her garden literally changed her live. Her garden reconnected her to food, provided a greater understanding

of food and health related issues, informed her of where her food came from, and most of all, she felt more connected with herself. In spite of the challenges she confronted daily as a result of being a part-time precarious worker trying to navigate an industrial food system and a food desert, her garden was a place where she can find a sense of peace and stimulate personal growth. By the end of the first year, Nancy was a regular at LMV events. Eventually, she reduced the effects of her diabetic condition, and she was part of a community. “Some families,” she let me know, “are afraid to come out, and this program can help alleviate that.”

Gregory Cajete claims that the loss of traditional lifestyles in Pueblo communities is the result of many compounding factors. In fact, “traditions lie dormant as the result of the interplay of historical, economic, and sociocultural factors whose cumulative effect has been to disconnect an entire generation of Pueblo people from their gardening roots, traditional food, and healthy nutrition” (1999c, 92-3). His point is that modernity has transformed the subjectivity of many Pueblo people, and as a result the meaning of gardening has changed and traditions have been lost. He also believes that these traditions are never dead or disappeared and they can be remembered through experiential teaching and learning. I am not assuming that Nancy has the knowledge of a Pueblo farmer, or that her cultural traditions have been suppressed in the same ways as the Pueblo. What I am arguing is that regardless of her ethnic or cultural background, the negative externalities of the industrial food system had severed the connection between food and well-being. Her homegrown food improved her own well-being, sense of place, and relations with other LMV community members. Nancy’s precarious status reveals how class is also a factor creating the conditions for the illness and draws attention to the alienation that

many lower-income people experience when they confront the neoliberal capitalist food system.

What makes Nancy's story particularly poignant is what it reveals about class inequality and the continuing process of enclosure, privatization, and displacement driven by gentrification in the Bay Area. While she saw tremendous beneficial changes in her health and social well-being while participating in *La Mesa Verde*, she was recently forced to move and lost her garden. The South Bay is one of the most expensive places to live in the U.S. and Nancy's rent was raised to a price that she could no longer afford. Her and her husband have yet to secure full-time jobs and now lives in a low-income housing complex where all they have is a room, a bathroom, and a hotplate. The loss of her garden has meant that Nancy has been forced back into the "food junkyard" and must often buy cheap processed foods. She currently works the night shift at a packaging facility, but during the day, I often see her volunteering to do paper work, make phone calls, or run errands for the LMV staff. She tries to maintain her garden networks but because she is often working during LMV workshops, many of her ties have weakened. She told me that she no longer feels like the person she was when I first visited her. She sleeps most of the day in order to work all night, and she misses her garden. Yet, Nancy is not letting her circumstances stop her. She volunteers as much as she can at Sacred Heart to stay connected with LMV and its members and regularly attends meetings. When I left, Nancy told me, "LMV wants to start a movement, but they don't realize they already have. The roots are underground and the implications are life-long." She told me that by gardening we participate in the cycles of life. Nancy's clear optimism is a striking

example of how a garden subjectivity moves toward well-being. Nancy feels confident that she will have her garden once again.

Biopolitics and Biopower in Struggles for Food Autonomy

Many of the people I have talked with over the life of this project view health as a complicated concept. While many believe that health starts with food, they recognize that the healthier the community is as a whole, the healthier families and individuals are able to become. As I mentioned earlier, one of the many strengths of the LMV community is that it does not depend on one person. While the passion and effort of the LMV organizers should not be downplayed, the real strength of this program lies in the emergence of member-driven “mutual reliance” networks. As Luís told me one day, “The heart of this program is not the gardens, it’s the people.” Historically, Yvette Flores argues, health in traditional Mexican communities depended on “individual, family, and community being in balance with one other and with the environment and spirit world” (2013, 1). The self-help and mutual aid healing practices that take place in these communities are a complex affair because they are at once biophysical, historical, and culturally specific, and therefore, simultaneously spiritual and material.

Synthesizing the work of Duran and Duran (1995), Flores argues, “intergenerational trauma and the prevalence of racism, discrimination, and institutionalized systems of oppression that emerged from conquest and domination adversely affect the spiritual, emotional, and physical wellbeing of Latinos and Chicanos” (3). While the majority of participants in this study are Latina/os, and many of these are recent arrivants from Mexico, the LMV program serves people from a diverse range of ethnicities, cultures, languages, and ages. There are clear differences between

the oppression felt in Chicana/o and other Latina/o communities and those experienced by other sectors of the so-called urban poor, but there are also clear parallels. The "bare life" (Agamben 1998) in today's urban centers contain the vast majority of low-income individuals, regardless of race or ethnicity.

According to Giorgio Agamben, the "camp" is "the hidden paradigm of the political space of modernity" (1998, 123). In this space there is a clear difference between bare life (*zoé*) and political existence (*bios*). Agamben has set up a binary between the political life of citizens and the bare life of bodies excluded from the realm of politics; these are *rightless* bodies; hence Agamben's invoking of the image of the *Homo sacer*, the man [sic] you can kill but not murder. This is not to say that this division exists physically. In fact, Lemke argues that for Agamben, "the camp is less a physical entity surrounded by fences and material borderlines, but it symbolizes and fixes the border between bare life and political existence" (Lemke 2005, 3). In this framework bodies exist only as far as the sovereign power finds value in them (Agamben 1998, 136-7). This value is manufactured by the biopolitics of the state and its disciplinary political practices (Foucault 1990). From this standpoint, the urban poor are included in the "camp" because their political marginalization has been normalized as part of the racial and class segregation of neoliberal and capitalist urban space. This includes the patterns of environmental racism that I have alluded to throughout this study. Indeed, the suspension of the rule of law in a state of emergency is an exercise in sovereign power that produces these rightless states of being. The long duration of disparate impacts and racist exclusionary zones in the environmental history of the Santa Clara Valley casts a

long shadow in the form of a toxic and damaging legacy and is especially pernicious, because it is an openly concealed form of structural violence.

Hardt and Negri (2000) distinguish between biopolitics and biopower. For them, biopolitics are disciplinary technologies in which the body is used to regulate and control human action. Biopower, on the other hand, “is a form of power that regulates social life from its interior, following it, absorbing it, and rearticulating it” (23-4). In this way, biopower exists in opposition to biopolitics and “refers to a situation in which what is directly at stake in power is the production and reproduction of life itself” (24). When a community begins to exercise its own biopower, in an escape from the regime of biopolitical control, it reclaims the productive and reproductive spheres as an autonomous space. I believe the LMV community illustrates what Hardt and Negri have in mind when they state that “the power to act is constituted by labor, intelligence, passion, and affect in one common place” (358) – in our case, the multiple networked places constituted by home kitchen gardeners is part of a largely hidden urban common wealth. Because the ability to grow food offers these communities pathways to subvert the demoralizing aspects of bare life, the constituent power of LMV is as great, if not greater, than the constituted power of neoliberal capitalism.

The ability to restore the health of low-income communities comes with the ability to act now and get past the politics of development, planners, and investors. Rather then interpreting these acts as forms autonomy or self-care, the vignettes of the gardeners above demonstrate that these acts represent a holistic ethics of care. Mary is a white, middle-aged woman in her mid-fifties who has only been gardening for just over a year. She told me that gardening allow growers to move beyond both the “victim” and the

"blame the victim" syndrome. She said, "it reminds us about trust," and that "community control requires community support." Her point is that recognition of mutual reliance can create opportunities that were not visible before. Oscar, a thirty-four-year-old single father, told me, "We can't rely on the government for the future we want; it's only going to get more complicated. Growing food allows us to simplify." In general, I believe that while many of us mistrust strangers, we trust people, especially those with whom we share commonalties and sustained social contact. According to Joan Tronto, "care helps us rethink humans as interdependent beings" (1993, 21). In this liminal space of interdependence marginalized communities seize on and enact their potential as agents of change, restoring health practices that ensure the well-being of entire communities and places.

An organizational form like *La Mesa Verde* has its limits, and while it has helped many of the people I interviewed, there is constant stress and pressure from the outside. Many in this study cannot escape the biopolitical context of empire explained by Hardt and Negri (2000). The reality of health in this community is that, in spite of all of their collective efforts, they are still susceptible to the chaos of capitalism; Nancy's story is a prime example of this struggle. Yet, what I continue to find remarkable about the LMV community is that in spite of all that is wrong, they manage to find or create what is good. If food really is "simply a lens through which the connections between other problems can be understood" (1991, 88) as Gussow argues, then it must also be a lens people themselves use to confront and overcome such problems in an actively radical and autonomous manner.

Conviviality and Healing with *Comida*

There is no doubt that food is a central aspect of social life (Counihan and Van Esterik 2013). Nearly every home visit during this project involved food as a central element. While the kitchen gardens brought me to visit these homes, what the interactions, conversations, and subsequent collaborations led to was essentially an invitation for me to become part of a web of convivial relationships. I have been given food from harvests; I have eaten with families in their gardens; I have helped to weed and prune and pick and cultivate; and I have been part of large potlucks at *La Mesa Verde* community events. In each of these instances, I have been humbled by the ways the community uses food as a healing agent and as a transformative medium for more radical social change by a multitude of convivial subjectivities. Ivan Illich argues there are limits on the tools we use for social change. Tools that strive to address the conditions of survival (e.g. emergency food; see Poppendieck 1998) or on distributive justice (e.g. universal human rights; see Esteva and Praksh 1998) may be insufficient to meet the needs, values, and hopes of oppressed communities. In fact, Illich believes that "people can be equally enslaved by their tools" (2009, 13).

The tools of conviviality "give each person…the greatest opportunity to enrich the environment with the fruits of his or her vision" (21). These tools can create new options and opportunities because they recognize the value of social relationships. "Tools foster conviviality to the extent to which they can be easily used, by anybody, as often or as seldom as desired, for the accomplishment of a purpose chosen by the user" (22). In other words, tools of conviviality are easy to use and practical, and because they acknowledge the importance of social relationships, "they allow the user to express his

[sic] meaning in action" (22). Food, and more specifically, *la comida*, is one of these tools.

According to Esteva and Prakash, "the modern individual self is created as much by the food he or she is fed from birth, as s/he is by the school texts, computers, automobiles and other 'goods' manufactured by and for industrial eaters" (1998, 51). The authors interpret "industrial eaters" as people who reduce food to a simple commodity removed of any meaning. Stripped of meaning, people eat food from all over the world, regardless of how or where it is produced, and with a focus on its caloric content (as fuel for the body). Esteva and Prakash believe the process of healing our bodies, communities, and cultures, begins with *comida* because it is a social relationship beyond the individual self. In fact, through their research in Mexico, the authors find that there exists a clear difference between *comida*, which translates as "food" in Spanish, and *alimento*, which also translates as "food." For the peasants in their study, *comida* refers to "a very complex cultural relationship with their [the peasants] land" (58). In contrast, the authors find that middle-class students in Mexico City consume *alimentos*, and "are completely dependent on the institutions that give or sell them these *alimentos* [or foods] (58). Part of the importance of *comida* is its ability to accomplish autonomy and self-determination. *Comida* is a "living memory" (67) because it is embedded in the practices of growing, preparing, and sharing foods. *Comida* is alive, evolving, *and* inviting. The voluntary simplicity of gardening and the humble act of cooking foster the use of these as tools of conviviality, which people can use under their own marginalized circumstances to transform the world into one they would like to participate in.

Figure 7:
2014 Harvest Festival
(*Source: Author's Photo*)

In August 2014, *La Mesa Verde* held their annual harvest festival. At the festival over one hundred families attended the all day event at Frank Bramhall Park in Willow Glen. It was a bright sunny San José day and the families gathered under a group of oak trees that provided shade from the heat. Two things stood out to me on that day. First, having a harvest festival brought people together to share their experiences throughout the year. Meeting outside of Sacred Heart changed the atmosphere and encouraged informal social interaction. Second, the festival showcased the produce grown in LMV gardens. As we set up for the event we lined four full-length park tables end to end to accommodate all of the food. As guests showed up they placed the dishes on the tables and found a seat at the surrounding dinner tables. The variety of dishes displayed the cultural and plant diversity present in the LMV gardens. While some of the food was store-bought, people would often add crops from their harvests to enhance the dish; we could say this was the LMV version of semi-homemade. Families made as much as they

could from what was being produced in their garden. There were salads, salsas, casseroles, tamales, empanadas, beans, *aguas frescas* including *jamica,* flour and corn tortillas, lasagnas, enchiladas, chili rellenos, cakes, and ice creams; you name it, it was there. People shared recipes, seeds, and leftovers. The event provided gardeners an opportunity to cook, share, and eat food from the many cultures enacting the socioecological spaces of *La Mesa Verde* gardens.

Toward the end of the event, several people got up to talk and reflect with the others on what the program meant to them and their families. One man sang a *corrido* to explain his gratitude to one of the program coordinators who was leaving to attend graduate school on the East Coast and to wish her luck in all future endeavors. Everyone clapped and the teary-eyed singer and coordinator hugged and exchanged thanks. After he sat down and the applause calmed, another woman got up to speak. She spoke in Spanish while one of the organizers translated into English. She told stories of how it was before she had a garden. She expressed gratitude for having help in starting a garden because this allowed her to gain "a sense of freedom" and encouraged her to remember and revalue the traditional practices of her childhood spent in rural Mexico. Upon finishing, she said, "Don't stop, we can't stop. We must continue to grow our own food. We must continue to share with our neighbors. We must continue to respect our Mother Earth."

As she walked off the stage people applauded and several expressed agreement with her sentiments. Soon after, the event ended and people packed their things. As I drove home that evening I thought about what the last speaker had said; there were so many layers to it. I have spoke with her several times since then and eaten at her home;

we have shared some great stories over wonderful meals embodying the meaning of *la comida*. She might be one of the most dedicated members of LMV because she believes that the actions of the gardeners are profound. There are so many levels to health and even more to healing, yet the mundaneness of growing food offers an unlimited opportunity to challenge the alienating and upsetting aspects of the neoliberal capitalist food system. Lupe told me one day that LMV and gardening might not be able to change the world in an instant but she emphasized that it will come one day, *"poco a poco,"* she told me – little by little.

Gardening allows *La Mesa Verde* members to improve their well-being on two fronts. Their kitchen gardens provide them with improved access to healthy organic foods, thus enabling and encouraging them to change their dietary habits to improve their physical bodies. On another, this network of home kitchen gardens improves the collective well-being because it encourages the LMV community to envision and enact the possibility of many futures. Wendell Berry argues, "the industrial economy does not see itself as a little economy; it sees itself as the *only* economy" (1987, 64). As the only economy, the industrial economy (or capitalist) transforms people and places by making them dependent on high-input farming practices and "financialization" of the entire food chain. But as Nancy told me, "You don't have to be rich to be a good gardener, you just have to be patient." The economy of LMV home kitchen gardens is not against the "industrial" economy. In fact, in many ways it benefits from it. Having a garden allows people the ability to negotiate between economies while privileging the circumstances and resources of each household's own assets.

As I have sought to illustrate, health is not a one-dimensional outcome existing in some social, political, and environmental vacuum. Our current health system, like the food system, is imbricated with biopolitical technologies that are designed to privilege capitalist market rationalities and to subordinate the subject to a regime of self-financed (or insured) self-care. This mechanism prices most working class and immigrant households out of access to effective and equitable health care, including, especially, preventative care (see Berenson et. al 2012). LMV members respond to the inequities of the food and health systems by cultivating food in their own home kitchen gardens because it is a practical tool to challenge the prevailing uses of land, soil, knowledge, and seed in the corporate-dominated American food system. But gardening also allows them to cultivate new subjectivities by providing access to the means of their own production and social and cultural reproduction through a return to heritage cuisines and traditional ingredients. This process also creates new and imagined worlds. It allows for the self-determination of people and the renewal of their capacity for a sense of self by grounding it in place and culture. These networks of conviviality have created this alterNative social economy.

Chapter 7: Tierra y Libertad: Cultivating Resilience and Autonomy "Milpa *Style"*

On a fall afternoon in September of 2013, I met with Diana, who was to give me a tour of her garden that she shared with her neighbor. I arrived at the small house and Diana walked me into the backyard where Grandma, her neighbor, was already hard at work. As we continued into the backyard we walked past a display of several flowers in pots that were hanging from the wooden fence that surrounded the yard. Iris, hibiscus, Easter lily, and *mastuerzo* were arranged near the entrance. We could see Grandma on the far end of the yard and walked over to greet her.

Diana explained to me that ever since they started at LMV together, Grandma had taught her a lot about gardening. She also explained how her daughter, who was in junior high at the time, had begun to have an interest in what was being grown in the garden and how to eat healthy. In addition, Diana explained to me that the garden had served to bridge the generations from Grandma, to her, and then to her daughter. The willingness and desire to learn about gardening provided her daughter access into a profound garden subjectivity that recognized the interrelationships between physical, social, mental, and environmental health.

On our way to the far end of the garden, we walked past Serrano (*Capsicum annuum),* jalapeño (*Capsicum annuum*), and yellow peppers (*capsicum annuum*). Diana pointed to how the cherry (*Solanum lycopersicum var. cerasiforme*), beefsteak (*Solanum lycopersicum*), sungold (*Lycopersicon esculentum*), and several varietals of heirloom tomatoes (*Lycopersicon esculentum*) were intercropped with basil (Ocimum basilicum) and Mexican marigolds (*Tagetes erecta*) to help with pest management. Green beans

(*Phaseolus vulgaris*) climbed a homemade trellis along the fence behind the tomatoes. We passed two Meyers lemon trees (*Citrus* × *meyeri*), two green fig trees (*Ficus carica*), as well as one white peach (*Prunus persica*), gala apple (*Malus domestica*), pomegranate (*Punica granatum*), guava (*Psidium guajava*), and Valencia orange tree (*Citrus sinensis*). "Grandma has fruit all year round," Diana told me.[28] She also explained to me that her daughter's favorite part of the garden was the many summer and winter squash flowers that bloomed throughout the year, which she picked to put in quesadillas. "That girl," Diana told me, "could live off quesadillas."

One thing that struck me as we continued to walk toward the far end of the garden was the scattered bunches of tomatillo (*Physalis philadelphica*) plants. Wondering why there were several patches throughout the garden, I asked, "Why are there so many different places with tomatillos?" Diana replied with a smile, "That's how Grandma does it. *Milpa* style." She explained to me that Grandma rotates crops over time, which is one reason for that, the other helps to explain Grandma's unique knowledge set. As the tomatillo plant grows throughout the year she harvests particular fruits prematurely to allow for others to ripen bigger and more flavorful. She then tosses those prematurely harvested tomatillos into particular places to provide nutrients to other plants as it decomposes. Sometimes this methods results in a new tomatillo plant the following spring. This explained how Grandma's garden was intensely farmed and regenerative; it also explained why Diana had one of the best-roasted tomatillo salsas in the neighborhood.

[28] For a complete list of harvestable plants, crops, and fruits in their garden and others, see Garden #5 listed in appendix A.

When we reached Grandma she was standing in front of eight nopal cacti (*Opuntia ficus-indica*). Grandma explained that there used to be a lot more of nopales, but over the years she removed them or they died. Grandma described how to harvest and prepared nopal with conviction, but Diana's facial expression relayed a different message. "*Es un arte /* It's an art," Diana assured me. Grandma's garden is her story, an expression of who she is, and this autotopographic oasis assured Grandma and Diana a pathway to self-determination. Standing at the foot of one nopal, Grandma said, "*Todos mexicanos tienen un nopal. Lo más tiene, lo más mexicano* / All Mexicans have a nopal. The more Mexican one is, the more nopal one has." Diana laughed in agreement. "*¿Tierra y libertatad, no*? / Land and liberty, right?" Looking at the cactus, Grandma simply nodded her head.

Figure 8:
***Lo mexicano* - nopales in the garden**
(Source: LMV Gardener)

Tierra y libertada was the battle cry of the Mexican revolution. As the Porfilato sought to seize up land, the peasants struck back in resistance claiming only with access to land could they achieve liberty. The two were wed. The battle cry was also used by the

South Central Farmers in resistance to the foreclosure of the downtown garden. While I only heard this phase once while at LMV, it is clear that the same awareness was present. While many of LMV members are renters, their access to the land is what enables a level of autonomy and contributes their social and ecological resilience.

Anthropology has a long history of exploring the intertwining aspects of humans and nature. Numerous scholars since the 1950s have sought to understand how the environment and culture co-evolve through time and space (i.e Conklin 1954; Steward 1955; Rappaport 1967; McC Netting 1977). And while there have been many justified criticisms of theories proposed by these scholars (Moran 1990), anthropologists have led the way in attempting to understand human roles in environmental processes and how the environment is also an active contingent force shaping and reshaping that relationship. With rising awareness of how climate change has impacted local lives and has influenced human adaptation (Crate and Nuttall 2009), anthropology is once again positioned as a key discipline to explore the complex interrelations of culture and environment. Perhaps more so than any time in history, it has become more imperative to appreciate both the scientific and social aspects of adaptation. Yet, to understand the fluctuation of social systems and environmental system means that we cannot separate the two. Anthropology is a discipline that can speak to both simultaneously.

A social ecological system is, "a coupled system of humans and nature that constitutes a complex adaptive system with ecological and social components that interact dynamically through various feedbacks" (Simonsen et. al. 2014, 18). All complex adaptive systems have three common traits; 1) they are highly connected, 2) they are adaptive (responsive to changes), and 3) they interact with different aspects on different

scales at all times. Because of these three interlocking traits, complex adaptive systems are unpredictable and constantly adapting in a nonlinear fashion to their changing environment. Some examples of complex adaptive systems are the human immune system, global markets, single cell organisms, and ecosystems. In order to study such systems, we must take a complex systems approach, which does not take the uni-linear traditional top-down, nor the counter hegemonic bottom-up approach. Rather, this approach allows order to emerge spontaneously. The spontaneity of such an approach encourages recognition of the self-organization of people and places.

The persistence of these systems depends on their ability to adapt in accordance to internal and external drivers, and the ability to transform into a new system is what makes them resilient. Resilience is a lens through which to view the world's complexity and the interconnections among subsystems. This model allows us to interpret how global and local drivers can cause large- and small-scale regime shifts. It is one that allows us to come to terms with the many ways in which human beings both damage and replenish ecosystems and their ecological services. For this model to become more ascendant and practical, it must include a set of values or moral codes. Yet, where does one get such a set of values? For many resilience thinkers, this comes in the form of culture (Dearing 2006, Abel 2006). Several Native scholars have argued that with the degradation of culture, comes the degradation of the environment (LaDuke 2005; for earlier iterations of the linkage of "ethnocide" and "ecocide", see Shiva 1988; Peña 1992). This is because embedded within a given culture's understanding of the environment is knowledge – how we know what we know; governance – how different people in different places have practiced autonomy at a variety of scales; and spirituality –how our sense of peace and

purpose contributes to the development of beliefs about the meaning of life and connection with other human and more-than-human beings. This is what Fikret Berkes referred to as a "knowledge-practice-belief complex" (1999, 14). Resilience refers to an ecosystem's and/or society's ability to adapt to its changing circumstances while also remaining self-determining.

There are differences in how social and ecological subsystems go about retaining and renewing the ability to remain self-determining, but the commonalities are just as important, if not more, in my estimation, since the differences are due largely to questions not of process, but of scale and the stochastic effects associated with global dynamics in local contexts, which is a bi-directional driver of change – global forces produce local changes and the local forms of resistance and alterity transform the global configurations. A social system might require a change in power or political institutions. An ecosystem might require a given keystone species to modify its behavior, modify its habitat, and even move into new habitat to retain its reproductive viability. In either case, the evolution of these systems is not so much the result of the "happen-chance" of historical events, as much as it is an open-ended process involving the restructuring of organisms and species and their relationships with other organisms and the environment itself. This process is a result of on-going structural changes (Maturana and Varela 1987; Carroll 2005). While human history influences these changes, it does not dictate them. This is why Berkes (1999) believes are four principles associated with resilience: 1) we must learn to live with uncertainty, 2) we must encourage and nurture diversity, 3) we must combine different types of knowledge, and 4) we must create opportunities for self-organization.

Diversity is perhaps a precondition for the rise of the very self-regulating ecosystems and peoples that are now threatened by new anthropogenic climate change. In fact, Soule and Piper believe diversity to be "the currency of adaptation" (1992, 17) because diversity enables diversity. Aldo Leopold understood this in the 1940s when he observed in the *Sand County Almanac* that biodiversity is essential to the health of the "land organism" and cultural diversity is vital to the health of society (1987). The coevelness of biological and cultural diversity has shaped the trajectory of ethnoecology – from Conklin through Shiva and Nazarea. The link between cultural and biological diversity has lead some scholars to propose and to use the term "biocultural diversity" (see Posey 1999) to refer to "the diversity of life in all of its manifestations: biological, cultural, and linguistic, which are interrelated (and possibly coevolved) within a complex socio-ecological adaptive system" (Maffi 2007, 269). Diversity is required in order for a resilient system to "to keep options open," and to encourage self-organizing spaces of autonomy.

We live in a world with ever more degraded ecosystems and ever more culturally and environmentally destructive social systems. The baseline norms that Darwin or McC Netting once observed are far different today. Diversity is our lifeline and both cultural and biological diversity feed off of each other. How we influence one of these, will greatly impact the other. Vandana Shiva (1993) argues that "monocultures of the mind" have impacted our epistemologies, environments, diets, and social systems. Yet, as groups such as the Zapatistas and La Via Campesina have shown us, there are alternatives. Embedded within these alternatives is the concept of autonomy, which encourages the self-constitution of those who practice the forms of livelihood and

conviviality in spaces that lay beyond the reach of the circuits of the expanded reproduction of capital. In fact, the Zapatistas are actively generating the possibility of "a world where many worlds are possible." Similarly, Negri (1991) believes that autonomia encourages a "plurality." The four principles emphasized by Berkes are the same that the Zapatistas account for to motivate people to pursue the self-organization and conviviality that autonomy encourages.

In this chapter, I develop an analysis of the relationship between resilience and autonomy in greater detail. In doing so, I present *La Mesa Verde* home gardens as a diffused complex social-ecological system while reading the signs of *autonomia* within the practices and subjectivities of the gardeners. I will complicate their relationships by using Berkes' framework to demonstrate where and how these theories overlap as well as their points of departure and disagreement. The time I spent with the families and organizers of *La Mesa Verde* taught me that growing food means a lot of different things to different people, which is why the simple act of gardening creates the potential to transform the relationships between people, places, and well-being. The ability of coupled social-ecological systems to be made and remade is a result of a community's exercise of autonomy. This realization explains how formal and informal social networks promote well-being and self-sufficiency in the face of large-scale perturbations such as climate change and the current cycle of economic crisis that capital imposes as a regime of austerity, globalization, deregulation, and disinvestment in the social sector (i.e. education, health, housing, and environmental protection). This chapter will explore how and why resilience and autonomy either work together or against each other and how the LMV community makes use of both of these qualities of complex adaptive systems,

albeit without completely resolving the question of intentionality (see Smith and Wishnie 2000).

Learning to Live with Uncertainty

According to Lance Gunderson, "systems of people and nature co-evolve in an adaptive dance" (2003, 33), and just like a couple on the dance floor, the adaptive dancing of human and natural systems exists tension. Through positive and negative feedbacks we confront and even exceed our boundaries. We move together through time and space in hopes of forming relationships of reciprocity where one of us will lead, and without realizing it, the lead passes to the other. The "coevalness" and fluidity of this relationship is what allows for a seemingly endless range of possibilities. However, even though perhaps we should think of it this way, life is not a dance. Risk and uncertainty weigh different burdens upon people in society. The desire to control the dance, to script its outcome, has altered this relationship. These scripts, whether laws, regulations, or even ethics, have a legitimation or oppositional function and are inherent to the exercise of constituent power, which provokes the resistance of the multitude in the form of the exercise of constitutive power. Power cannot control forever and nature (and communities) can and does "speak" back. Today, the global shocks of declining snowpack, dwindling topsoil, overfished oceans, and ultra-hot forest fires have demonstrated that we must restore this relationship if we are to continue the dance.

While this "adaptive dance" might sound like a romantic way to think about our relationship with the earth, it is a plausible one. Captured by native scholar Viola Cordova, "the universe is dynamic, changing, creative, infinite, and full, there is no idea of a static or empty space in which things exists." Therefore, "what exists has motion;

what has no motion does not continue to exist" (2007, 117). Without motion and change, we do not exist. It occurs to me this is also the case with quantum mechanics and string theory. At the core of resilience theory, is the idea of motion. If fact, "resilient social-ecological systems have the capacity to change as the world changes while still maintaining their functionality" (Walker and Salt 2006, 12). As social systems collide with environmental systems, our future appears all the more uncertain because these systems are always in the process of becoming.

Carol Dweck summed this up in the 1960s by arguing there was a particular mindset that allowed the so-called counterculture to disrupt the status quo. According to her, this mindset declared that, "becoming is better than being" (Dweck 2006, 25). This mindset discouraged a "fixed mind-set" and had an effect on global social movements and the direction of science. Prior to the 1960s, Eugene Odum (1953) led the way by championing cybernetic ecosystem models, which focused on stability and change. According to Odum, an ecosystem sought homeostasis but was subject to perturbations, which were most often caused by human action. He explained that human actions should be managed and should not disrupt the natural balance of ecosystems. In the 1960s, "complexity theory" (see Lorenz 1963) emerged to change the terms of the discussions. This theory rejected homeostasis as the "norm," and insisted that constant dynamic change is what creates ecosystem form and function. This logic did not remove humans from responsibility of the toxification and deforestation of the planet, but acknowledged that ecosystems are always in the process of becoming and have regenerative capacities. However, as Peña (2005) argues, Lorenz also proposed that tiny differences in the initial conditions of complex adaptive systems could result in ever-larger consequences as the

temporal and spatial scales at which the perturbations operate increase. This led to Lorenz's famous dictum: "A butterfly flaps its wings in the Amazon and Texas gets a tornado."

Peña (2005) offers a decolonial interpretation of these matters when he observes that Odum sought to subject the management of ecosystems to top-down managerial principles drawn by allegorically modeling, and thus naturalizing the ecosystem on the basis of the presumption of energy flows in the industrial capitalist regime. Instead, Peña argues, we need to embrace humility before the complexity of Earth systems. We must recognize and become accountable for the "second contradiction of capitalism" (O'Connor 1991). According to Peña, we must understand how capital is the principal driver of the most globally damaging anthropogenic effects and impacts we see across the planet.

In 1973, C.S. Holling published a short article entitled, "Resilience and Stability of Ecological Systems." In the article he argues that a stable ecosystem is one that seeks to maintain an established order, or a state of equilibrium. A resilient ecosystem, on the other hand, seeks to keep as many options open as possible, it seeks to maintain the possibilities of many futures rather than manage for a future. The resilience model is located somewhere between homeostasis and chaos.

The late 1960s and early 1970s was a dynamic time in Italy as well. Just as Neil Armstrong declared, "one small step for man, and one giant leap for mankind," the "Hot Autumn" of 1969 broke out in Italy. Workers organized a widespread insurgency against the established order of the state and the factory by circulating struggles in wildcat strikes, street protests, and other direct actions across all spheres of the social order, from

the factory to the community. The movement and philosophy became known as *autonomia*. Franco Berardi states that with the goal of autonomy, "we want to make possible a general reduction in working time and we want to transform the organization of work in such a way that an autonomous organization of sectors of productive experimental organization may become possible" (2012, 11). While the resilience of ecosystems is concerned with feedback loops, buffers, and thresholds, so too is autonomy. What both the concept of resilience, as originally conceived by Holling, and *autonomia*, as conceived by the *operismo* movement in Italy, share in common, is the idea that a system or organization needs to allow for simultaneous and multiple forms of self-organization with the end goal of creating the possibility of many futures.

The traditional view of ecosystem succession had historically been described in two stages. The first stage is exploitation, where the rapid use and distribution of resources is encouraged. The second is conservation, where the slow accumulation and storage of resources is emphasized (Gunderson and Holling 2002, 33). This thought pattern projects a uni-linear worldview by de-emphasizing change. The resilience framework adds in two more stages, release and reorganization, and emphasizes cycles. In this framework, as a system moves from exploitation to conservation it will eventually reach a bifurcation point, a release. The release stage has been referred to as "creative destruction" (Shumpeter 1942) because it is here where the system becomes extremely fragile. All systems that release will reach the reorganization stage, however the ability to retain its basic functionality, is dependent on its potential and connectedness. A system's potential refers to its accumulated resources of biomass, nutrients, or social and cultural capital. The more potential a system has, the greater its ability to retain its resilience.

Connectedness, on the other hand, refers to how connected a system is to controlling variables. The more connected a system is, i.e. through ecosystem services or social networks, the greater its capacity to restore its functionality. The cycle then repeats and continues, but it is never static.

The uncertainty that coincides with resilience thinking is that while systems continually move towards higher levels of potential and connectedness, they inherently draw closer to creative destruction. The release stage of the adaptive cycle can be seen as a move inward. As systems move toward reorganization they lose connectedness but gain potential. Gunderson and Holling refer to the reorganization phase as one of "innovation" (2002, 35). This stage allows for different economic, social, ideological, and environmental forms to emerge. Yet, what these systems might look like as complex adaptive processes, are actually highly unpredictable. Sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2006) argues that the people in power are less likely to change their behaviors if it means giving up some of the power they may have. While Bonilla-Silva is referring to racism, and how ethnic and social groups in power are less likely to change their actions if it means they may lose some of their privileges, I believe the analogy works here too. People fear uncertainty because of what it might lead to, what one might be forced to give up.

While uncertainty is part of the adaptive cycle of complex systems thinking, Gunderson and Holling argue that ecosystem resilience is the opposite of vulnerability. In this instance, uncertainty and vulnerability are not the same. In fact, a system's potential is what sets the limits to what is possible, or sets the number of alternative viable, although not necessarily likely, options. The connectedness determines the degree of

control a system may have in controlling its own destiny. "Resilience determines how vulnerable the system is to unexpected disturbances and surprises that can exceed or break that control" (2002, 51). This is where the issues of power and autonomy can be seen to play into resilience thinking. Who has power and what type of system is being encouraged? These are some of the questions that can only be answered by combining resilience thinking with *autonomia.*

Autonomia theory was first developed within the Italian *operaismo* movement during the 1960s and 1970s. While much of the theory around the movement discussed the "end of work" and the "refusal to work" (Tronti 1972), it was also about creating systems of self-governance and self-organization (Negri 1991). The movement did not necessarily desire an end to work, it sought the "*autonomy of the working class from the development of capital*" (Negri 1991, 101). In other words, the movement made strides toward the "liberation of life" (Berardi 2012, 20). The theorizing of autonomy begins with the understanding that workers are in control of the process of production. It is workers' struggles that force capital to restructure itself to in order to attempt to regain control of the processes of production. As Cleaver states, "yes, capital plans all of social life, but we are not in the Brave New World. The working class has forcibly and repeatedly asserted its autonomy" (1979, 124). According to Cleaver this is the frailty of capitalism. Workers pose a threat to capitalism because there is always a struggle over the value of labor and the length of the working day. So while capital appears as a means of social control over the worker, it is in fact the worker who both enables and disables the existence of the social factory. The continual composition and recomposition of the multitude is what encourages autonomy and the eventual "liberation of life." There is no

one path for autonomy because within the reorganization stage there are "a great *multiplicity* of aspects" that allow for "complex autonomy" (Negri 1991, 167). Crisis and rupture constantly make and remake autonomous networks, but it is the ability to control (or at least influence) one's own future that maintains the multiplicity of autonomy.

Autonomy is always a political project in the state of "becoming" because it persistently seeks reinvention and this is partly what makes autonomy a liberating act and a rejection of all totalizing narratives and practices. Yet, the reinvention of autonomy is experienced in a variety of ways, depending on the location of the subject(s), and the uncertainty that coincides with autonomy is celebrated by some and feared by others. Autonomists, such as Negri (1991), focus their efforts on liberating the working class (now, "multitude") from the oppression of capitalism. As Marx observes, workers have "nothing to lose but their chains" (2008, 84). Capitalism has already removed the worker from the means of his or her own production, there is nothing left to lose but his or her dependence to work for capital. But "peasants" might not be so revolutionary because many of them are still attached to their land, which provides them the means to their own production. James Scott (1976) observed this in his research in Southeast Asia, where peasant farmers moved between submission and resistance in order to maintain their well-being. Roberto González (2001) also observed this in the northern sierra of Oaxaca, where Zapotec farmers negotiated between markets (global v. local), sciences (cosmopolitan v. traditional), and crops (cash v. sacred) in order to balance their world. The difference between the working class struggle for autonomy and that of the peasant comes down to access to independent means of production and access to common property resources. The worker does not have access to the means of his or her own

production while the peasant largely does, albeit under conditions where capital is constantly seeking to disrupt and enclose these assets. The worker contributes to the *potential* of capitalism, while capitalism contributes to the *connectivity* of the peasant.

The LMV community in San José negotiates uncertainty in a way similar to what Cajete calls "creative participation." Just like Scott's peasants or González's farmers, LMV members are active participants in restoring their relationships with each other, their food, and the land. In the context of Washington-Alma, autonomy means creating new systems of self-organization that allow individuals and groups to collectively organize and reorganize their lives according to their own needs in order to deal with uncertainty. While neoliberal projects have ushered in a new era of global precarity and uncertainty for people around the world, Gusavo Esteva and Mandu Suri Prakash believe that "To 'make a difference,' actions should not be grandiosely global, but humbly local" (1998, 21). Local food and home gardens play a large role in encouraging humble actions in place. And by decentering the power of industrial food, the local food networks are "recreating, regenerating and relying upon political bodies on the human scale" (39), and thus, "reskilling ourselves to look after the well-being of members of our local community, who, in their turn, are similarly committed to our well-being" (26). Many LMV gardeners use their garden to make and strengthen social networks by sharing their experiences and knowledge about growing food. Others use it to grow healthier and more affordable food for themselves and their neighbors. LMV gardeners even produce food to sell in the market (also see Shava et. al. 2010), and while it may not be their sole source of income, their gardens help to *keep options open*. What allows gardeners to be open to

uncertainty is their ability to control the potential and connectivity embedded in their gardening relationships.

Encouraging Diversity

I entered Lucy's garden from the side entrance. As we entered, she warned me that she had recently moved things around and she was not expecting anyone, so "things were a bit crazy." The first thing I saw upon entering Lucy's garden was a row of eight-foot tall sunflower plants reaching for the sky. Trellising up the sunflowers were several varieties of beans. She told me that she did not remember the names of all of them, but she did know two of them were the same varietal grown by her grandmother when she was a kid growing up in Manila and then Singapore. "Growing up," she told me, "my grandmother's garden supported eight of her own kids and helped with another forty grandkids." The only way a home garden can support that many people is by nurturing diversity and assuring that something is always ready to be harvested. Like it was for her grandmother in Singapore, Lucy told me, "My garden is my life."

La Mesa Verde gardens provide avenues for members to reclaim the means of their own production. The LMV program originally started out as a strategy to address the lack of access to fresh and affordable fruit and vegetables experienced by many in the community. However, the program grew into a tool that stimulates diversity; and diversity encourages more diversity. Through the simple act of deciding to grow food, LMV members are discovering new and uncovering old ways to strengthen and heal the community. The diversity that is cultivated in LMV home gardens is not simply biological, but also social, cultural, and economic.

Biodiversity

In the fall of 2015, *La Mesa Verde* provided its members with broccoli, cauliflower, parsley, kale, collards, chard, lettuce, garlic, and onion seedlings. They also provided fava beans, spinach, peas, beats, radishes and cilantro seeds. Assuming that all seeds grew to maturity, each gardener was given sixteen different crops. While many first-time growers stick to these simple and easy to grow crops, for gardeners who have either been with the program for several years or already know a lot about farming or gardening, LMV provides only a fraction of what they grow. Of the ten garden biodiversity surveys I conducted while working with LMV, there was an average of 41.8 different harvestable crops growing in home gardens (see appendix B). It is important to remember that these are backyard home kitchen gardens and they are using already existing spaces to practice regenerative farming methods. Thus, gardeners must make efficient use of limited space.

The first time I went over the findings of these diversity studies I was amazed that while several of these corps were herbs, the majority of them were annual vegetable plants and perennial fruit trees. The herbs, vegetables and fruit trees of LMV gardeners spanned oceans and generations. The first house I visited to conduct a garden survey was the home of Maria, who grew thirty-one different crops. She is third generation Italian, and grows over one hundred and thirty different tomato plants from eight different varietals and some of the best oregano I have ever tasted. Maria's grandfather migrated from southern Italy to California in the 1920s. He, and a large group of Italian immigrants decided to settle in the Santa Clara Valley. When he bought the land and built the home in 1924, which is the same house Maria lives in today, the Valley was little

more than a small orchard town. Along his travels to the United States, her grandfather carried several fig tree (*Ficus carica)* seeds from his home in Italy with the intention of someday planting those seeds when he settled.[29] Today, six of those trees still remain in their front yard. When Maria's nephew gave me a tour of the garden and told me to try a fig, a feeling of humility and awe came over me, because I was aware of the privilege of tasting a rare heirloom fruit, and I was experiencing the taste sense of a person's deepest heritage. Over the years, Maria's garden has shrunk as the city has encroached around the small home, but the fig trees are a defiant reminder of the family's long tradition of gardening and maintains a sense of heritage and autonomy.

Another LMV gardener, Jessica, is an herbalist. She is a member of the Cherokee nation in Oklahoma. As she aged and saw her health slowly decline over the years, she began to grow an increasing diversity of medicinal and sacred herbs. Many of the herbs that she grows she brought back from her visits with friends and family in Oklahoma. She told me that she does this for two reasons. First, direct access, "If I need something, its here." The second, it's cheaper. I asked her how much money she saves by using her garden as a pharmacy, and she simply smiled, "I couldn't even guess." She grows several types of mint including *yerba buena* and lemon mint, lemongrass, blackberry, blueberry, raspberry, stinging nettle, lemon balm, *verdolagas* (purslane, a.k.a. *Portulaca oleracea*), watercress, southern mustered greens, wild oregano, and aloe vera; all for medicinal

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[29] Fig trees are most often grown from cuttings taken from small branches, but it is also possible to grow fig trees from seed as long as viable seeds are used and the right conditions are provided. Whether Mary's grandfather actually carried seeds from his homeland or whether this story contributes to the folklore of intergenerational sharing, the history of Mary's family fig trees further demonstrates a garden subjectivity whereby the existence of traditional knowledge encourages alternative value framings.

purposes (see appendix A, garden #7). She makes herbal, anti-oxidant rich, and high omega-3 foods, teas, and shakes for herself and husband, and the community throughout the winter season. Over the years she has accumulated knowledge of preservation methods (i.e. canning and drying) from her elders, community members, and online resources and continues to share them with the LMV community (Figure 4).

Social Diversity

Sara is a third generation Mexican American in her mid 60s. She has had several health issues related to diet and as a result is missing a lung and a kidney. When she moved into her neighborhood, which is an old gated-community right off busy West San Carlos Boulevard that consists of eight one-room houses, she knew she wanted to grow a garden. Mares and Peña refer gardens like Sara's, and so many other LMV gardens, as "autotopographies." Similar to the gardens studied by the authors, Sara's garden allows for the "self-telling through place shaping" (2011, 208), because gardens like hers emerge as "communal spaces that nurture conviviality" (209).

Sara suffers from chronic anemia because of her body's difficulty detoxifying itself. Often weeks passed without seeing or hearing from her, yet when she attends events, she always has a positive and energetic demeanor. It took her two years to remove all of the tires, metal debris, ivy, and garbage from her backyard. She told me that the hardest things to remove were a large clawfoot bathtub and a huge metal locker. Once cleaned up, LMV helped her install garden beds for Sara and two neighbors, who also live alone. She began with LMV in 2014, and over the course of year, Sara and her neighbors remade her backyard as the conviviality center of the neighborhood. The three gardeners have created lasting relationships with each other. As a result, they share their

surplus with each other and other neighbors, and they have encouraged others to do the same. Before these gardens started producing, all three women were experiencing debilitating health conditions, suffered from what social psychologists call “low self-esteem,” and they relied almost entirely on food stamps and emergency food pantries. Today, these women spend their time socializing in the garden, and while two of them are still on disability, the garden has diversified and transformed their social relationships by providing a space for conviviality and access to more healthy foods.

Cultural Diversity

Philip Ackerman-Leist claims, “what happens in our kitchens determines what happens in our landscapes” (2013, 213). His point is that the more we settle for ready made or processed foods, the more likely we will lose the importance of understanding this connection between cooking and landscape. But cooking makes us who we are (Esteva and Prakash 1998; Shiva 2005; Calvo and Esquibel forthcoming). The diverse foods we eat are a reflection of the diverse cultures we are part of. Recently, with the influence of LMV members, the program started to include a potluck after each workshop or meeting. The range of the different foods that were shared and eaten amazed me. *Empanadas de calabacita*, *salsa verde*, persimmon salad, roasted asparagus, *agua fresca*, *chayote con chili*, *pepinos locos*, kung pao chicken, and okra curry salad are just a few of the many dishes that could be enjoyed on a regular basis. Even *habichuelas con dulce*, which is a rare treat from the Dominican Republic consists of red beans, cinnamon, nutmeg, coconut milk, evaporated milk, raisins, butter, sugar, and salt, could been found there from time to time. While this diversity is amazing, what is more telling is that most of the ingredients used in these foods were grown in LMV home gardens. In a study by

Bachmann (2009) on Cuban home kitchen gardens in Havana, gardens also provided many functions. While in most cases these gardens do not provide stable foods i.e. corn or rice, they provide a significant "nutritional complement" (713) that is culturally relevant. The ability to grow food allows gardeners to represent their culture through food and the celebration of food. This allows gardeners to recover their health and well-being through the recovery of heritage cuisines and the crops that make that possible.

Economic Diversity

The home kitchen gardens of LMV provide gardeners with the ability to enter the marketplace if they choose. The City of San José is currently working on how urban agricultural products should be sold from private homes[30]— representing an act of governmentality seeking to regulate these "escapes" from the dominant food system—however, most of the economic activity in LMV homes happens either off-the-books, or in the form of direct face-to-face sharing. In fact, out of the over one hundred families that I have talked with, only a handful say that they sell things to make a profit. Simply because people are not generating income on their garden, does not mean it does not promote economic diversity. Gibson-Graham discuss that a community economy is "an acknowledged space of social interdependency and self-formation" (2006, 166). They believe that a community economy is an "empty space" because it "awaits filling up by collective actions in place" (ibid).

The community economy is an appropriate way to describe the LMV economy because it involves gardeners acting directly, and without surveillance, in activities that

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[30] Published by The Health Trust, the 2013 document, "New Food Rules for San Jose" offers residents insight into the developing practices of urban agriculture in the City of San Jose.

help meet the many diverse needs of the LMV community. For people like Sara, the community economy is a social safety net where she can count on others to help her if she is too sick to harvest or plant. For a person like Diego, who collects seeds, the community economy is a place to exchange germplasm. Alma and her brother make tamales from some of the crops grown in their garden and for them, the community economy is a means to sell tamales and seedlings. For Diana, who is a cook, the community economy is a space to share her food and learn from others. An economy is simply an exchange of goods, but a community economy is the recognition of the interdependency of those who participate and facilitate the spaces where this form of agency can unfold.

Recently, two well-trained permaculturists, Eric Toensmeier and Jonathan Bates (2013), published a text documenting their experiences in attempting to create a "permaculture paradise," and in the process they filled their backyard with low-maintenance edible plants. They were able to intensely grow (some better than others) almost two hundred varieties of edible plants on one-tenth of an acre. While the LMV gardens might not be to this extent, Toensmeier and Bates incurred very little risk. Both of them held full-time, well-paying jobs, and their garden was not so much a way of life, as it was an experiment into diversity. For many LMV gardeners, they do not grow diversity simply because they can, but rather because the must. I bring this up not to discredit the importance of the research, but to draw attention to how such research can often erase centuries of traditional knowledge. *Huerto familiears*, or home kitchen gardens, have historically been an important feature for peasants and immigrants alike to assure diversity and to navigate uncertainty (Peña 2005; also see Guillen forthcoming). In

fact, Ramón Mariaca Méndez has put together an edited volume helping to shed light on vast ancient and continually transforming knowledge of *huerto familiares*. Similar to Mares and Peña, Méndez believes "*el huerto familiar es el espacio de reproducción social, cultural y simbólica que da sentido a la identidad de quien lo cultiva y lo habita* / the home kitchen garden is a space of social, cultural, and symbolic reproduction that give meaning to the people who cultivate and inhabit them" (2012, 4; my translation). These plants are valuable because of the diverse social, cultural, and symbolic value ascribed to them. Not only do such gardens carry far more diversity that of Toensmeier and Bates, but they also bring out the living cultural memory of seed saving. "If seeds and memories are important to people who are rooted in place... how critical are these 'resources' to people who have uprooted from their place of origin and settled in a foreign land or, for that matter, who perpetually negotiate two worlds, never completely belonging to one or the other?" (Nazarea 2005, 98). Diversity helps people to mitigate risk, and whether those risks are crop failure, social networks, cultural determination, or economic opportunity, home kitchen gardens provide outlets for people and plants to form relationships that can strengthen resilience.

Combining Knowledge(s)

Michel Foucault believed that politics is influenced by power/knowledge so that all claims to "truth [are] conditioned by politics" (1990, 5; brackets added). Knowledge then is inevitably a political matter. Foucault used the concept of "power/knowledge" because the two concepts are so closely interrelated that it is implausible and reductionist to separate them. Rabinow (2010) argues that because we cannot separate these two concepts, Foucault believed that we are always participating in politics and that our role

is to “alter power relations” (6). Yet, Foucault did not see power as inherently a bad thing, in fact he believed that in all healthy relationships power is present. It is how power/knowledge is used that can make it a tool of oppression and control.

For home kitchen gardeners, knowledge is used not so much as a tool for control, as it is a tool of solidarity. Many LMV families openly and willingly share knowledge about seed saving, farming, cooking, and working. As active participants, the LMV community is participating in forms of social learning that contribute to their resilience. Eric Holt-Giménez (2011) claims that many of the peasant farmers that suffer the most from land-grabs, climate change, and free market neoliberalism, are so caught up in trying to survive, that their knowledge and experiences are pushed aside. The knowledge and experiences that many of these farmers have is diverse *and* mobile because traditional knowledge is “an ever-evolving balance, perpetually creating and perpetually new” (Cajete 2000, 19; also see Mares and Peña 2010, 2011). In addition, while these same peasant farmers might not be the most productive in terms of commodity markets, they often are in relation to scale, as many produce more food per hectare of farmland (Grain, 2014). Peasant farming provides many other benefits including improved biodiversity, land stewardship, higher-quality food, and improved social interaction. These are only some of the reasons why their knowledge is needed to help feed the world and establish self-determining communities. In fact, Altieri and Nicholls (2008) insist that agroecology can have a substantial impact on a region’s food sovereignty. Place-based knowledge contributes to a community’s resilience and autonomy because the knowledge and relevant biota are shared. Similarly, Raj Patal (2009) finds that the answers to some of the most difficult questions regarding the future of food will not be

answered by a democracy run by experts, but the democratization of knowledge and resources. Within the LMV community, knowledge is combined and shared in ways that represent the enactment of local democratic spaces.

The Personal

I spent almost two hours with Lucy one Sunday afternoon in the fall of 2014. She showed me her garden while I took detailed notes on all of the plants and herbs she was growing. She told me about what she shares with others and explained how some of the seeds she used had been brought over from China by friends and how these plants would benefit her health. Lucy's garden is perhaps one of the most unique within the LMV community. Her landlord, like so many others, has put a giant cement slab across most of her back yard. She told me he did it years ago to save water. While this is great for him, it provides Lucy with only minimal earth to work with. There are several others in the program in similar situations. LMV deals with this by simply putting the garden bed on top of the cement. They then layer the bottom of the 4x8 bed with cardboard and then fill the bed with soil. These types of beds are typically higher than traditional ones because the increased amount of soil is more resistant to the heat from the concrete below. While this is great and provides people with access to workable land, it makes it very difficult to expand garden projects. But Lucy has found a innovative solution to this.

Lucy was born in the Philippines in the capital city of Manila where she lived in a home with her grandmother and other relatives. Because of the urbanization of cities like Manila, there is very little access to good soil. In fact, Lucy told me the first time she had dirt in her back yard was here in the U.S. Yet, somehow her grandmother was able to have a bountiful garden. When I asked her how, she told me her grandmother used pots.

"What do you mean pots?" I asked. She esplaned to me how she collects pots and makes soil in the same garden pot while the plant is actually producing, a technique she learned from her grandmother. "My grandmother was an incredible person," she explained, "she used potted plants to make compost and grow food simultaneously." In order to understand fully, she gave me a one-on-one workshop on the process. First, depending on what she plans on growing she chooses a pot of an appropriate size. Next, she uses cardboard and paper scraps from her house to create a one-to-three inch layer at the bottom of the pot. She then puts a layer of dead plants and leaves to form the second strata. After that layer, she creates the next out of kitchen refuse. Lastly, she adds the final layer, which is a combination of previously used soil and compost full of worms and insects. She then plants the seed or seedling. Depending on what she is growing, how the plant did the previous growing season, and what the plant is, she uproots the plant after one or two years. She takes the soil from the same pot, and pours it upside down in another pot, and replants the same plant. What was previously cardboard is now decomposed into nitrogen-rich soil. After two years of use, she uses the soil for other projects in her garden beds or adds it to other pots.

She explained that the process of layering of each pot is not an exact science, and she told me that the most important part is to remember which plants were flipped by years. She has a journal to help her out in this process and to write notes about how the plants are doing in accordance with the seasons. Every few months or so, Lucy moves her pots around to receive more or less sun. Her garden is literally always in movement. Lucy uses LMV as a platform to share her experiences in the garden with others who are in similar situations.

The Group

LMV events are structured around providing as much relevant information to gardeners as possible in a short amount of time. They are also “third-spaces” of conviviality where people learn and share their knowledge and wisdom together. In order to accomplish this, every event starts off with an icebreaker. This often has to do with the information that is going to be presented in the class. Sometimes this is an activity that is a reflection of where people see themselves in the food system. In other instances, the icebreaker allows people to share what they have been growing in their garden or what was recently cooked with ingredients from the home kitchen gardens. In whatever instance, this sets the stage for the organizers and/or Master Gardener to begin the class, workshop, or meeting.

In the summer of 2015, I met with Jacky, an LMV organizer. We talked about the future of LMV and its shift toward a new model. The lead organizers and members had by then begun to include “resource sharing” as an element of every member event. Each event is about two hours long. The enactment of this new model encourages participants to share whatever they had brought to the breakout confabs, in a very informal process of face-to-face engagement. Some came to share seeds, others tools and techniques. Gardeners and orchardists arrived with loadfuls of fruit to share, while others eagerly presented home-cooked meals with garden ingredients and explained their recipes and their nutritional and medicinal values. Knowledge of gastronomy, agroecology, ethnobotany, the culinary arts, and even nutritional ethnoscience are shared. I realized that all these bodies of knowledge and wisdom were being circulated through the informal confabs that happened at the end of the formal events.

When I asked Jacky what the rules are for determining who can participate and how much food or seed people can take, she explained that it runs on accountability. “Many of these people see each other often, and we hope that the accountability to the group will keep people from taking too much.” This notion of accountability is a very significant norm that usually distinguishes morally dense social relationships in which primary and secondary affiliations are “thick.” From the vantage point of the tools of conviviality this is certainly expected in those circumstances where people in communities are able to create a localized *alter*economy.

In Elinor Ostrom’s brilliant book, *Governing the Commons*, she discusses the many ways people organize common pool resources. What she finds is that while there is no one way in which people do this, a common thread in all institutions of collective action is that they “all face uncertain and complex environments” (1990, 88). People manage uncertainty by working collectively, and while each step is thought to reduce uncertainty, it often also adds complexity. In the cases discussed by Ostrom, these institutions of collective action are highly complex. People are invested in them because they live side by side with neighbors and expect their children and grandchildren to do the same. In each case, a community has specific physical, state, cultural, and linguistic elements. “The differences in the particular rules take into account specific attributes of the related physical systems, cultural views of the world, and economic and political relationships that exists in the setting” (89). For the LMV community to discover what these physical systems, cultural worldviews, and political relations are require high levels of social learning. Gregory Cajete believes that a “people’s ecology” is just that. A people’s ecology seeks to celebrate the “home fires” (1999a, viii) of diverse people as a

means to regenerate awareness of the ancient wisdom of our ancestors. Traditional environmental knowledge is an experiential form of knowledge and because it is constantly transforming to meet the needs of people who practice it, knowledge is itself a form of social learning.

In a community-based ethnography one cannot forget to ask: What does this all mean for those who "possess" TEK, especially for recent arrivants who may experience the Sana Clara Valleys as an "out-of-place" locale? We may do well to recognize how each gardener, through the experience of a self-generating subjectivity that springs from cultivating a garden, also involves a way of becoming and being in the world. This is a transitory adaptive subject, surviving uncertainty by relying on a proven ancestral resource modified to new perturbations—the work of formal and informal institutions of collective action like the LMV community. But through the extended networks of these collective engagements, the community is generating a radical sense of conviviality across entire neighborhoods and between neighbors that may have had lesser ties in the past. These autonomous networks truly assert and enunciate the potentiality to challenge the "enframing" of biopower, especially as it pertains under the dominant neoliberal capitalist food system that daily manufactures precarity. Many LMV gardeners have expressed the view – in different words – that this system is out of balance. I take their understanding to provide insight on how the dominant food system is certainly "wobbling" from the effects of the second contradiction of capitalism, and the violence unleashed by financial speculation, which both thrive alongside the cruel vagaries of endlessly exploitative, disparate, and disruptive global commodity chains.

The Community, or why verdolagas are not "weeds"

As a kid growing up in a small town just north Lake Tahoe, CA. I remember my family stayed informed about school "snow days" or events at school; the word got around through informal phone trees. Someone, often an administrator, declared that there was too much snow for students to get to school safely and decided to declare the day a "snow day." While these were some of my favorite days as a kid, I always found it interesting the way knowledge and news trickled down from administrators, who would then call teachers, who then called parents, who then told their children. This version of the phone tree system and its distribution of knowledge functions as a hierarchy. The most important people hear the news first, and those presumably deemed least important (to the decision-making process) are last. While the garden knowledge at LMV does function this way from time to time, in more cases than not, it functions in a quite different capacity. Knowledge often occurs organically and spontaneously, in what Deleuze and Guatarri (1987) call a "rhizomatic" fashion.

The leadership network of *La Mesa Verde* is an assemblage of a variety of actors who seek similar goals but through different means. In my research, I have figure there to be at least three groups of gardeners with similar traits. I refer to the first group as recent immigrants. This group consists of recent immigrants from Mexico, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, China, Philippines, and South Korea. Most of the families come from rural regions of these countries. Similar to participants in a study done by Shava et. al. (2010), these families come with a wealth of knowledge about gardening and farming and have the potential to stimulate and renew existing traditional knowledge *in a new urban context*. In May of 2015, I visited Diana, who made me homemade waffles with

fresh picked berries from her garden. While we ate together to discuss her garden, Grandma came over for a visit. During breakfast, Grandma told me about a discussion she had with a Master Gardener. The Master Gardener wanted her to remove what she called a "common weed." The gardener told her that it was not a weed because she cooked with it regularly. The plant in dispute was *verdolagas* (*Portulaca oleracea*, a.k.a. purslane, common purslane, Mexican parsley), which while it does look like a weed and can spreads fast, it is also nutrient dense. This reveals something about the oppositional consciousness and radical subjectivity LMV gardeners embody in the transborder spaces of their newfound homes. The state, in this case through the Master Gardener program, often attempts to provide the home gardeners with accurate knowledge about best practices for gardening but in the end, perhaps because of the persistence of settler colonial norms and attitudes, devalues the knowledge that the gardeners bring to the "table" as part of their agroecological and ethnobotanical understandings. Despite a regime that ends up seeking to impose a decidedly Westernized understanding of plants – like determining which plants are weeds and which are not – the gardeners resist this imposition of a normalized view of human-plant relationships. Indeed, a weed is not a weed in every cultural worldview and the LMV gardeners understand this and use this knowledge as practical wisdom in their own gardening activities, regardless of what the "experts" opine.

The second group of gardeners consist of second and third generation Latinos, Native Americans, and some white Americans, whose knowledge about gardening is heightened by the presence and use of the traditional knowledge of recent immigrants. Most of the families in this category are English speakers, but because their parents

originated from Mexico and other Latin American countries, they have the ability to engage with the two groups. Oscar, a third generation Latino, told me he remembers visiting his grandfather's farm in outside of Hermosillo in the Mexican state of Sonora. His grandfather would tell him stories about how to farm and the nature of our responsibility to the Earth. While he has carried these life lessons with him, it was not until he became part of LMV and (re)learned from recent immigrants how to farm, that he recovered these precious place-based memories. "Gardening forces you to pay attention to the small things," he told me. "The water, these seasons, the Earth," all of these, he told me, must be accounted for, which is what Oscar now teaches his daughter. Oscar told me how gardening came easy to him because he felt like he was simply relearning it again. His ability to speak both English and Spanish has made him a valuable part of the LMV community because he now passes this knowledge along to others across linguistic borders.

The last group of gardeners consists of U.S.-born urbanites. This group mainly consists of White Americans and African Americans. While everyone in the LMV program is considered low-income, this group tends to have more income and is often more formally educated. Most families in this group have found themselves at Sacred Heart because in married households, one or both of the spouses have lost their jobs or can only find partial work. Additionally, many of these gardeners have never gardened before in their life. While this group primarily sticks to the basics for the first year or so, they often join the ranks of those who are most dedicated to the program. The members of this group are highly motived to do research on their own to find new farming techniques, recipes, herbs, and vegetables to use and grow.

The combination of the diverse knowledge of these three groups is what makes the leadership network of LMV a "rhizomatic" structure and process. According to Deleuze and Guattari, "the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature" (1987, 21). For them, a rhizome is a network that is constantly morphing and adapting to given circumstances. There are an infinite number of ways for these networks to organize because nodes emerge spontaneously. The ability of these networks to emerge and transform is a result of the autonomy of the actors in the network, and because the network extends laterally, not vertically, these networks have no beginning, middle, or end. These networks expand and contract as people use them; they provide safety and security, and a means to share knowledge and power. "A rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines" (1987, 9). This is how the LMV network works. The networks, which are continually created, bring in new knowledge and refresh existing knowledge. If someone leaves or drops out, the broken link will repair itself by the creation of new connections.

The diversity of knowledge present in resilient social-ecological systems is what enhances their ability to renew and reorganize. The rhizomatic nature of the knowledge exchanges in the LMV network strengthens community by allowing individuals and families to determine the potential (the amount of garden knowledge and resources) and the connectivity (the diversity of crops and social networks) of their own system. Every family that has joined *La Mesa Verde* has joined for different reasons, but the degree of autonomy one chooses to enact is what determines opportunity for self-organization.

Opportunities for Self-Organization

Emma Goldman so eloquently once stated, "If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution."[31] While there are many renditions of this quote, and much speculation about whether or not she actually said this, for me, it sums up the food justice revolution. *La Mesa Verde* is a place where people come together to garden and strengthen relationships all along the way sharing and transforming the meaning of food. Many people have told me the garden is a place where they can be removed from the rush and stress of everyday life. Some have told me that it is a place where knowledge is gained and remembered. Alfonso is an elderly man who migrated from the suburbs of Mexico City in the 1950s. He always wears a Panama hat, long sleeved collared shirt, and uses a cane. He told me about his childhood, the move north, his family, and his loving wife Rocio. His stories had a nostalgic feel and in a deeply felt way, he reminded me of my own grandfather. He told me that growing food is about *communicación*. For him, growing food was about communicating with the Earth, land, community, and family. Through communicative praxis, the gardeners are able to create and restore the type of intimate relationships needed to build and sustain a community.

Over the past four years working with the LMV community, one thing that has remained constant throughout has been the celebratory aspect of growing, eating, and sharing food. I have witnessed sicknesses and deaths in many families. I have seen people evicted from the homes, fired from their jobs, and even deported. Yet, when people are

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[31] While many believe that Emma Goldman did in fact say this, there are many conflicting citations of when this occurred and her exact phrasing.

able to pick up the pieces of their life and put them back together again, the garden is almost always one of the first parts they restore.

Ivan Illich (2009) argues marginalized communities need tools that actually work for them. Often times, NGOs appear in communities and start "grassroots" organizations. Regardless of the good intentions of these organizations, the agenda of NGOs is often different from that of the community. According to Illich, "Individuals need tools to move and to dwell. They need remedies for their diseases and means to communicate with one another" (2009, 11). Above all, people need "the freedom to make things among which they can live, to give shape to them according to their own tastes, and to put them to use in caring for and about others" (ibid). The tools of conviviality Illich discusses are also tools of practicality. He uses the concept of conviviality because he believes it to be the opposite of "industrial productivity" (ibid). But more than that, Illich uses it to mean an "autonomous and creative intercourse among persons, and the intercourse of persons with their environment" (ibid). In other words, autonomy is not about the *freedom from responsibility*, but rather the *acknowledgement of responsibility*.

Experimental Forms of Self-Organization

Earlier I quoted Berardi, who stated that with the goal of autonomy, "we want to make possible a general reduction in working time and we want to transform the organization of work in such a way that an autonomous organization of sectors of productive experimental organization may become possible" (2012, 11). I bring this up because the key element in self-organization is that it is always experimental, which is what Berardi argues is the goal of autonomy. The experimental aspect of the adaptive cycle of resilience is self-organization, or "innovation" (Gunderson and Holling 2002).

Similar to resilience, the experimental aspect of the adaptive cycle of autonomy lies in the self-organization stage. Autonomy is more than the end of work, it is the end of work *for capitalism*. Thus, embedded within autonomy lies the pursuit to create meaningful labor. This type of labor has been referred to as *self-valorizing* (Cleaver 1989; 1992; Negri 1991; Valle 2015) because it offers new hope and new spaces in spite of and possibly because of marginality (also see Peña 1996; Anderson 2010). Cleaver refers to self-valorization as a "self-defining, self-determining process which goes beyond the mere resistance to capitalist valorization to a positive product of self-constitution" (1992, 19). In combination with Illich's tools of conviviality, autonomy is a positive project of self-constitution because of the creative intercourse between persons and their environments. Conviviality contributes to the resilience of a community emerging at the interface of social ecological systems while also remaining self-determining. Through the sharing and enjoying of food, the LMV community is reconfiguring neoliberal capitalist value framings and participating in the experimental aspects of self-organization based in their enjoyment of food and labor (i.e. gardening). Their acts are against the industrial capitalist productivity of food and labor and for the self-constitution of gardeners and community.

There are various levels of experimental self-organization embedded within the LMV model. At the most basic level, gardeners organize their gardens according to what they want from it. Lupe grows chayote squash (*Sechium edule*), a common crop grown throughout Mexico, because it provides shade for a variety of lettuces that she grows. The *chayote* climbs a homemade trellis, which then spreads to create a well-shaded area. Sara, who is often sick because she is missing a kidney, was told by her doctor that she has low

levels of iron, calcium and potassium. She believes in the healing potential of food and began planting several varieties of beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris*), including pinto, lima, fava, and green, which she eats almost everyday. In order to accommodate the trellising of these beans she uses PVC piping. Her neighbor has a large tree, which provides her afternoon shade, but it also stunts the growth of her beans. With the help of her neighbor she constructed a PVC trellis, or as she calls it, "Jack and the Beanstalk," which forces the beans to the left in order to miss the afternoon shade. The creativity and experimentation of these two acts demonstrate how gardeners modify their backyard to benefit the diversity in their garden while contributing to its self-organization.

While these individual acts demonstrate how the agency of gardeners promotes self-organization in the garden, they extend well into the LMV community. At one event, I met Guadalupe, who moved to the Valley several years ago from Guadalajara. She had been a part of the LMV community for four years and had become a skillful and productive gardener. With the help of Master Gardeners and friends, she has transformed her garden into, as she called, "an oasis." But Guadalupe was recently evicted because her landlord raised her rent, which she can no longer afford. At the meeting she expressed her feelings and fears that she could lose her garden. Within moments, the LMV members were organizing to find ways she could keep her garden. Some volunteered their house and others had options at community gardens. As a result of this conversation, *La Mesa* Verde and Sacred Heart are pressuring the City of San José to enact AB 551,[32] which would allow owners of vacant lots to give permission for the creation of

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[32] This bill and its ramifications are discussed in greater detail in chapter nine.

community gardens on those lots for a tax write-off. The self-organization of the group is tailored to the context of the community, and to their desires and needs.

Defining our Needs: Conviviality and Women Gardeners

Illich's concept of tools of conviviality works very well with Gustavo Esteva's concept of the "new commons" (2005, 20). According to Esteva, "for people on the margins, disengaging from the economic logic of the market or the plan has become the very condition for survival. They are forced to confine their economic interaction… to realms outside the spaces where they organize their own modes of living" (2005, 20). It is within these spaces where people and groups enact autonomy to define their own needs, and with the tools of conviviality, they have the practical tools to act upon those needs. Malin liked to say, "we meet them where they [the gardeners] are at." She meant that the goal of LMV was not to initiate social transformation, but to create a space where self-defined social transformation could occur.

The typical LMV meeting is loud and talkative. People come early because they need to leave early, and people arrive late because they had something to do. It is evident that life goes on outside of LMV; but when people enter the third-space of *La Mesa Verde*, the stressful life associated with late modernity becomes more manageable. People come to LMV events because it is a space where their knowledge and experience is validated and embraced as practical and effective. Once a gardener graduates from the first year program, if he or she chooses to continue with the program and becomes an LMV member, they no longer have access to Master Gardeners. The Master Gardeners are part of the funding agreement, which Sacred Heart has received and they only visit first-year homes. While many gardeners do not need Master Gardeners (especially those

from rural backgrounds), the urbanites often do. At member events the answers to problems come about organically through popular education and the face-to-face confabs that occur in this space. The LMV organizers structure events based on the interests of the advisory committee, comprised of gardener members. Organizers find community speakers or instructors for events, and then they find members to co-facilitate the event. This model allows for flexibility and for the needs of the community to come forth. I recently attended a meeting about water saving tips. The drought in California has hit low-income families hard and many are trying to find ways to continue gardening while saving water. I have also attended meetings for canning, composting, and cooking. All of these events were initiated by the community and co-created and co-facilitated with LMV members.

One of the most striking aspects of the LMV program and community of gardeners has always been how the community works collaboratively to define their needs and how the garden remains important to meet those needs. Nowhere is this more evident than in the diverse social networks perpetuated within the community. The self-organization of the community emerges spontaneously. As explained earlier, the spontaneity of these networks creates a rhizome-like network. Doina Petrescu, claims that, "making a rhizome" is not simply the creation of a network or the transmission of information. For her, making a rhizome is "a way of communing" (2013, 267). These rhizomatic networks contribute to community well-being because "these networks are forms of resilience" (ibid 269). Petrescu insists the women are at the core of these networks and my findings with the LMV community confirm this.

Women form the basis of these networks while also contributing to its regenerative aspects i.e. food, sharing, and gardening. Petrescu states that women "are the humble gardeners of a rhizomatic reconstruction of democracy in times of change and resilience" (272). At LMV, the majority of participants at workshops, meetings, focus groups, advisory meetings, and cooking classes are women. While there are men at these events, women make up an overwhelming majority of gardeners. Vandana Shiva (1988) argues that the "feminine principle," which is not exclusive to women, is a restorative and regenerative ethic that emphasizes how right livelihoods (appropriate to time and place) can work to nourish the diversity of life and the health of ecosystems on the planet. My experience with LMV has informed me that the humility of the gardener can change the world. *La Mesa Verde* gardeners continually find humble solutions to real global problems. In doing so, they are developing radical subjectivities that derive from the experience of being marginalized and thus understand that they may not be able to reject the totalizing conditions of late modernity under neoliberal capitalist regimes, but they can certainly enact living convivial spaces of autonomy where the potentialities of an alterNative future are made more salient.

Chapter 8. The Emergence of Political Subjectivity in Leadership Networks

Elizabeth and Paul have been married for twenty-two years. Paul is a white male in his late forties who grew up on a small family farm outside of Medford, Oregon. His wife, Elizabeth, is a second-generation Asian American woman in her mid forties who grew up in the Chinatown district of San Francisco. They married and moved to San José to be away from urban San Francisco and closer to the agriculture of the Santa Clara Valley. Together, they started a business. Paul builds custom wood flooring and Elizabeth does the books. While they by no means earn extraordinary profits, especially compared to some of the obscene amount of money being made in the Valley today, the live comfortably. They were able to buy an older home in North San José where Paul refinished the wood floor to match the time period of the 1930s when the home was built. They have two tall Arctic Glo nectarine (*Prunus persica*) trees right in front of their home, which were planted when they moved in almost twenty years ago. When Paul comes home from work, he climbs the tree to look for fruit that is a couple of days away from being ripe. He then tosses these select pieces of fruit to the ground, which is then put in a box that Elizabeth stores in their cellar for future consumption. Fruit that is already ripe is collected and put into a small plastic bag that goes directly to the kitchen table and is eaten within days. Elizabeth rotates the cellar's surplus in terms of its ripeness, the time of season, and the trade networks that they have established. Together they have a system whereby they have fresh nectarines, ripening nectarines, and sharable nectarines all season long.

Elizabeth was an eager participant in the disposable camera project. Before even meeting me, she obtained my contact information from LMV staff to invite me to have a tour of her garden and storage system. Following my directions, I accidently drove past her home because the large nectarine trees hid the address. It was not until five or six houses later that I realized my mistake. I pulled over, checked my address again, and began to turn around. I looked in my rearview mirror for oncoming traffic and a saw an Asian woman carrying a box across the street to her neighbor's house. I turned around thinking nothing of it. I parked in front of her house and was greeted by the same Asian woman, who turned out to be Elizabeth. She introduced herself and we walked across the street together. Elizabeth is calm and assertive. She speaks softly and with purpose. I could tell after only a few minutes that she had an abundance of garden knowledge and wanted to share as much of it as she could. We sat down at a large solid oak kitchen table to talk about LMV and her garden over a bowl of cherry tomatoes and snap peas. It was not until after an hour-long interview with Elizabeth that she informed me that when I first saw her, she was walking over to the neighbor's house to share surplus nectarines; the neighbors in turn provided her with jalapeño and serrano chili peppers. I asked her if her neighbor was part of LMV, and she said, "No, it's just something we have always done." Elizabeth and Paul have a fabulous garden in the back of their home with beefsteak (*Solanum lycopersicum*), cherry (*Solanum lycopersicum var. cerasiforme*), and heirloom tomatoes (*Lycopersicon esculentum*), Persian cucumbers (*Cucumis sativus*), Meyer lemons (*Citrus × meyeri*), green figs (*Ficus carica*), English peas (*Pisum sativum*), watermelons (*Citrullus lanatus*), green beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris*), and a variety of flowers and seedlings.

Paul and Elizabeth had a well-established and extensive sharing network prior to LMV and have benefited from the expansion of the program into their neighborhood. When LMV began in 2009, it only served the community of Washington-Alma. As it has grown, it has been able to spread in other low-income pockets of San José. The spread of LMV has changed the demographic makeup of the LMV community. What was once a gardening program made up of Spanish speaking Mexicans and Chicanas/os, is now a diverse group of gardeners ranging in age, nationality, gender, and language.

La Mesa Verde is an urban agriculture program that teaches people how to grow food and fosters these strong social networks with the mission "to create a leadership network of urban gardeners who challenge food access in San José." As Hector said when he informed gardeners at a recent orientation, "This program not only teaches gardening, it also connects you to a network of urban gardeners." The program pursues self-sufficiency by promoting empowerment and fostering future leaders from within the community. It connects people from different communities, ethnicities, and nationalities through the convivial experience of sharing food. Paul and Elizabeth are a clear example of this. They continue to use their already existing sharing networks and the networks introduced by LMV. The real genius of the program is that by fostering empowerment and social networks, the organization actually taps into pre-existing social networks. As articulated by Luís, "I think, that with just one crop, I come into contact with *at least* sixty different people." These social networks help to form both the formal and informal alternative food networks that exist within the program membership and extend contacts and relationships. All of the LMV gardeners have preexisting social networks that they call upon from time to time, and the incorporation of the new networks offered by LMV

is a reminder of a cultivated subjectivity that is inclusive to people seeking to ease social vulnerability and improve their well-being.

LMV is a vital part of the leadership network and would like to be considered the center, however, the member networks present a strong centrifugal force because these networks take on a life all their own through the convivial relationships spun out by the gardeners themselves in their daily lived experiences. The social networks created by LMV are only as strong as the informal networks of association beneath the surface. The LMV network operates according to the logic and mutual reliance rationality that Gustavo Esteva refers to as "a new commons" (2005), or a space of the common man [sic] for the pursuit of a "life worth living." Just like any other non-governmental or civil society organization, LMV and Sacred Heart have a mission and an agenda. While members of LMV understand this mission, they also use and transform the program to achieve their own self- and collectively-defined goals to fulfill and enrich that mission. Individuals, families, and *La Mesa Verde* itself use the network to meet and define their own needs.

In this chapter, I first present and ethnography of "informality" by demonstrating how the continuing growth of the member-driven network is itself an adaptive and innovative result of racialization and the inequality this engenders. Next, I examine how the leadership network established by LMV and its members allows families to negotiate around their social, economic, and/or environmental vulnerability by defining and acting upon their own needs in concert with other like-minded members and neighbors. I will also discuss how the LMV community has transformed the network into a "network

struggle" (Hart and Negri 2004) to challenge the existing inequalities in the food system and to affirm their own existence and importance.

For those whom I have interviewed or talked with, the core values that maintain the network appear to be solidarity, trust, reciprocity, responsibility, and generosity. I have never once heard anyone use the concept of "rights." This suggests an ethic of obligations to the collective and a commitment to shared problem solving rather than individualistic rights-oriented enunciations and demands. Each one of these values is interpreted into a variety of ways in accordance with a given family's social and economic position. Social networks pose both risk and possibility, and when, why, and how people choose to use them is always circumstantial. Lastly, I will demonstrate how the leadership network functions as a "new commons" by helping gardeners to define and act upon their own needs, doing so in a manner that creates spaces of autonomy and conviviality. The informal economy is not often the first choice for anyone. Many in the LMV community turn toward informality when the formal economy does not meet their needs. As realized by the LMV community, the interstitial spaces between these economies may open new worlds of economic possibility.

How the Uncertainty of the Market Transforms the Subject

Zygmunt Bauman (2000) argues that our current society is one that encourages its subjects to be consumers rather than producers. This logic encourages people to act on their own best interests while avoiding the consequences of their choices. This logic avoids any responsibility that may be tied to the consequences of one's own actions. The society Bauman presents is one where risks are created by society and experienced by individuals. The "liquid times" experienced today are a result of a social system that

praises the individual at the cost of the community (Bauman 2007). The neoliberal logics that have created such a society allow the state to abandon responsibility while placing those most vulnerable at the mercy of the inherent unpredictability of market forces. The individualizing market forces division rather than unity (Bauman 2000,148) and compels the consuming subject to "perceive the world as a container full of *disposable* objects, objects for *one-off* use; the whole world – including other human beings" (162). However demoralizing these "economies of abandonment" might be, as Povinelli (2011) shows, these spaces of social abandonment can be transformed into new areas of possibilities.

In order to come to terms with how the LMV community presents themselves in light of neoliberal governmentality, we must understand their actions through an "analytics of government" (Foucault 1991). Using the work of Foucault, Thomas Lemke believes the best way to understand the role of the state in our daily lives is not through a theory of governance, but an analytics of government. He believes that we need to consider the theory of the state as practices, not objects; strategies and not function; and technologies rather than institutions. Lemke insists that, "instead of taking institutions as the point of departure, it [an analytics of government] focuses on technologies that are materialized and stabilized in institutional settings" (2007, 9). The alternative food networks established by *La Mesa Verde* gardeners is the result of governmental technologies (in the Foucauldian sense) that produce uncertainty and informality. These networks result in communitarian *convite* (see Arellano 2010; 2014). As explained by Arellano, *convite* moves beyond the concept of sustainably because it embraces the values and ethics of sharing. Those who live in accordance with the life-force of *conviviendo* are not just sustaining life, but moving collectively to toward better health

and collective well-being.

Richard Griswald del Castillo argues that the historical legacy of colonialism has assured that minorities cannot always depend on the "passive fairness of the system to defend their rights" (1990 175). In fact, part of the struggle of organizations such a *Via Campesina*, are predicated on just that - everyone has the "right to have rights." Within the context of the city, Henri Lefebvre (1991) calls for an inclusive transformation and a political reimagining of how the city could be organized and how it might work. He believes that everyone in the city needs to "have the right to the city." But the barrio and the ghetto are far different than the neoliberal city, and its demands are "utterly different from what most Americans can imagine" (Venkatesh 2006, 4). David Harvey argues that the rights to the city do not come from "intellectual fascinations and fads," but rather, "they rise up from the streets, out of neighborhoods, as a cry for help and sustenance by oppressed peoples in desperate times" (2012, xiii). The urban poor have the power to transform the city through humble acts of social interaction. As Diaz contends, "survival depends on the self-reliance and resources of the social networks in barrios" (2005 3). As several participants in this study have discussed, city governments simply either cannot or choose not, to meet the needs of low-income residents. Through strong social networks, the informal economy picks up where the formal economy left off.

While I agree with Richarson and Pisani (2011) that poverty and citizenship status often push (and sometimes pull) people to participate in the informal economy, I also agree with Castells and Portes, who argue; "the informal economy is not a euphemism of poverty. It is a specific form of relationships of production, while poverty is an attribute linked to the process of distribution" (1989 12). While poverty and informality are often

used simultaneously, we must not forget that the informal economy is not fixed. It is a "fluid process involving particular interaction between investor, worker, and state agency" (Fernández-Kelly and García 1989, 248). This is especially true in immigrant communities such as Washington-Alma. As the state and its policies change, so too do its people. Studying the Latina/os in San José, Zlolniski (2006) found the community was in the constant process of change and informal economic activities were a result of their creative adaptive strategies to cope with low-waged work and political disenfranchisement. This is why Diaz (2012) believes that the barrio offers the perfect site for urban planners to (re)learn how cities can be organized to meet the needs of its residents.

The community of Washington-Alma parallels many communities in the U.S. where a high number of undocumented residents can be found, and their continued struggles for social belonging is invariably a contradictory and ambiguous process. This is because the informal economy is both the result of state policy, and "the ability of individuals to leverage disparate regulations to their advantage" (Richardson and Pisani 2011, 109). Communities can and do organize informal economies that resist state control in order to take advantage of "economies of abandonment" (see Povinelli 2011). The state works against and for informal economies because each new state regulation offers new opportunities for informality to open up. However, in my experience at LMV, people do not go out of their way to skirt the regulations of the state, nor to become wealthy. The gardeners of LMV participate in informal economic exchanges to make ends meet. It is because of this that "trust makes many things possible" (Richardson and Pisani 2012. 120), including change.

Citing the work of Portes, Castells, and Benton (1989), Richardson and Pisani (2012) confirm that there are three types of informal networks; survival informality, dependent exploitation, and growth informality. While I agree that these forms of informality exist, and I have been witness to them, the type of informality that typifies LMV is quite different. Informality within LMV is one that I refer to as *cohesion informality*. This type of informality strengthens survival informality, expands growth informality, and counters dependent exploitation. This is because cohesion informality is a social bond and a value framing. One of the shortfalls of Richardson and Pisani's (2012) otherwise fantastic and detailed study of the informal economy along the Texas-Mexican border is that they limit analysis to the "materiality of transaction." Many of the exchanges within the LMV community networks are experienced as forms of culture rather than "social capital" because their knowledge and lived experiences are what is being valued, validated, and celebrated. The leadership network of LMV is one of a "network struggle," because creativity, communication, and self-organization are its values and this facilitates "new subjectivities and new expansive forms of life within the organization itself" (Hardt and Negri 2004, 83). Without these three intertwining elements, LMV would lose it flexibility to adapt to the changing circumstances of the community.

As Ben Spies-Butcher argues, "social capital is not a concept that is universally welcomed" (2003 6). In fact, an alterNative approach might argue that our traditional environmental knowledge and other forms of indigenous or local knowledge are not "capital" (not even social or cultural) and instead are the community's heritage commons consisting of knowledge, skills, practices, and beliefs. While not stated in the same way,

this may be what Berkes refers to as a "knowledge-practice-belief complex" (1999,179). This is the source of right livelihoods rather than "capital." It is "culture stock" rather than "capital stock." A move away from the concept of social capital is my attempt to move beyond the narrowly defined logics of economic prescriptions and market reform. "It is in this sense that the concept of social capital is not so much the direct product of neoliberalism, but is perhaps better understood as a social theory informed by neoliberalism" (Spies-Butcher 2003, 269).

The problem with Richarson and Pisani's interpretation of informal economies is that they follow a liberal economistic cost-benefit analysis of individual decision-making. For them, people make choices that are always already economic. But that is not how knowledge sharing works. However, there are those like Michael Taylor, who fears this rationality "denies to its subjects capacities and dispositions that are part of what makes us human" (2006, 55). Spies-Butcher's is against the concept of social capital because he believes it is informed by neoliberal economic logics. He insists that the concept emerges when individuals make choices to resolve social and economic problems. "Thus, social capital was not so much a move away from the market as it was an extension of the logic of the market to the social as well as economic realm" (Spies-Butcher 2003, 269). While the *La Mesa Verde* community does make decisions that alter and transform their economic positionality, it is my belief that gardeners encourage cohesion informality not based on cost-benefit, but for a life *convide* - "*una vida buena y sana y alegre* [a good and healthy and joyful life]" (Arellano 2010, 2). Similar to *convide*, cohesion informality is about the sharing of knowledge through the validation and celebration of life experiences.

Throughout my time with LMV, I found that informality poses obstacles to social cohesion, but I also witnessed that because of those obstacles, gardeners used their marginality as an "inventive force" (see Peña 1998) to enable social engagements that encourage cohesion informality. In my discussion with gardeners, I sense that cohesion informality is best understood not as "capital," but rather simply as "culture": As a logical and rational system of knowledge, belief, and practice constituted and recognized within the community of practice as a continuously regenerated heritage commons much older than any form of "capital." Moreover, cohesion informality can be said to operate not in a "market," but through "social engagement" with a wide variety of kinship, civic, and conviviality action networks. These engagements present the possibilities and potentialities of "escapes" from systems that reduce value (and value-creating agency) to the metrics of the dominant currency, the universal equivalent as per capital's definition of the subject.

These escapes come in various forms. In July of 2014, I visited Sara's garden and spend the afternoon with her discussing how she has transformed her garden into a social space. "This garden," Sara described, "is our little paradise." Sara shares a common gardening space amidst eight cottage rentals just off the busy West San Carlos Street with two other women. Each of the gardeners are white, in their mid fifties, and live alone. Each gardener has her own raised garden bed, but all of the surplus and labor is shared. "We are always willing to give," she explained. There is a common compost, tool shed, and sitting area. The sharing practices of these women can best be understood as an ethics of care. Joan Tronto explains that "care implies a reaching out to something other than the self: it is neither self-referring nor self-absorbing" (1993, 102). For these three

women, and many others in the LMV community, the ability to share coincides with the ability to heal. When I asked Sara why she shares, she said, “It’s my responsibility. They [her neighbors] would too.” An ethics of care helps to embed a garden subjectivity that realizes the interdependence of other gardeners through the cultural norms of sharing. Cohesion informality encourages alternative food movements that base themselves in ethics of care.

Tronto’s description of the ethics of care is very similar to what Vadana Shiva calls the “feminine principle” (1988). For Shiva, the feminine principle is an ecological worldview that promotes regenerative and restorative ecological engagements. Rather than the extractive and destructive ecological practices that typify modern industrial capitalism and are a threat to life, the feminine principle embraces life.

> And while Third World women have privileged access to survival expertise, their knowledge is inclusive, not exclusive. The ecological categories with which they think and act can become the categories of liberation for all, for men as well as women, for the west as well as the non-west, and for the human as well as the non-human elements on the earth. (Siva 1988, 224)

The practices of the feminine principle can be seen throughout LMV. While it is true that women make up the majority of those who attend workshops, classes, and events, and many carry the feminine principle within their daily actions, many men do as well. When I visited family homes and gardened with families, I found that both men and women did the actual practices of planting, harvesting, restoring, and regenerating. Part of the garden subjectivity that exists within LMV rests on the member’s ability and desire to produce

regenerative agroecosystems that nourish their communities and bodies through the propagation of cohesion informality.

The Network Struggle of LMV

One day while meeting with Malin, she told me that LMV is like cooking pasta. “When we think it might be done we take a hand full and throw it against the wall. The ones that stick, we keep, and the ones that don’t, we let fall, but we constantly move along.” For LMV, the ability to maintain open lines of communication with its members and to provide a space for the LMV community to be creative is what allows for their self-organization. Early on in Malin’s tenure as the director of LMV, she realized the need to encourage open lines of communication. Just like any organization that is reliant on funders, there is a need to meet performance goals. Thus, in order to counter the pressures that can result from having to evaluate these goals, Malin established an advisory committee within *La Mesa Verde* that consisted of gardeners rather than staff. Presently, the advisory committee members do not necessarily have power in terms of the hiring of staff, they collaborate with the director to discuss and evaluate projects, goals, and issues within the program. The director then takes those to people higher up. While it may not be a perfect system, the work done by the advisory committee is greatly appreciated by the rest of the members and can be attributed to the formation of the current membership model. As one gardener told me, “Membership is designed to guide the program in the direction that the graduates want.” By taking feedback from the members, the advisory committee acts as advocates to influence the program.

Raj Patel (2009) explains that there are many people out there for whom the economic collapse of 2008 was bad, but not bad enough. What he meant was that a

complete transformation of our economic system would require them to lose what they have invested their lives into. Therefore, those who are leading the transformative movements of the future are not, like the 1960s, middle-class individuals. For privileged households whose problems at present are not too bad, change will not come because they are unwilling to give up what they have. For the poor, on the other hand, who have nothing, there is nothing left to lose. The poor are resisting the imposition of an economic system driven by accumulation and transforming old ways (or maybe returning to the old ways) of socializing to meet their needs without remaining in the trap of the capitalist appropriation of value. The transformations that I have witnessed at LMV are not the result of individuals demanding "rights." They are part of a larger project of people working together to define and meet their needs in spite of the impositions of the state and market systems. They do this to act upon their collective well-being, not because they find the need to be counter-hegemonic or resistant.

The Existing Informal Networks

Portes and Haller claim that attempting to measure the size of the informal economy is like "measuring the unmeasurable" (2005, 413). There are several reasons for this, which the authors attribute to various paradoxes that arise within such economies. One such paradox that the authors refer to is record keeping. Participants in the informal economy do not often keep records because records are easy to trace. While this is most likely true, this tactic could also be seen as the practice of strategic indivisibility and a form of autonomy. The informal economy associated with LMV is different than the forms studied by Portes and Haller, but it does pose some commonalities. Most of the informal acts of exchange in the LMV community are not economic transactions, as

commonly explored; rather, they are exchanges of seed, labor, knowledge, and food. Similar to practices confirmed by Portes and Haller, these exchanges are seemingly impossible to trace even with the relatively small sample size of the *La Mesa Verde* community. The reason for this is because embedded within LMV's leadership network of urban gardeners, is an extension of personal and familial attachments that exist outside of the LMV network. In addition, the social networks that exist are not exploratory devices, but rather "critical maps with specific properties" (Montiel et. al. 2009, 174). This means that the social networks within the LMV community are expressions of agency and the uses of such networks depend upon the needs of an individual and/or family.

Luís estimated that he came into contact with at least sixty different people with one given crop. He told me how he shared food with some, explained to others how to propagate the seed, and helped each other to harvest. As I have learned how these networks of exchange work within the context of LMV, I make no assumptions that I am completely aware of their extent. Indeed, these extended networks can be seen as a form of "strategic invisibility." In a recently published study of how this occurs at the individual level, Karen Lollar notes;

> Hidden in plain sight, under the radar, or behind the scenes are people who strategically choose to conceal parts of their identity, their locations, or their life situation. Strategic invisibility resists an oppressive environment by disengaging from it until new possibilities arise. Not powerless but strategic. Distinguishing between culturally imposed invisibility and invisibility that involves agency, this paper presents brief personal stories suggesting the best strategic option in certain

circumstances is invisibility and the rejection of the social and public spheres. (2015, 298)

Gender in informal networks

In their analysis of the existing informal economies along the Texas border region, Richardson and Pisani's (2012) found that men and women participate in different forms of "underground activities." The authors explore the informal activities of drug dealing, human smuggling, gambling, stripping, prostitution, theft, and the selling of pirated materials. In all of the categories, except human smuggling, stripping and prostitution, men participate more in the informal economy.

While men are the biggest contributors to informal economies explored by Richardson and Pisani, women are the overwhelming participants in the informal sharing networks at *La Mesa Verde*. LMV intentionally pursues families to join their program, but women are the ones who often show up at meetings, events, and workshops. In her study of two Mexican American Los Angeles communities, Mary Pardo (1998) found women typically were the leaders in strengthening community relations during environmental justice struggles. The difference between what Pardo found in LA and what is happening at LMV, is the women in San José strengthen their social cohesion through informal networks of exchange. They intentionally seek out other women to continue to build their social networks to protect against social vulnerability. While most Latino men in these families work as food handlers and construction or landscape laborers, many Latinas also work as maids, childcare providers, and food handlers. In several instances Mexican immigrant women informed me that their husbands were the

ones with the knowledge about gardening and farming, but it is the women who go to the workshops because they want to learn about health and be active in the community.

Many of the white families in the program had only one adult working. In most cases, white families come with far less previous knowledge of gardening, yet women were still often the ones who showed up at gardening workshops. One exception to these differences is seen at the biannual planting day celebration, which occurs every spring and fall. This is a time when families receive their seedlings and a short demo from a Master Gardener on how to plant what they receive. During this event, both males and females often attend along with their children and extended family.

Seed sharing networks

Seed sharing networks form an important part of the LMV community because they help families receive heirloom varieties and traditional plants often not available in stores or nurseries. While I cannot discuss all of the seed sharing networks that exist (nor am I fully aware of all the forms of seed sharing), I will present four cases that are particularly interesting and expansive.

Diego is a sixty-two year old man from Peru and has lived in San José for over twenty years. Every year Diego and his wife visit his mother, who still lives in Peru. While in Peru the two of them gather particular seeds to bring back and plant in San José. Upon returning home they plant the seeds to see how the plants acclimate to the Santa Clara Valley environment. Throughout the growing season they continue to watch as the varieties grows. By the time the plants are ready to harvest, they have a good idea of how the plants are doing. While they harvest the crop to see how good it tastes, they also let some go to seed in order to see if they can be saved and replanted the following season. If

the seeds look viable, the plant did well in the Valley, and they feel the seed can be saved, they then collect the seeds so the following year they create starters with those same seeds and then share them with the LMV community. Diego's brother lives in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, and when he visits there, he also collects seeds. While they have done this with several bean varieties (*Phaseolis vulgaris*), they also share herbs including *epazote*, *yerba buena*, and Mexican oregano.

Martha is a young, energetic Mixtec in her mid-thirties. Both her and her husband are recent migrants from Oaxaca. Martha's mother continues to live in in rural Oaxaca and every now and then will send an envelope full of seeds north. Martha told me that she remembers most of these crops from her childhood and loves to grow them and share the seeds with her friends and family. There are several crops that Martha has planted from her mother's seed collection including *epazote*, avocado, and various heirloom melon and corn varieties. There are two crops that she has a strong sentimental connection to, mango and banana, but the plants have yet to produce fruit. She is aware that these might not ever produce in the Santa Clara Valley, but she enjoys looking at them because it reminds her of home.

Manuel is another person active is seed sharing networks. He lives in a home with extended family, all of them having extensive gardening knowledge from their years growing up. Manuel has been in and out of work for several years, but one constant source of the family's off-the-books cash flow comes from selling fruit trees. In the back yard the family has lemon, nectarine, plum, and fig trees. Manuel is highly skilled at turning the fruit from those trees into thousands of seedlings, which he then sells at the nearby flea market. When I visited the family last fall, he had turned two five gallon paint

buckets into over two hundred seedlings. He uses the compost from his home because of its high nutrient content. I did not ask Manuel how much he planned to sell each plant for, and I never had a chance to return to see if he had sold them all. He had explained earlier that selling was important for him, but he also wanted to share some of the seedlings with other families.

The last informal seed-sharing network comes from the Master Gardeners themselves. The Master Gardeners are highly skilled and often save seeds. However, most of the Master Gardeners lack sufficient cultivatable space to grow all of what they save. I have talked with families who have received heirloom varieties of tomatoes (*Lycopersicon esculentum*), chili peppers (*Capsicum annuum*), squash (*Cucurbita*), melons (*Cucumis melo*), legumes (*Fabaceae*), onions (*Allium cepa*), and even fruit trees. The Master Gardeners hold an important position in the facilitation of the LMV seed-sharing network because each first-year gardener develops a close relationship with the Master Gardener and this relationship continues long after the first-year program.

Labor in informal networks

Labor within the LMV network is extremely hard to quantify. This is often the case in an informal economy that purposely, or not, enables members to act in a strategically invisible manner. Part of what makes LMV unique is that the spaces of interaction produce and form a convivial atmosphere, and embedded within that atmosphere is a decidedly collective spirit. Mexican anthropologist, Guillermo Bonfil Batalla (1996), argues that within Mexico's indigenous communities cooperation is based on long-standing customary rules of reciprocity. The philosophy of, "today for you, tomorrow for me" is what helps to maintain relationships within a community. While the

LMV community consists of both recent immigrants who identify (or are identifiable) as indigenous, it also consists of U.S.-born Latina/os, recent and long-standing Asian immigrants, African Americans, and U.S. born non-Latina/o whites. The shared labor practices and reciprocity norms within the LMV community cannot be ascribed only to indigenous peoples. The "fiesta spirit" of communal labor that Bonfial Batalla discusses, occurs in LMV partly as a result of the large number of recently arriving indigenous diasporic migrants, and also because these acts of communal labor helps move the community toward a common goal of improved health and well-being through the informal economy that supports food autonomy. Furthermore, Oscar told me that no one on his block is part of LMV, yet they all have gardens and they all share. He said he likes to use his hands, and coming from a landscaping background, he helps neighbors plant trees and build raised beds. Other neighbors help collect eggs from chickens or help babysit his eight-year-old daughter.

Knowledge in informal networks

Montiel, Atencio, and Mares (2009) claim the Pueblo communities of New Mexico are immersed in a long history of sharing. The authors refer to *la resolana*, which is "the space defined by the south wall of a building that is shielded from the east and west winds, where the sun reflecting off the wall creates a place of warmth, light, and tranquility" (14). For the authors, *la resolana* is a more than just such a physical space, it is also the location where goods are traded, news shared, and stories told. Historically, both men and women gathered in these spaces to share knowledge and wisdom about life. The positive and co-creative environment of *la resolana* perpetuates the idea that the community is an ever-evolving, "learning society" (30). The authors demonstrate how *la*

resolana is a space of exchange and a vital part of the community. *La Mesa Verde* opens up a similar space within the communities surrounding Washington-Alma by encouraging positive dialogue and creating spaces where knowledge and skills can be shared.

At every LMV event, members are encouraged to come with tools, seedlings, seeds, and rootstock that they would like to share with others. While these forms of exchange happen from time to time in different spaces, agroecological and ethnobotanical knowledge is the one constant involved in these reciprocity exchanges. I have heard conversations where women inform others how to prepare a traditional dish. I have heard men explain to each other how transplanting chili pepper seedlings works best. I have heard people give advice about pest management, water saving, food storage, herb drying, and even cost saving tips for shoppers. In all of these conversations men and women participate equally. I have also witnessed individuals ask for advice on cooking tips from a person with a different language background. In spite of the perceived inability to communicate with each other, the diversity of spoken languages adds depth and nuance to the perspectives and insights that are shared while encouraging openness to other members of the community, a quality that is lacking in most formal economic spheres.

Informality and food

The more I interacted with the LMV community and participated in garden practices with gardeners, the more I came to realize the centrality of the garden as a biophysical and sociocultural space promoting personal transformation and a new-found or rekindled willingness to engage in broader collective actions. Nancy, who has

overcome her social anxiety disorder, and Lucy, who has controlled her diabetes by changing her diet (both described in chapter six) are direct examples of LMV gardeners who have seen personal transformations as a result of having a garden. For many indigenous scholars, like Cajete, this comes as no surprise. In fact, “Pueblos cared for their gardens as they would care for their family and community. Their gardens received such attention because they were literally the foundation of the life and well-being of the family and community” (1999c, 92). Many gardeners, similar to Nancy and Lucy, have seen complete life changes associated with growing food and adopting epistemological orientations that are inspired by the contributions of the indigenous members of the LMV network.

Figure 10:
LMV Convivial Potluck
(*Source: Author’s Photo*)

Within the LMV network, food serves as a happy medium where people are encouraged to share. Recently, LMV has adopted policies to respond positively to the community’s desire to have food at every event. However, this is not about serving day-

old donated bagels and doughnuts. LMV itself often relies on such donations, but the convivial expression of sharing carefully prepared recipes using garden ingredients, occurs at the conclusion of LMV events organized with the participation of members in mind. Each event resembles more of a multi-ethnic potluck than an urban agriculture program. People learn and try new recipes, most of which derive from seasonal food from their gardens. Many of these recipes (see appendix C) are indicative of a return to decolonial diets and involve indigenous vegetarian and vegan preparations, suggesting that the work by Calvo and Esquibel (forthcoming) is right on the mark. At the last event I attended I had eight different families tell me that they cooked a meal that we had talked about when I visited them. They were adamant that I try each one, which I did, and each one was delicious. Needless to say, I was very full. More than sharing good food, they are sharing part of themselves (Mauss 1950) and their culture while promoting the logic of *la resolana* by celebrating and sharing the knowledge and experiences of everyday life.

Garden Possibilities Amidst Risk and Uncertainty

There is no doubt that the informal economy poses both risk and opportunity. Richardson and Pisani explain that embedded within each aspect of informal activity there are a variety of risks to consider. These risks are: 1) market risks - profit and competition, 2) transaction risks - being cheated by customers and suppliers, 3) liability risks - being sued or forced to pay for damages, 4) enforcement risks – being caught, and 4) personal risks – damage to personal relationships (2012, 62). The authors also point to the fact that, "in all economic systems, individual actors seek to find ways to manage risks" (66), and the informal economy is no different. Their study directs our attention to the risks associated with the many "illicit acts" of the informal economy, demonstrating

that "highly evolved social capital is a key facilitator in informality" (255). While the informal activities that exist within the LMV network are both economic and non-economic, the risks associated with them are quite different than those posed by Richardson and Pisani. There are two reasons for this; first, the authors assume that risk is beholden to universal cost and benefit metrics. But the "risks" attributed to the LMV network do not often fit into this narrow definition of risk because people often enter these networks for reasons that extend well beyond economic rational. After all, the value of the garden is not just the economic benefits it offers (i.e. reduction in money spent on food stuffs), it is also the well-being it enables through intergenerational learning, teaching, and sharing. As explained by Taylor, cost-benefit "in effect denies its subjects the narratively grounded identities that real people actually have and in doing so denies them the real and various bases on which they exercise their autonomy" (2006, 79-80). The second reason, which is closely connected to the first, is that the basis for LMV networks is not economic transaction, like those of Richardson and Pisani. Rather, the currency that underpins the LMV networks is relational accountability whereby members fulfill their accountability to others not through economic transactions, but through their accountability to other LMV gardeners to ensure *convite*. This serves to maintain the cohesion informality of existing *La Mesa Verde* networks of exchange.

If the garden is truly the foundation of life for the family and the community's well-being, than perhaps I have only began to uncover the profound complexity of the existing garden networks. And while that may be true, I do know that in my experience, these networks are not simply held together through weak or strong ties (see Granovetter 1983), but through responsibility and generosity. Recently, Gibson-Graham, Cameron

and Healy argue, “when we take responsibility for our economic lives and for interconnected others, we can being to shape the economies in which we live” (2013, xx). While the forms of exchanges in the LMV community might not be the economic transactions, as is traditionally discussed within the mainstream studies of the informal economy, they are still important because the meaning of transactions is not governed by universal norms. Perhaps this is what Gibson-Graham refer to as an “imagined connection” (2006, 196) of people and of movements. The imagined connections within the LMV garden networks consists of people taking control of their lives, communities, and health by imagining new possibilities and defining things like value on the basis of alterNative epistemologies.

La Mesa Verde stresses a member-driven leadership network because they believe that when the community has the power to define needs and values, they have the potential to then act upon the economic locus of power, which rests on the universalizing norms of neoliberal behavioral economics. Luís, a long-time LMV member, told me one day, “Anyone may be the next César Chávez.” What he meant was that when people have a space to come together to discuss things that are important to them, whether it be health, healthy food, clean water, or safe schools leaders will rise up. Malin once explained that the leadership network as envisioned by LMV is not designed to create leaders, but rather, it is designed to create a space where future leaders may rise up.

Chapter 9. Confronting the Neoliberal Culture of the Non-Profit Charity Industry

"To have a garden is against this system."

- LMV Gardener

Wednesday afternoons are the usual time for the LMV organizers to meet. While the majority of the time they have access to one of the rooms at Sacred Heart, this particular Wednesday, they did not. We met at the *Biblioteca Latinoamercana*, which is a branch of the San José Library system and located only a few blocks from Sacred Heart. I noticed that the room was small with a round table and six chairs surrounding it, even though it looked like only four of us would fit comfortably. There was a small whiteboard on the wall where Malin had written the date and the agenda. LMV meetings are highly organized with little room for change because there is too much work for so few employees. Similar to many other NGO and food justice organizations – they are understaffed and overworked, yet their passion for what they are doing motivates them to continue the struggle.

The six of us, Malin, Patty, Hector, Jacky, Tawna and myself, began the meeting by first "checking in." This is what Malin called it when she wanted her staff to take a deep breath, remember what was important, and reflect on the week. When I was able to attend these meetings, Malin always asked me to start first, which I did, but I was always a bit embarrassed. For the first half of the research project, I flew from Seattle to San José in two-week blocks every other month. So when I arrived I was always excited and energized to talk with families, see their gardens, and hear about their experiences. That day, I told a short story about meeting with a family who served me breakfast and

cucumber chia water in their garden. After two minutes, the timer beeped, and like clockwork, the next person was on queue to check in. But the experiences of the LMV organizers were quite different from mine. More often than not, when organizers "checked in" they explained how they balanced the craziness of their own lives and work with the lives of the LMV families. In this context, I became aware of my privileged position and had to do some "checking-in" on myself as I prepared this dissertation. Malin told me several stories about how she played the mediator between families and landlords. The organizers do not have the privilege as I myself do. They are unable to make sitting in the garden with someone for an hour or two listening to stories, eating food, and documenting farming methods their principal work. They have numbers to present, data to archive, and deadlines to meet. However, while I was always a bit embarrassed to check in with the group, it truly was a humbling activity. In a short two-minute talk, I was able to explain to them through stories of the lasting impact of this program, which Malin later told me was why she always asked me to start. While the research we have collaborated on includes information that can be quantified, this work is not data-driven. As Malin told me, "you are giving this program a human face." By sharing stories and lessons based on the patterns of backgrounds, knowledge, belief, practice, reciprocity, engagement, and conviviality, I was enriching the work of LMV and the gardeners themselves.

"There is a real urgency to improve the health of this community," Hector told me one day as we walked through the neighborhood of Washington-Alma. He explained to me that his motivation is in knowing that gardening and food are our first preventative medicines and with this program people are embracing that principle and transforming

their lives. While the organizers might not have time to hear the stories about how growing tomatoes has broadened someone's food autonomy network, how people have controlled blood insulin levels or dropped their blood pressure, or how gaining access to raised beds has helped people enact a multitude of personal forms of restoration of traditional agroecological knowledge, they all understand and often reflect on the importance of their praxis. In this final chapter, I explore how the LMV program thrives and addresses the many contradictions that the gardeners and the organization face as they work to sustain their existence as a viable set of formal institutions of collective action and their affiliate informal networks.

The concept of community is far too often idealized or is made to reflect settler colonial historical trajectories and dominant value sets. I do not wish to base the following interpretation of our findings on any unstated ideological assumptions such as the notion that I might know what is best for LMV or the gardeners. *La Mesa Verde* holds a common position within the world of non-profit organizations because it attempts to balance the relationship between providing "clients" with services to ameliorate poverty, while also remaining dependent on the perception that poverty continues to exist as a social problem requiring a rational and measurable response from civil society. There is nothing new or groundbreaking about this realization (see Poppendiek 1998), and these contradictions will not end anytime soon. For my purposes, I am interested in how the organizers and community make sense of these persistent contradictions.

Confronting the Culture of Charity by Enacting Spaces of Autonomy

For average Americans, charity is an act of giving a few times a year, usually around holidays and the end of the year when charitable donations increase. It is a chance to give back to those "less fortunate" – appealing at once to the state of exception and the neoliberal definition of poverty as a necessary but ultimately inconsequential function of the free market. But for many in the LMV program, the actual human needs and diminished capacities to reproduce value are seen as the underlying forces driving the need for charity. The vision statement of Sacred Heart is "a community united to ensure that every child and adult is free from poverty."[33] Their mission is "to work together to improve the lives, advocate for justice, and inspire our community to live, serve, and share."[34] By helping to create opportunities to achieve economic self-sufficiency, Sacred Heart wants to provide avenues for people to pull themselves out of poverty and create healthy relationships within the community. While Sacred Heart does have a food bank and gives away jackets and school supplies to low-income families, embedded within their model is their desire to enable self-sufficiency. As Malin explained to me, Sacred Heart wants to "meet people where they are at." This means that some people are not able to fully engage in the self-sufficiently programs offered at Sacred Heart and so many need emergency relief until they enter programs such as *La Mesa Verde*. While engagement in programs such as LMV does not guarantee that a family will no longer need emergency relief, it does ease the uncertainty and vulnerability experienced by the families who utilize the resources available at Sacred Heart Community Services.

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[33] For more information see http://sacredheartcs.org/about/#vision
[34] This language comes from Sacred Heart Community Service's "Strategic Plan 2014-16" executive summery; June 2014.

Charity and volunteerism create what Janet Poppendieck (1999) calls a "moral safety valve" for the failures of neoliberal policies. She is referring to how charity reduces the discomfort that many feel when we are bearing witness to poverty. However, the culture of charity cannot end poverty, rather, the culture of charity only normalizes the inequalities that exist in society. For this, Poppendieck argues "charity contributes to our society's failure to grapple in meaningful ways with poverty" (5). *La Mesa Verde* is contributing to the culture of charity by giving away seedlings, it also serves as a network of knowledge and resources, which breaks the traditional mold and promotes self-sufficiency.

Charity is problematic when it covers up the structural inequalities that exist in our society. Many of the people in the LMV community are low-income because of a variety of compounding and reinforcing structural forces. Karla is a single mother in her mid-fifties. She is joyful, talkative, and always on the move. She lives with her two daughters, who are also both single moms. Several years ago Karla had an accident while working. Because she was working "under the table" she was unable to collect workers compensation. She told me that first her back hurt, then because she was bed-ridden, she become chronically ill. One of her daughters then had to stop working to take care of her. Soon the entire family was dependent on one of her daughter's minimum wage earnings. Then she entered LMV and the group gave her seedlings, seeds, soil, irrigation equipment, and two raised garden beds. This seemingly insignificant act of charity was much more than a gift. Karla stems from a long line of Mexican *curanderas,* or traditional healers, and while before LMV she grew some herbs around the house, the new garden rejuvenated her efforts to practice herbal remedies.

Karla's experience reinforces what Shava et. al. (2010) concludes in New York City community gardens. The authors claim that while many recent immigrants suffer from low wages and bad living conditions, the ability to garden revives traditional knowledge and allows them to improve their collective and cultural well-being. Today, Karla still receives charity seeds and seedlings from LMV, but she continues to save seeds, shares food and knowledge, and contributes to the LMV community. She has definitely become part of the "leadership network" that LMV is trying to create, but is she reaching the programs goals of self-sufficiency? Malin asked me one day, "The program wants numbers, but how can you measure the tools of leadership?" During Malin's time as the program director, she was conflicted with the difficulties of balancing charity and social justice-oriented volunteerism.

La Mesa Verde functions and relies upon volunteers, many of whom are young college kids from San José State and Santa Clara University looking for community service hours. In the past, these volunteers have helped to host planting days (the day everyone receives their plants) and build days (the days the raised garden beds are constructed). Yet, volunteerism can reaffirm the existing inequalities it seeks to address. Poppendiek believes that the culture of volunteerism teaches youth that, "*we* [those who have the ability to volunteer] are good-hearted… [and those who need help] are 'downtrodden,' and passive" (1998, 318). *La Mesa Verde* is challenging this assumption by shifting its model from one of volunteerism to one of membership. This means that first-year gardeners receive raised garden beds, soil, seeds, seedlings, garden classes, and monthly visits from a certified California Master Gardener. All of this is part of the program's funding model and goal to create future leaders and a healthy community.

Once the family completes the first-year, they have the opportunity to become a member of *La Mesa Verde*. As a member of the program each family is required to volunteer a minimum of thirty hours. While LMV considers these "volunteer hours," they are less of an act of volunteering and more of a requirement to continue to be a part of the network. As a member, each family may attend "member classes," which are classes based on topics chosen by the advisory committee, any first-year classes they wish to revisit, cooking matters workshops, and the annual harvest festival. The difference between first-year classes and member classes is that first-year classes focus on the basics of gardening, while the member classes are more tailored to the self-defined needs and interests of the community.

The first-year classes focus much of their attention on topics such as seed propagation, soil health, harvesting, seed saving techniques, composting, etc. In addition, first-year gardeners go through a series of food system workshops led by LMV organizers and members. At these workshops participants use their lived experiences to understand how they themselves fit into the larger food system. This is a time for active discussion about GMOs, factory farms, industrial agriculture versus sustainable agriculture, pesticides, farm workers rights and living conditions, health, and assessing access to fresh and healthy foods in their community. Following the model of popular education, the goal of these workshops is to combine the existing knowledge and experiences of the community and to collectively raise consciousness together. It was in 2014 that LMV first fully integrated critical analysis of food systems into their workshops. At the conclusion of the series, I emailed a gardener to ask about what he learned. In his reply he said, "One thing I'm learning is that we do our best work when

we are passionate about it. I never saw the political or social angle of gardening until I saw how LMV can be a transformative vehicle to raise consciousness about food."

The member classes are more tailored to the members because the influence and direction of the classes come from the members themselves. LMV organizers are often relegated to support roles while the members lead the class and discussions. When I collected this information in August of 2015, the membership model had been going on for seven months, and they had three member classes. Thirty-five adults attended the first meeting, which convened in January 2015. The meeting focused on what the membership model should look like, how people should be held accountable, and how members could contribute to *La Mesa Verde*. Being that it was the first year of the new model, it required LMV organizers to move slowly on the project, which meant that with each new step, the organization would have new successes and failures. The key, Luís told me, is to foster "a *La Mesa Verde* culture" where gardeners do not feel like they are getting something for free, and instead, members are able to understand their efforts as broadening and improving collective well-being.

I recently sat down to talk about the new model with Evelyn. As one of the longest standing participants in *La Mesa Verde,* she cares deeply about the future of the program. Evelyn is white, in her early sixties, and lives alone in a one-bedroom studio apartment that is attached to a house. She told me how she has seen LMV change so many times, that it was tough for the families to really understand what was happening and who was still working there. She told me that the agreement forms LMV requires members to sign clearly states that they will volunteer the required number of hours, and this is nothing new. The problem, she told me, is that there is an underlying perception

that even if someone does not contribute all of their required hours, they will still be able to receive the seeds and seedlings for the next growing season. “What’s the point?” she told me.

La Mesa Verde is attempting to break the culture of charity by increasing relational accountability (Wilson 2008) within the community, yet in some ways they are met with resistance. While this resistance is sometimes intentional by individuals not wanting to volunteer, most of the time it is the contingencies posed by the reality of life on the margins. Evelyn told me that she knows that many people want to contribute their hours, but simply have to work more, take care of their kids, move, deal with illnesses and deaths, etc. Life often leaves little free time. She herself has run into this when she was sick and unable to volunteer. The reoccurring issue is that LMV organizers and community members want accountability, but they struggle to establish consistency. Perhaps, part of this struggle can be explained by the difficulty of defining clear group boundaries within LMV.

Eleanor Ostom (1990) insists there are eight principles consistent in governing the commons. She notes that uncertain and complex environments typify locations where common pool resources exist. Residents that participate in common pool resources (CPR) confront such uncertainty by establishing rules to govern resources. She also explains, “Whereas the construction of physical works [rules] tends to reduce the level of uncertainty, it tends to increase the level of complexity in these systems” (1990, 88). Ostrom says the first step to establish effective collective action in CPRs is to define clear boundaries. But the common pool resources established by *La Mesa Verde* are not very clear, which is perhaps part of its difficulty in established graduated sanctions. People

come and go, sometimes by choice, and sometimes by necessity. The LMV network is also less defined because it is rhizomatic in that it is always transforming and becoming (see Deleuze and Guattari 1987; also see chapter seven for LMV specifics). This provides flexibility to CPR, but also complexity, and it can cause some members to fail to appreciate or see how the use rights allocation rules require relational accountability. This can happen because when perceptions suggest one is violating these rules, the organization may not engage graduated sanctions if it fears losing on its own need to document "performance goals" under conditions of accountability to the purveyors of neoliberal charity.

Accomplices and Allies

The non-profit industrial complex presents a paradox because the sector is created under conditions in which the careers of the activists (*qua* service providers) depend on the continued existence of the issues they seek to end (i.e. poverty and hunger). Samimi argues that the non-profit industrial complex accomplishes three things. First, it avoids chaos by "taking care" of, or managing poverty. Second, it keeps hope alive for the poor and non-poor by encouraging the *possibility* of finding a way out of poverty. Lastly, it controls the people who want to change the status quo (2010, 21). Samini belives that these traits can reproduce a sense of normalized dependency on poverty for many non-profit organizations. The tactics used to address issues such as poverty and hunger do not seek to end it, but to ease the more pernicious effects without challenging the constitution of power/knowledge relations in the political decomposition of the poor.

There is no doubt that poverty is real, but it is also a social construct. Poverty comes in various forms and Vadana Shiva (1988) describes two of those. There is

“imagined poverty,” or a subsistence lifestyle, and “the poverty of deprivation,” or the material reality of poverty. The material conditions of poverty come in forms such as malnutrition, hunger, illness, and higher mortality. Whereas subsistence lifestyle, or “culturally perceived poverty, does not necessary imply a low physical quality of life (10). If fact, while all LMV gardeners must be low-income[35] to enter the program, it could be argued that many of them enjoy a good quality of life enabled by the extensive garden networks. As explained by Peña;

> A subsistence lifestyle is not true poverty, even if development experts and planners call it so. It is imagined because it is not material in nature. Instead, it is based on cultural assumptions and myths rooted in Western models of consumerism, in which continually increasing consumption of good is desirable. A subsistence lifestyle is really just a form of right livelihood. Local people may defend it as a low-consumption lifestyle based on the local environment, which they often view as sacred ground or homeland. (2005, 35-6)

Many LMV gardeners take the decolonial turn when considering the reality of poverty. Typically, non-profits are best situated and organized to deal with the material condition of poverty by provided emergency food, clothing, and social services. Without challenging the inequalities (i.e. race, class and gender) that (re)produce the material conditions of poverty, non-profit organizations may not be able to confront the structural and/or institutional forces that create the poverty of deprivation, thus, they limit their ability to create the lasting change many place-based grassroots organizations seek to

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[35] As of 2014, the maximum monthly income requirements for *La Mesa Verde* were, $1,915 for one person; $2,585 for 2; $3,255 for 3; $3,925 for 4; $4,595 for 5; $5,265 for 6; $5,935 for 7; and $6,605 for 8.

achieve. But *La Mesa Verde* challenges the cultural assumption of poverty because the garden encourages subsistence livelihoods. This is part of the revolutionary garden subjectivities that exists in LMV. "You guys [modern consumer subjects] work too much," Lucy told me one day after we spent the afternoon in her garden. "You're crazy." Lucy's garden allows her the autonomy to navigate modernity and enact "escapes" in order to live her desired subsistence lifestyle.

Early in her tenure as program director of *La Mesa Verde,* Malin learned a lot from the diverse community in which she served. She informed me of how the community was asking for things that she could not offer. As the director, she could not simply change program goals without first convincing administrators and board members, who must then report to funders. In order to challenge this hierarchy, Malin created the LMV advisory board. As we have seen, the board, led by LMV community members, was used to appease administers that the work of LMV was community driven. It was a subversive way for her to hand over limited but meaningful control to the community.

When Malin left, the advisory board was only in its infancy. Since then, this group has changed the organizing and service strategies of the LMV program in a positive direction. Jamie, a young Asian American woman in her twenties now serves as the program director. One of her many strengths is how she allows the "third space" of the advisory board to influence the direction of the program in accordance with the goals of the community. For Jamie, the advisory board in one the most important organizational aspects of LMV because it serves as a platform for the community to make a lasting impact on municipal politics. Sacred Heard has been a central figure in the

South Bay for forty years, when they speak, the City listens. Jamie has used this influence to the advantage of LMV by seeking ways to remake the region's food system. In fact, through discussions and meetings with the advisory board, the program has created an organizing committee. The organizing committee's objective is to identify and conceptualize the issues that are most important to LMV members and discover ways to address them. Currently, the organizing committee is working to encourage the City of San José and the County of Santa Clara to institute Assembly Bill (AB) 551. If passed, the bill would allow the City and County to establish urban agricultural incentive zones where owners of vacant lots can permit community gardening projects to be established in those zones for a tax reduction. Currently, the tax reduction stands at $12,500 per acre[36] and will be adjusted proportionately to reflect the size of the space under contract. LMV and its advisory committee believe that if enacted, such a bill would be an opportunity to gain allies sitting on City Council and County Commission, as well as allies within the community in the form of more gardeners.

In a recent article by the Indigenous Action Media (IAM), they argue, "the term ally has been rendered ineffective and meaningless" (2014, 2). Their point is that while allies may claim to be in "solidarity," they lack any "real mutual understanding of support" (ibid). IAM distinguishes between "allies," those who are somewhat removed from the community, and "accomplices," those with direct stakes in the outcomes of

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[36] The language states: "This bill would enact the Urban Agriculture Incentive Zones Act and would authorize, under specified conditions and until January 1, 2019, a city, county, or city and county and a landowner to enter into a contract to enforceably restrict the use of vacant, unimproved, or otherwise blighted lands for small-scale production of agricultural crops and animal husbandry. The bill would require a contract entered into pursuant to these provisions to, among other things, be for a term of no less than 5 years and to enforceably restrict property that is at least 0.10 acres in size."

resistance. This is further articulated by Maldonado Alvarado (2010), who argues that solidarity is an insufficient basis from which to channel the long-term intentions of resistance. He believes that solidarity is limited because it is: a one-way street, always selective, and temporary. Maldonado Alvarado claims, “unlike solidarity, reciprocity powerfully contributes to creating a solid social fabric, very tight, just like the thread of a weaving, while solidarity creates less communitarian relations, like [a] net” (2010, 373). He is very careful to clarify that while solidarity is valued, it is valued differently than reciprocity. In other words, solidarity creates a relationship between a group of people and individual persons, while reciprocity is a more intense relationship because of its “communal characteristics” (374). This means that part of what strengthens and extends a community’s relationship of accomplices, is the ability to have people integrated into its social fabric.

“Combining Knowledge to Achieve Social Change”

A constant throughout this study has been humility of gardeners. As Karla informed me, “We do things not by choice, but by need.” Gardening for her is not a novelty, but a way of life, and it is through that way of life in which the garden encourages the transformation of her social life. According to Hardt and Negri (2012), people revolt against repressive neoliberal regimes to gain security and freedom. In the process of reclaiming security and freedom, people are reminded of their interdependence on each other. This newfound awareness enables a garden subjectivity that creates new meanings of freedom. “The task is not to codify new social relations in a fixed order, but instead to create a constituent process that organizes those relations and make them lasting while also fostering future innovations and remaining open to the desires of the

multitude" (13). The openness of LMV enables it to meet the needs of precarious workers seeking security.

Openness also offers LMV the ability to maintain open lines of communication and is invaluable for the constituent power of the multitude. Interpreting Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man*, Hart and Negri (ibid) believe that the, "invisible man, after an arduous journey through a racist society, developed the ability to communicate with others in struggle." Along the same lines, the ability to communicate in struggle seems to be an apt description of the LMV garden networks. According to Hardt and Negri, "the common actions of labor, intelligence, passion, and affect configure a *constituent power*" (2000, 358). Their point is that constituent power occurs in common with others, and as a collective experience of self-valorization, it possesses the ability to create new social relationship and values. As Malin put it, "Gardeners are combining knowledge to achieve social change."

For *La Mesa Verde*, their constituent power comes in the form of more gardeners. The more gardeners that are recruited, the more impact they can have on the organizational communication that is reshaping the food system discourse and the transformation of the lines of social stratification the food system perpetuates. Reciprocity encourages forms of positive social exchange, which provides people with a stronger sense of belonging. Maldonado Alvarado claims that reciprocity encourages the indigenous concept of *comunalidad*, which "means to revive the joy of living" (2010, 368). Food is the most central tool used by *La Mesa Verde* to foster such a *fiesta* spirit. This spirit, as Bonfil Batalla (2004) also indicates, is a form of communal celebration in

indigenous communities that resists hegemonic norms of inequality and replaces them with social acts of cultural and community affirmation.

Food is a unique mobilizer to build solidarity because it is something that everyone can relate to. But building reciprocity is a bit harder, and while LMV has made tremendous strides in cultivating deep relationships among its members, it still must strike a balance between giving and receiving. Evelyn told me that she thought new members recruited into the program should be more thoroughly interviewed. She wants more people that have a vested interest in the strength of the network, but she also knows that LMV needs to meet the numbers of annual participants to continue to receive funding. As Malin would say, “The garden is the carrot”: it attracts people, funders, organizers, media, academics, etc. But beyond the garden are the real transformative effects. As members realize the transformational potential of the network of gardeners, they become more committed to the network and their desire to learn more about agroecology, self-provisioning, traditional diets, herbal remedies, animal husbandry, worker rights, GMOs, social inequality, and similar issues, increases significantly. By focusing on leadership, Jamie is encouraging the community to define the scope of what they are capable of achieving. Some of the long-term goals of LMV are to create future community leaders and to raise the “collective consciousness” of the community. While it is true that there are members in the LMV community that are there only “in transit,” there are also many who have molded their life-long day-to-day interactions through the social and ecological relationships created by these garden networks.

The not-for-profit world is big business (Samimi 2010), and while it may be difficult to democratize it, there appears to be ways to provide spaces of autonomy for

community praxis in some of the more progressive organizations in the sector. *La Mesa Verde* is by no means perfect, and they too have an agenda, but integrating a community-led advisory board into its institutional framework unleashes the possibility of moving beyond the neoliberal constraints facing non-profit organizations and deepens the regeneration of norms of reciprocity that are already present within the community as expressed in their willingness to use convivial tools and relational accountability that often lay beneath the surface.

Self-Help and the Neoliberal Project to Regulate the Urban Poor

Barbara Cruikshank argues that self-help is "emblematic" of liberal governments and as a tool it can be used to reform both society and the subject by "indirectly harmonizing their interest" (1999, 48). She believes that self-help is a viable strategy to maximize citizenship because it can be used to address persistent social problems, i.e. hunger and poverty. Cruikshank's careful investigation into the study of empowerment reveals that "technologies of citizenship" encourage self-governing citizens, which through the everyday practices of voluntary association of "self-help" continually reproduce itself. "Governance in this case is something we do to ourselves, not something done to us by those in power" (1999, 91). Governments and development agencies use the technologies of self-help to "empower" people to take control of their lives and communities as well as enable them to create positive social transformation. It has also "been adopted by mainstream development agencies as well, albeit more to improve productivity within the status quo than to foster social transformation" (Parpart and Staudt 2007, 1). Such a "technology" moves to shift governmental responsibility to the individual and to create productive citizens.

The problem with empowerment, which is in keeping with Anthony Giddens (1994) and the so-called "third way," is that this is an endorsement of a model that keeps (and in practice privatizes) the state's "welfare" functions intact but fails to address and challenge the overwhelming asymmetries of power emblazoned in continued corporate domination through the increasingly unfettered institutional force of the capitalist market (also see Spies-Butcher 2002; 2003). In the U.S. context today, what the "third way" has given us is an extreme "neo-regulatory" regime based on new enclosures, privatization, self-regulation of capitalist operations, and disinvestment in the environmental and social sectors; hence the neoliberal need for the "devolution" of the "welfare" function to the non-profit industrial complex and the civil society associations intersecting with that sector.

A more critical decolonial and environmental justice challenge to the critique of the "third way" seeks to expand and strengthen the autonomous associations of civil society—in part through a revival of state investments in the environmental and social sectors—combining these spaces of constituent power with community-directed policies that dismantle the unfettered corporate-directed market institutions by both downsizing and "communalizing" these assets. This could involve community-directed investments to improve the quality of life and equality through the restoration of the vitality of the environmental and social (education, health, housing, etc.) sectors. The legitimation of these environmental justice and decolonial principles that can guide civil society organizational forms like the informal economy networks of LMV involves challenging, but plausible, alterNative governmental rationalities.

Malin once told me that there will come a time when "we [LMV] must give community gardening back to the community." She understood that the long-term sustainability of LMV would depend on the community having control of the program itself. Jessica also emphasized this idea when she stated, "We [LMV members] need to save *La Mesa Verde*." She was referring to the direction and intention of LMV. There is a belief held by many of the former LMV staff and the long-standing LMV members that the program as it stands cannot continue forever. This is one of the reasons Raul left the organization several years ago. He saw a future for LMV that could generate revenue for families and create new urban gardeners. However, Sacred Heart is a charity and volunteer based organization, and their funders are not interested in funding small-scale urban agriculture "entrepreneurs." Thus, the current future of LMV is likely located somewhere between the production of neoliberal subjects disciplined, "made responsible" for self-care, and the spontaneous emergence of the autonomous agents of mutual aid and their networks of conviviality and reciprocity.

There are various frames from which we can begin to think about "escapes" from the contradictions involved in the crafting of subjectivities in the context of urban agriculture. Bruno Gullì (2005) argues for a return to labor. Echoing Karl Marx, he believes that such a return is necessary for the full development of the human experience and widest realization of potentialities. The constraints and antagonisms imposed by the dominant logic of neoliberalism currently imply that labor is predominantly coded as an exploitative relationship because workers produce the value that capital accumulates; this also devalues labor as a potential means to enact collective self-determination. Mary Beth Pudup explains that early community garden projects were "intended to substitute for the

inability of unemployed workers to purchase their means of subsistence by allowing them to grow their own food" (2008, 1229). As a result, "gardening puts individuals in charge of their own adjustment(s) to economic restructuring and social dislocation" (1228). In a similar way, Alkon and Mares (2012) criticize the alternative food movement for following neoliberal logics. The authors acknowledge that the alternative food movement objects to neoliberalism, but the movement often unintentionally reproduces neoliberalism in the ways it challenges inequality, for i.e., through the promotion of so-called self-help projects. The movement still lacks critical self-reflexivity from which to examine the institutional inequality embedded in the very structures and organization of the alternative food movement.[37]

For diverse groups such as *La Mesa Verde*, this can be highly problematic as it can disregard the "racial projects" (see Omi Winant 1986) that produce inequality and thus further mystify the sources of precarity and environmental and public health risks. Julie Guthman (2011) argues that the practices of the alternative food movement unintentionally code the movement as a "white space," which "in effect works as an exclusionary practice" (2011, 266). More importantly, for groups such as LMV, by coding the alternative food movement as a white-led space, this obscures and devalues the traditional agroecological and ethnobotanical knowledge, beliefs, and practices (and related forms of convivial self-provisioning) developed by the multi-ethnic/multi-lingual LMV membership networks.

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[37] One exception is the forthcoming anthology by Peña, Calvo, McFarland, and Valle forthcoming; this collection of fifteen chapters by farmers, gardeners, activists, and academic scholars presents a critique not just of alternative food movements but also of the food sovereignty movement, especially as this framed by La Via Campesina's declarations.

Simply challenging the "white space" logics of the alternative food movement cannot dismantle the neoliberal assumption that labor in LMV gardens is essentially an individualized self-help practice. Cruikshank believes it is important not to negate the autonomy or the action of citizens, because "social government is a means of promoting and instrumentalizing citizenship and autonomy" (1999, 55). Her point is that while self-help can be a means of "instrumentalizing and maximizing the self-interest of the poor," (54), if we disregard how it can provide pathways for autonomy and transformation, then we miss the liberating possibility of self-help and continue to marginalize certain social groups. However, Cruishank fails to address the asymmetrical dynamics of "social government" and how this so-called instrumentalization remains captive to the constraints imposed by the continued deployment of biopower concentrated in the unfettered institutions of the capitalist market system. Without the massive re-appropriation of capitalist hoard, for example, there can be little progress toward the assertion of the revolutionary claims of constituent power through investments in the environment, health, housing, and education. Moreover, one important constraint overlooked by Cruishank is precisely the *asymmetrical quality of the racial projects* that capital imposes through the state to governmentalize citizenship on the basis of the neoliberal "capture" of biopower. This is the state's ability to end life in the U.S. through deportation or the refusal of medical care to the "undocumented." This clearly reveals the totalizing face of sovereign power over bodies reduced to the "bare life" and thus banned from the political sphere where participation is necessary for any possible equitable functioning of "social government." The neoliberal move actively blocks the assertion of constituent power among the especially precarious "undocumented" and indigenous

diaspora communities, who are after all, a vital and central presence in the LMV extended member networks.

This is why the approach of empowerment, and that pursued by other proponents of Giddens' "third way," cannot reconcile the contradiction embedded in a "new" (neoliberal) form that is reminiscent of the 1920s-styled welfare capitalism in which the unfettered free market reigns supreme and provides charitable capital to the philanthropic and non-profit charity industrial sectors control working-class oppositional impulses. This further reveals, as Hardt and Negri (2009) have strongly suggested, how this comprises a strategy of biopower that benefits from a failure for all of us to recognize that economic and political power are a singular integrated whole rather than separate domains of constituted power (also see Pels 1998). One cannot separate the two because capital, moving beyond the "social factory," has already colonized the political sphere (the state) through the devolution of the welfare function to civil society paired with the ascent of neo-regulation. This means that capital has also colonized the coupling of social-ecological systems, subordinating all these forces to the logic of the "Republic of Property" (2009, 15) as the source of sovereign power.

Yet, perhaps this provides an opportunity for the LMV gardeners to enact alternative ways of becoming and being that allow escapes from the neoliberal spaces of "social government." As I have explained, the level of autonomy a gardener enacts is what cultivates the subjectivity and capacity to negotiate between the formal and the informal economy and between the state and social citizenship. One is never too far removed from the ability to navigate between multiple domains of power/knowledge politics; indeed it is required if social movements are to challenge the capitalist

colonization of our labor and suppression of alternative economic livelihoods. Despite the surveillance and disciplinary functions of the state mutual aid and conviviality have become subversive strategies to resist the logics of neoliberal governmentality. As Peña argues, "marginals present themselves as agents of social and cultural change and inventors of political struggle" (1997, 217). Through his ethnographic fieldwork in the *maquilas* of Juarez, Mexico, Peña found that marginality produces spaces for transformation because "struggle is an invention of the people" (217).

While there are distinct differences between LMV gardeners and *maquila* workers, there are many commonalities. Both of these groups face the grim realities of opposing structural forces that produce conditions akin to Agamben's notion of "bare life." Both groups must find inventive ways to accept and reject this logic by redirecting and repurposing the acceptance of assets donated by the non-profit sector to further the informal networks of conviviality and reciprocity that facilitate communication with others in struggle. In this manner, they establish themselves as political subjects who are capable of articulating critiques of neoliberalism and enunciating forms of epistemic disobedience and praxis when the gardeners renounce the dominant food system and celebrate the wisdom of their own agroecological, ethnobotanical, and ethnomedical traditions and practices. While LMV gardeners may accept the "charity" relationship with Sacred Heart and LMV, they also transform the value potentialities of these newly acquired assets by innovating ways to organize their gardens, networks, relationships, and personal livelihoods in ways that affirm a more healthy, active, and convivial existence. I believe these can be seen as "escapes" grounded in the constituent power of a collective and heritage commons. It can eclipse the reductionist and individualized location of the

subject of self-care produced under the neoliberal regime of charity and self-help in social government, and it can encourage new subjectivities where conviviality is central to creating new worlds.

The violence that capitalism and the industrial food system impose on the urban poor has placed many LMV families in a state of acute awareness of this biopolitical crisis. Obesity, diabetes, and heart disease are only a few of the diet-related conditions facing many low-income families, and they increasingly understand these maladies and conditions are consequences of the political "will to power" asserted by the dominant actors that control the industrial capitalist food system. Yet, crisis and precarity appear to compel marginalized communities to assert their own agency and to create new ways of interacting in the world. Cleaver (1989) documented such a case in the Tepito neighborhood of Mexico City. In the aftermath of a catastrophic 1985 earthquake, people fostered autonomy and cooperation to recreate their own version of a place-based community re-appropriating space and place for the renewal of the urban common. Disregarded by the Mexican government, Tepito was left to fend for itself, yet the people organized their work lives in such a way as to make more time and space for political and cultural existence *beyond work.* This form of self-valorization could not be separated from social life and Cleaver celebrates how "so little work" allows so many of the *tepiteños* to flourish in endless acts of conviviality. Through their labor and cooperation they celebrate life and strengthen the community in the spaces of neoliberal neglect rendered as autonomous places of constituent power.

I am not arguing that the alarming health care conditions and the staggering number of untreated illnesses faced by many LMV members is a good thing; nor am I

arguing that the conditions produced by the capitalist decomposition of the social welfare and civil rights gains of prior cycles of working-class struggles are dead and buried; indeed, these can be addressed by regional and national governments when social movements assert their demands in non-reformist legal codes that derive from constituent power. What I am arguing is that danger, crisis, and precarity can present opportunities for more radical change from the grassroots up, and this involves a search for the enactment and strengthening of constituent power through institutions and networks of civil society of our own making that are already strategies for escapes from the neoliberal trap of the charity/self-help governmentality complex.

For many LMV gardeners and their extended relations, growing food is a political act in that their garden networks strengthen their capacity to improve well-being and create their own version of community values outside the spheres of control under the neoliberal privatization of social government. LMV organizers are mindful of how the urban poor both use and are used by the neoliberal culture that has come to dominate philanthropy and even social justice advocacy. But they are left with charity as an actually existing system and so they too must learn to invent ways to accept and challenge this regime.

For over four years, I have been amazed by the ways in which LMV organizers possess the ability to constantly change and shift with the community and to even create change within Sacred Heart. They possess the ability to use the "creation of chaos" (Berardi 2011, 160) to invent alternative forms of resistance and cooperation. Malin told me that LMV is a "creative accident" and Jamie explained it as, "playing a game and not knowing the rules." Perhaps what they meant is that creativity occurs spontaneously and

not knowing the rules means one can escape from the conventions of neoliberal expectations concerning the nature of the self-helping subject.

There is no one-size-fits-all or step-by-step guide for defining food justice or explaining how it might be implemented as a political project of constituent power. There is no one way of thinking about the conditions that encourage the development of the multitude of alterNative subjectivities seemingly associated with the informal moral economy created by precarious households and entire neighborhoods engaged in conviviality and reciprocity. When gardening works to improve the lives and relationships of its participants, the possibilities for radical change become more plausible. Imagine what communities and networks like the LMV gardeners could do with the $5 trillion currently sequestered in capitalist hoard? Understanding that possibility seems like one key in reimagining the future of the autonomous struggles for resilience, conviviality, and environmental and economic justices sought by the LMV gardeners. Even when *La Mesa Verde* experiences a strategic or organizational challenge and fails to resolve problems, the members and staff are still doing the "right thing" because no matter what, as one gardener said recently, "*Para tener un jardín es contra este sistema* — "To have a garden is against this system."

Chapter 10: Recalling Ancient Wisdom: A Conclusion

Four years ago during my first visit to the homes of *La Mesa Verde* members and staff, I was surprised by the biological, economic, and cultural diversity present in their gardens. Years later, these gardens truly remain forms of “vibrant matter” and retain the same levels of convivial intensity, bio-cultural diversity, and social complexity. Both human and more-than-human actors are constantly in motion in these spaces of urban transformation unleashed and tapped by LMV organizers and members. People move and return; plants cycle through the seasons; and organizers continue to mold new political subjectivities with the community. El Kilombo Intergalactico, a Zapatista project, has analyzed the mass protests led by transborder immigrant and diaspora peoples since 2005. The project notes how “the massive…mobilizations are historic by any measure, and, more importantly, undeniable evidence of a new political subjectivity, a new political community, a new gesture of the multitude” (2006). One aspect of the political subjectivity of the LMV members that my research finds to be constant is the commitment of people to make practical use of the resources they have gained access to as tools of conviviality to improve their life circumstances. This mobilizes the humility of the gardeners to provide people with options for collective action strategies to build a future worth living.

Recently, the farmer and social critic Wendell Berry wrote a short article explaining his views on the future of climate change logic. He states, “if we think the future damage of climate change to the environment is a big problem only solvable by a big solution, then thinking or doing something in particular becomes more difficult, perhaps impossible” (Berry 2015). He is not arguing that climate change is not a big

problem, or that we do not need big solutions. In fact, he believes that large-scale governmental policies have their place. However, he believes that governmental policy is always dependent on the future, a future that has progressively become more precarious by the day. Whereas small solutions, he explains, "do not wait upon the future. Insofar as they are possible now, exist now, are actual and exemplary now, they give hope" (ibid). In other words, small solutions are practical, useful, and effective in their immediacy. Throughout my research, the humble acts of the gardener have given me hope in the possibility of radical social transformation. As late neoliberal modernity continues to push more and more people into the cruelest conditions of precarity, society at large faces an uncertain future. Yet those most marginalized continue to transform in the most innovative and sustainable of ways.

As the summer heat beats down on me, beads of sweat pour down my forehead. I can feel the back of my neck burning as the sun reaches its crescendo in the sky. Years after I began this project, I finally have a garden of my own. I have collected seeds from families, Master Gardeners, at workshops, and from unanticipated and delightful exchanges with eager volunteers. I have accumulated ancient knowledge from countless individuals with hopes to apply it toward my own food justice activism. But the summers in California are changing. They are hotter, dryer, and longer. Recent water restrictions have made growing food more complicated and more directly confrontational in political terms. Yet, I am in a privileged position because I do not rely on my garden for subsistence like many families in LMV. I incur very little risk because crop failure means very little to me. In fact, in 2015, because of the drought, many of my crops failed. The heirloom corn did not make it, nor did amaranth. I had only marginal success with beets,

squash, melons, and watermelons. However, my bolita beans thrived, perhaps because it is an arid lands denizen and drought hardy variety. To this day, I enjoy my time working in the garden, but I am careful not to romanticize my labor because I feel that it can discredit the harsh labor and living conditions of farm workers and other food chain workers who produce, prepare, and serve the bulk of food in the violent and globalized practices and technologies of the neoliberal capitalist food system (see Barndt 2008).

While my aspiration of being as successful as some of the gardeners at LMV has not come to fruition, my failures are humbling. Were I in the same situation as many LMV gardeners, I would be forced to often make difficult choices between what is available at food pantries or by purchasing cheaper fast food meals and processed packaged foods. I would be forced to depend heavily on my social networks for food and work. This is what makes the LMV garden program so important for many people. While gardening helps members produce a measure of self-sufficiency and even nurtures the sense and practice of conviviality, crop failures and crises (i.e. drought, job loss, illness) may hinder household members' best efforts and force them to depend on social networks or public assistance, the last a benefit available only to citizens.

Cooperation, Mutual Aid, and the End of Individualist Rationalities

I began this study with a set of questions deemed useful and relevant by the gardeners themselves: What practices do home gardeners engage in to protect against vulnerability, attain social mobility, improve health and well-being, and strengthen ties to the neighborhood and community? Many of these practices have been discussed already, but I now wish to reflect on a deeper level and revisit questions about the rationality

underlying the formation of human morals and the processes involved in the determination of what situated subjects define as value.

Throughout my time with *La Mesa Verde* gardeners, I have witnessed the testimony of those with the least giving the most. Perhaps part of this can be explained by what Peter Kropotkin refers to as the unwritten rules of "human solidarity" (2006, xvi) or what Shawn Wilson more recently calls "relational accountability" (2008, 8). It is not just love or the moral obligation of sacrifice that forces one to act in solidarity with others but abeyance to an underlying principle of mutual aid. Kropotkin states, "In the practice of mutual aid, which we can retrace to the earliest beginnings of evolution, we…find the positive and undoubted origin of our ethical conceptions; and we can affirm that in the ethical progress of man [sic], mutual support – not mutual struggle – has had the leading part" (247). This ethical stance helps uncover what the LMV mission is really all about. The importance of the principle of mutual aid, seen through the canvas of a much larger set of implications, is borne out of contemporary accounts by evolutionary anthropologists who affirm that cooperation rather than competition is the more significant driver of human productive and reproductive adaptations to uncertainty in the environment (see, for e.g. Hammerstein 2003).

Given the context of a food system dominated by capitalist corporations, in which access to food is presumably determined by the invisible hand of consumer purchasing power and individual choices, the mutual aid option can only emerge as a political project if it undermines the dominant regime not by seeking to "reform" that system, but by enacting spaces of autonomy created through direct action and mutual aid by the members of informal networks like those nurtured by *La Mesa Verde*. The stories and

accounts in this study provide strong examples of how cooperation (and mutual aid) emerges as a strategy among those of us who are facing the conditions of uncertainty produced by precarious work in toxic and diminished environments.

It is worth recalling the epigraph used by Elinor Ostrom (1999) in an article addressing the role of collective action in the evolution of "social norms." Ostrom, who disdained the idea that competition somehow *always* trumps cooperation, was also dismissive of the RCT obsession with demonstrating how cooperation would only become possible if it was subordinated to individualized utilitarian interests. The quote she opens with is from Mancur Olson, a key proponent of rational choice theory (RCT):

> …unless the number of individuals in a group is quite small, or unless there is coercion or some other special device to make individuals act in their common interest, *rational, self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interests.* (Olson, 1965: 2; Ostrom's emphasis)

Ostrom countered that one cannot predict any outcomes of such a determination without knowing the "history" of the participants in any given game theoretic situation. Through culture previously hidden norms are revealed. There is no universal "rational egoist." The lessons of LMV show how the uses of the garden network is dependent on the gardener's life circumstance, yet the culture of LMV is what guides and shapes the norms of cooperation. The utilitarian ethic and concept of the individual are fairly recent inventions across the wider span of human evolution, showing greater normative diversity. The cultural frame is what ultimately contains a multitude of possibilities in which cooperation is enacted and mutual aid rendered as a driving force of adaptation and transformation. Culture also informs cooperating groups how the problem of free riders

might be addressed. Among LMV gardeners, the free rider is viewed as more endemic to a system in which the value set is defined by untenable neoliberal individualistic behaviors and values, i.e., selfishness; greed; disinterest in sharing; commitment to unfettered accumulation; indifference to dispossession; etc. For example, *vergüenza* (or shame) can be used as a form of normative consensus and avoidance of graduated sanctions in organizations like the LMV networks. This is what Jacky was implying when she referred to the community's need to foster norms of accountability to others and the collective. This includes those who use social norms like reciprocity, trust, and fairness, which prefigures the type of member willing to sustain a commitment to such a collective ethos. This is forcefully illustrated by the tendency within the LMV networks to coalesce around a membership that values honesty and reciprocity as the social norms underlying the commitment to become a member of a convivial sharing economy.

Given my focus on the coupling of social-ecological systems, the resurgence of social norms like cooperation and mutual aid is something that must be seen in the context of larger and more encompassing food justice and food sovereignty struggles. Leading scholars in the food justice and food sovereignty discourses often refer to organizations like LMV as struggling *against* the food system to create some type of sovereignty over their food and health. But LMV is different. Many of the organizers and gardeners I have learned from do not refer to the food system as something they are struggling against even as they recognize it imposes conditions of precarity on them. I believe that the reason has to do, at least in part, with their perception of a food system that is "so big" and "so vast" that it becomes a "hyperobject" (see Morton 2013) rather than any system can be remade or controlled by humans.

This does not mean that people do not act, because they do, and in the case of LMV gardeners, this is realized on the basis of alterNative social norms corresponding to the ascendency of cooperation and conviviality. In fact, this study demonstrates that the myriad of practical ways in which people act to cooperate are also very humble. Jaime, the newly appointed director of the advocacy and self-sufficiency programs at Sacred Heart, recently explained to me how the food system has a tendency to victimize people who use the services provided by Sacred Heart. He described how some people want to use their garden to challenge larger structural forces imposed on the LMV community. However, he believes that the organization and its people are motivated more by the desire to create an *alternative* food system, one that allows for escapes from the precarious condition of their positions in the dominant class and racial formation. He called this alternative a "homegrown food system." Jaime explained to me how by helping people grow their own food LMV is less concerned about challenging the structure of power from within the food system, and more interested in fostering alternative "homegrown" spaces to emerge. This is precisely what the theory of autonomy suggests as well. LMV is not engaging in a mutual struggle against the food system, rather they are engaging in a process of mutual support through formal and informal institutions of collective action in order to bring about something new - perhaps the beginning of a daring escape from the dominant food system. In doing so, the members of LMV are encouraging their own version of a community economy with "collective actions in place" (Gibson-Graham 2006, 166). They are supporting the affirmation of their cultures, languages, environments, knowledges, customs, and people through the revival of one of the principal targets of neoliberal governmentality, the

institutions of collective action sustained by the informal networks of everyday life in civil society.

Producing Ethnography *with* and *for* the Community

In chapters one and two I provide the theoretical and methodological framework of the dissertation. I argue that my accountability is first and foremost to the community. Throughout the process of research and writing I privilege the voices, knowledge, and experiences of the community that collaborated with me in conducting and interpreting this study. I show that my motivation for the project is grounded in my moral and ethical pursuit of social justice. Furthermore, I hold myself accountable to the LMV community by returning my findings and presenting them to the community. All of the photographs I have accumulated over the past few years have been returned. My goal is that LMV may one day use these to encourage others to join their cause while at the same time appealing to a movement to challenge the larger structures and dynamics of power/knowledge.

In chapter three I provide the context of the Santa Clara Valley as to offer an overview of how the Valley has become what it is today. The social-ecological landscape of the Valley was the result of restructuring modes of production, economies, labor practices, cycles of struggle, and the subjectivization of bodies. What is ironic about *La Mesa Verde* is that it is located in the heart of the modern world where the common perception is that most of the residents understand more about information services than ecosystem services. But, as I explain, in the face of modernity, people in the most precarious of situations reach for ancient wisdom in order to survive and flourish. As Franco Berardi argues, modernity flourishes in chaos and pushes people into vulnerability. “Chaos is an enemy, but it can be a friend, because chaos is the door of

creation" (2011, 160). While those who live in the Silicon Valley may reach for Facebook or Google to find out about the world, those immigrant, working-class, and transborder diaspora peoples who live in the Santa Clara Valley often reach for the experiential knowledge gained from the ageless practices of growing, preparing, and consuming food to find and create new of ways of becoming and being in this part of the world.

Chapter four explains the reasons why groups such as LMV have emerged in recent years. Health and "food insecurity" (hunger, malnutrition) are underlying issues facing many immigrant and low-income communities, and the members of the LMV network are no different. In this chapter, I also shed light on the diverse meanings of food as perceived by LMV gardeners. The circumstances of the community influence the composition of LMV as an organization, and as the community continues to change so too does the organization. Understanding how and why LMV has changed over the years is essential for comprehending its vital importance to its members. I present key aspects of the research done by the Santa Clara Health Trust, which points to the compounding and intersecting issues that produce income and health inequalities. These underlying issues must be understood because LMV gardens confront the political economy of health (Baer 1996) by simultaneously improving access to healthy foods and alleviating some of the financial burden associated with buying adequate nutritious and culturally appropriate foodstuffs. This study highlights how medical anthropology and environmental anthropology must be in concert with each other. The health of the landscape is inevitably tied to the health of those who inhabit it.

Chapter five presents a discussion of value theory. The ethnographic enunciations in this chapter show how the value of the garden is highly dependent on the circumstance of one's life and on the location one has within the shifting political composition of the precarious and working classes. I also present an overview of several theories of value, and I place the LMV experience within each context. These theories include: the labor and class theory of value, social value of the gift, post-colonial critique of value theory, and the anthropological theory of value. By weaving these theories together with the voices and experiences of LMV gardeners I conclude that growing, sharing, and consuming food fosters the creative potential to transform the food system and the larger society along with it. The framing and reframing of value by LMV gardeners is an enunciation that encourages the possibility of many futures. The moral economy of the home gardener exists because people have the necessary knowledge, skills, and capacity for autonomy to create new worlds while transforming existing ones through the intentional self-organization of direct lived experiences. I suspect the existence of the extended LMV networks is well served by the extent to which such individual acts of self-determination accumulate within the networks and have the effect of liberating a rather substantial space (or territory) from complete domination by the capitalist industrial food system. These are breaks and ruptures in the fabric of the global commodity chains of that very system; the accumulation of the social and ecological value of those acts can create a different form of political disturbance for the governmentality regime and may have the additional effect of adding tension to the "legitimation" crisis of neoliberal ideology and policy.

Health is the focus of chapter six. The idea for this chapter came about in a conversation I had with one of my advisers after returning from a fieldwork visit. We discussed how many recent immigrants follow traditional health and healing practices because they are both affordable and practical. I explained how within the LMV community food is a central part of the healing and wellness process. I clarify how structural vulnerability is systematically produced and how the garden provides people with the means to influence their health and the health of their families. I also point to the importance of knowledge/power for LMV. The garden and the spaces created by LMV, produce "regions of refuge" where people discover and create collective positive futures. The garden centered stories in chapter six come from several key informants who have greatly influenced the makeup of this project. These gardeners invited me into their homes, gardens, kitchens, and lives to reveal some of the most heartwarming and transformative practices of self-provisioning I have known. I argue that food and labor are essential elements to the healing process from the maladies incurred by the body trapped in the dominant food system. It is important to recall the centrality of labor as a creative force because it is within the return to labor's "form-giving fire" where we find people re-asserting their refusal to be traped within the biopolitics of neoliberalism and foment conditions that will help restore "health equity" communities. *Comida* is celebrated in LMV because of the social relationships and healing it encourages. *Comida* allows gardeners to eat with intention and pay awareness to one's body while celebrating culture, tradition, and community.

Resilience and autonomy have been two underlying theoretical rubrics throughout this study. In chapter seven, I present an eclectic interpretation of the findings of this

research into these complex and overlapping theories. Using the work of Berkes (1999), I develop an elaboration of how his framework presents itself in LMV gardens. Berkes believes that a system's resilience is dependent on four overarching points. A system must: 1) learn to live with uncertainty, 2) encourage diversity, 3) combine different forms of knowledge, and 4) allow opportunity for self-organization. I show that each one of these aspects is present in LMV gardens and that they are pivotal to their success and sustainability. Many low-income and immigrant families are forced to live with uncertainty; having the garden network of LMV allows for gardeners to assuage the worst effects of such uncertainty. I also explain how these gardens encourage various forms of biological, social, cultural, and economic diversity. The LMV community combines forms of knowledge by allowing a space for both UC Master Gardeners and community members to contribute. No one form of knowledge is privileged over others because people will make use of the more practical methods for their given circumstances and goals as gardeners. Home kitchen gardens in the LMV community allow for multiple opportunities of self-organization. The reason these forms of self-organization are so prevalent is because the value of autonomy is widely embedded within the practices of individual LMV gardeners, and thus promotes a "plural universe" of political subjectivities (Negri 1991, 13). The ethnographic narratives and observations reveal that the LMV gardeners actively seek to make sense of their world and their circumstances with a sense of openness to the truth claims of others, and this encourages the diversity of the crops grown in gardens as much as it promotes a wide range of convivial social relationships.

In chapter eight, I present the diverse networks operating in the LMV garden network. The motto of LMV is "a leadership network of urban gardeners who create access to healthy food in San José." This statement clarifies two things. First, that LMV wants gardeners to use the network organizational form to strengthen their presence in the local food system. Secondly, that program organizers foster a space to encourage "organic" local leaders to step forward. As Luís put it, "anyone may be the next César Chávez." I explore a variety of networks within the LMV community. Each one serves a purpose and contributes to the creation of spaces for organic grassroots leadership. I also clarify that the network struggle of LMV is one that shares the core values of solidarity, trust, reciprocity, responsibility, and generosity. These gardens produce food, community, social and cultural values, and subjectivities. These new garden subjectivities are what allow gardeners to move beyond individual rights and toward collective responsibilities to ensure health and conviviality. The "politics of possibility in the *here* and *now*" is real for the LMV community because each gardener possesses the ability to define and act upon their own needs.

In chapter nine I bring the voices of the organizers and members of LMV into the discussion of how to best sustain the struggle for food justice, community health, and "empowerment." Since I have been personally involved with LMV as a consultant, I have witnessed several changes in personnel, organizational goals, and composition of the community members. Flexibility in the face of such shifts has allowed the organization to remain both innovative and on the verge of exhaustion. The non-profit charity industrial complex assures there is no easy fix. Yet, LMV is being both accepting and subversive to the neoliberal logics of self-help. Gardening within the LMV community is a political act

where the urban poor are using the “masters tools” to restructure the inequalities associated with access and health by creating something completely outside of that same structure. People are able to articulate their own collective solutions to precarious work by forging LMV into an institution that allows for mobility between markets, languages, and citizenships. Marginality is a space of innovation because it forces people to make practical use of the resources and the knowledge that one has in order to pursue and create the places we wish to inhabit.

***Convide* - Beyond Data, Narrative, and Interpretation**

When I first met with Malin, she told me she wanted me to give a human face to what was happening at *La Mesa Verde*. She explained how funders and administrators wanted to see numbers, but so much of the program could not easily be measured in that way. This study helps to provide insight into the realities of those associated with LMV while also addressing issues regarding value and subjectivity that should be of concern to food justice movements in general. All of the ethnographic data and photos have been placed in the care of LMV and its members. The data will be used by LMV to help further the garden network and to secure future funding in the Bay Area. Lydia, a former director at Sacred Heart, believed this dissertation could be a roadmap for future organizations that seek to pursue similar goals. Most importantly, the findings in this dissertation re-affirm the experiences, stories, practices, and knowledges of the LMV gardeners, who are not alone in their quest for food justice.

Anthropology provides a useful set of conceptual tools and research methods to answer questions about how people and communities transform themselves and the world around them in light of the diaspora movement of displaced peoples ushered by

globalizing neoliberal policies. Forced migration is a result of anthropogenic climate change coupled with the violence of privatization and enclosure; the struggle for land, seed, and water are exacerbated by the globalization of extractive and industrial processes and "accumulation by means of dispossession" across the Global South. My contribution to the anthropology of cultural change illuminates how people are more than simply adaptive beings; they are also transformative agents who, through conscious political projects, can enact their own alternative environmental engagements based on a reframing of something as basic as the value of food.

The world does not exist in binary colors. Yes, precarity forces individuals, communities, and societies to innovate or die, but since we prefer to live, the fire of our labor's creativity itself offers an escape from the Other's insistence that we assume the position of the Homo sacer. To overcome neoliberal biopolitics, we must assert new ways of participating in the world by engaging in patterns of cooperation and conviviality that decisively decolonize and disrupt orthodox notions of self (rationality), environment, and value-creation. This study matters because the members of LMV are working together to create their version of justice in an unjust world. If nothing else, this study validates the infinitely human ways home gardeners confront and sublate inequality through social cooperation to protect against precarity and create the conditions for a newfound appreciation of an ancient form of collective well-being, *convide*.

The Limits of this Study and Future Research and Praxis

Each research project and researcher has limitations, and this project and researcher is no different. I have made a great effort to learn as much as I could from the indomitable home kitchen gardeners of *La Mesa Verde*. I have interviewed many people,

talked with countless, and visited dozens upon dozens of home gardens. There are many aspects of this study that I would have liked to develop further if I had the time and the resources. The biodiversity surveys were an important part of this study because they helped to elucidate the diversity present in home kitchen gardens. They also provided me a means to sit with gardeners, hear stories, learn garden techniques, and eat great meals. However, the ideal research project would have included garden surveys of every garden in *La Mesa Verde*. Perhaps LMV gardeners themselves will initiate such a practice of research on garden biodiversity if it turns out to serve a greater purpose. I conducted ten complete biodiversity surveys for several reasons. First, these ten gardeners were instrumental in providing insights on the workings of LMV and the role of gardening in people's lives. Additionally, these gardeners had been growing food with LMV for several years; one gardener was actually one of the first to join in 2009. I have also grown close to these gardeners. We have shared stories, recipes, meals, and seeds. And finally, I have included these ten because of practicality. As I have explained, many acquaintances I have known through LMV have witnessed a series of unfortunate events in their lives; most of these were consequences of the conditions of precarity that I have found myself theorizing about in this very text. I have lost contact with people over the years because life continues outside of LMV. People have moved, been deported, and passed away. As much as I would have loved to continue conducting biodiversity surveys of more gardens, it would have required a commitment for families to stay associated with LMV for several years, which in many cases was simply impossible for many families.

At LMV I have been introduced to the political ecology of water. For LMV gardeners, water is a delicate resource. Gardeners cherish it and are aware of the record drought in California. However, similar to the distinction between the Silicon Valley and the Santa Clara Valley, California breeds an illusion that sunny days are always good. As Mike Davis (2006) finds is his research of Los Angeles, when you buy real estate in California, you are buying sunshine. The Silicon Valley is very similar to Hal Clifford's (2003) investigation of mountain resorts, where he describes that when one buys a mountain home one is purchasing a lifestyle and an image. The mainstream perception is that one moves to California for the sun. However, the reality for the urban and rural poor is that without water there will be fewer jobs and constraints on all other economic opportunities.

Investigating the meaning of water, including the political ecology of drought and the ideological uses of climate change, may allow environmental anthropology to arrive at deeper insights on the role of home kitchen gardens. These new insights may initiate a dialogue on how water is perceived, used, and understood through various worldviews and provide a window into the lives of those who already bear the brunt of the effects of climate change. This may help us understand the resource conservation practices and ethics of agroecology and its contribution to the creation of more just and sustainable worlds.

La Mesa Verde and Future Possible Worlds

The first planting day I attended was in September 2012. I remember walking into the event not knowing anyone except Malin, who was too busy to talk. I was nervous and anxious as I tried to figure out my position within the LMV community. I wandered

around, met a few families, listened to Master Gardeners speak, ate some good food, and watched the *baile folklorico.* Although I had yet to really get to know anyone, I felt included; the scene was very familiar. I remember returning home that day and being so excited about the project that I could not stop talking about the people I had met and the enthusiasm I felt.

Planting day is the biannual celebration that occurs in the spring and fall. It is when all of the LMV participants come to receive their seeds, seedlings, training, and reunite with old friends. The last planting day celebration I was able to attend was autumn 2015, three years since my first. While I saw many of the same faces, there were many friendly smiles that were missed. As I asked around, people shared stories about those who had left, moved on, or simply stopped gardening. But that did not take away from the excitement at the event. There were balloons, posters, music, and food. Kids were holding hands with their mothers as they selected the plants they wished to take home. One of the many things I have learned while working with LMV is that people are humbly proud of the work they do in their gardens. They are proud of the food they produce, the relationships they create, and most important of all, the impact they collectively make on each other.

Gustavo Esteva and Madhu Suri Prakash (1998) explain that autonomy is not something one asks for; it is something one does or performs. The performance is where alternative spaces emerge and where relationships and the responsibility to those relationships are forged. On the surface, LMV is a simple program. It teaches people how to garden so that they can reduce food bills and have access to fresh and organic fruits and vegetables. Yet, what gardening encourages has a multiplicity of outcomes because

gardens help to nurture the interstitial spaces where we can use what takes place in our day-to-day lives to remake the places we wish to inhabit. Somewhere amidst this gray space is where people find meaning in their lives because gray allows for people to navigate between cultures, languages, economies, and worlds.

During one of the last biodiversity surveys I conducted, I met with Davíd. He is a jovial man in his late sixties from Michoacán. He grew up on the edges of Lake Pátzcauaro in the small village of San Andrés Tziróndaro. Much of his family still live there and some continue to work in the many avocado fields that line the hillsides. His once dark black hair is now full of streaks of gray. His Chivas Guadalajara baseball cap was worn from the sun, yet he wore it proudly. Highway 280, one of the nation's busiest freeways, is located just beyond his backyard. Davíd explained to me that twenty years ago when he moved to the U.S. and into his home, highway 280 was still there, but its presence seemed less obvious, intrusive, and far less busy. There was several hundred feet of open space before the freeway and the only thing stopping one to cross was an old barbed-wire fence, which still sits in his yard. Today, a twenty-five-foot cinderblock wall sits just beyond his apple, avocado, and pomegranate trees, and is a constant reminder of "progress."

As we sat on his porch in the shade, the Silicon Valley began to melt away. Hummingbirds and butterflies were constantly moving in and out of the garden. I could hear birds singing and the wind blowing through the trees as it gently stirred his wind chime. He showed me his grandson's favorite tomato plant. Davíd explained to me that it was his favorite because the fruit tasted the best. I could not believe that tomatoes would taste so different simply based on where they were in the garden, so Davíd set up a taste

test. I closed my eyes, chose my favorite, and sure enough it was from his grandson's favorite plant.

Davíd's garden was one of the most complex of all those I visited (see appendix A, garden #10). His pomegranate, apple, loquat, *naranja agria* (sour orange), kiwi, avocado, guava, and white and red peach trees have been there for over fifteen years. Yet, he knows that when he is forced to move, the new owner will not value those trees in the same way he does. More likely he will not pass the house down to his children or grandchildren. The house will be bought, remodeled, and those trees will be replaced with grass or worse, concrete.

Davíd taught me that we simply no longer pass things from one generation to the next like we once did. While I have seen hope at *La Mesa Verde*, I am conscious of the power of late neoliberal modernity as the pervasive form of sovereign power in the Silicon Valley. Davíd and others like him have the strength and resilience that comes from an informal heritage of knowledge about traditional plants, farming, and gardening. Just as Raul told me, gardening is nothing new. In fact, it is ancient. The future we face as a society must call upon that ancient wisdom to heal the wounds caused by the industrial diet. Movements like LMV help to shatter the demoralizing and alienating effects of the neoliberal regime that privileges individualism by discounting the interconnectedness of both human and more-than-human actors. Gardens are not passive observers and they too have the power to influence change. Planting a seed is a humble act. But how we grow, prepare, share, and consume foods that nourish our minds, bodies, soils, and communities can truly become the first of many revolutionary acts unleashed by the "living form-giving fire" of liberated labor giving life back to the body and the land.

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Appendix A: Garden Agrobiodiversity

These surveys focus on the agrobiodiversity present in the *La Mesa Verde* gardens and do not take into consideration the amount of plants present in each garden. The names of these plants, herbs, and crops derive from the knowledge of the gardeners. Each survey is not in alphabetical order; they are listed exactly how the gardener walked me through their garden. In cases where a number is listed, it indicates the number of different varieties of that particular corp.

*Unknown heirloom or domesticated verity

Garden #1

Plant Name	Scientific Name	Plant Uses	Uses of Surplus
Roma tomato	*Solanum lycopersicum*	Consumption	Preserve
Beefsteak tomato	*Solanum lycopersicum*	Consumption	Preserve
*Heirloom tomato	*Lycopersicon esculentum*	Consumption	Preserve
Cherry tomato	*Solanum lycopersicum var. cerasiforme*	Consumption	Preserve
Eggplant	*Solanum melongena*	Consumption	Share
Bell pepper	*Capsicum annuum*	Consumption	Share
Zucchini	*Cucurbita pepo*	Consumption	Share

	var. cylindrica		
Pattypan squash	*Cucurbita pepo*	Consumption	Share
Cucumber	*Cucumis sativus*	Consumption	Share
*Cantaloupe	*Cucumis melo*	Consumption	Share
Onions	*Allium cepa* L	Consumption	Share
Garlic	*Allium sativum*	Consumption	Share
Spearmint	*Mentha spicata*	Herb	n/a
Parsley	*Petroselinum crispum*	Herb	n/a
Oregano	*Origanum vulgare*	Herb	n/a
Basil	*Ocimum basilicum*	Herb	n/a
Rosemary	*Rosmarinus officinalis*	Herb	n/a
Kumquat	*Fortunella crassifolia*	Consumption	Share
Lemon tree	*Citrus limonum*	Consumption	Share
Fig tree	*Ficus carica*	Consumption	Share
Orange tree	*Citrus sinensis*	Consumption	Share
Apple tree	*Malus domestica*	Consumption	Share
Nectarine tree	*Prunus persica*	Consumption	Share
Sunflower	*Helianthus annuus*	Consumption	n/a
Marigold	*Tagetes minuta*	Pest management	n/a
Radishes	*Raphanus sativus*	Consumption	Share
*Grapes	*Vitis vinifera*	Consumption	Share
Peach tree	*Prunus persica*	Consumption	Share
Cilantro	*Coriandrum sativum*	Herb	n/a

Delicata squash	*Cucurbita pepo*	Consumption	Share

Garden #2

Plant Name	**Scientific Name**	**Plant Uses**	**Uses of Surplus**
kabocha	Cucurbita maxima	Consumption	n/a
Eggplant	Solanum melongena	Consumption	n/a
Butternut squash	Cucurbita moschata	Consumption	n/a
Pattypan Squash	Cucurbita pepo	Consumption	n/a
*Zucchini	Cucurbita pepo var. cylindrica	Consumption	n/a
*Pumpkin	Cucurbita pepo	Holloween	Holloween
Mint (lemon balm)	Melissa officinalis	Herb	n/a
Mint	Mentha longifolia	Herb	n/a
Spearmint	Mentha spicata	Herb	n/a
Sage	Salvia officinalis	Herb	n/a
Chives	Allium schoenoprasum	Herb	n/a
green onion	Allium fistulosum	Consumption	n/a
oregano	Origanum vulgare	Herb	n/a
thyme	Thymus vulgaris	Herb	n/a
basil	Ocimum basilicum	Herb	n/a

Cilantro	Coriandrum sativum	Herb	n/a
Cherry tomato	Solanum lycopersicum	Consumption	Share
Beef steak tomato	Solanum lycopersicum var. cerasiforme	Consumption	n/a
*Melon (6)	Cucumis melo	Consumption	n/a
Sunflower	Helianthus annuus	Consumption	n/a
Strawberry	Fragaria × ananassa	Consumption	n/a
Artichoke	Cynara scolymus	Consumption	n/a
Sweet potato	Ipomoea batatas	Consumption	n/a
Anaheim pepper	Capsicum annuum "Anaheim"	Consumption	n/a
Jalapeño	Capsicum annuum "Jalapeño"	Consumption	n/a
Bell pepper	Capsicum annuum	Consumption	n/a
Radish	Raphanus sativus	Consumption	n/a
Red kale	Brassica napus subsp. pabularia	Consumption	n/a
Pole beans	Phaseolus coccineus	Consumption	n/a
Red lettuce	Lactuca sativa	Consumption	n/a
Arugula	Eruca sativa	Consumption	n/a
Bokchoy	Brassica rapa subsp. chinensis	Consumption	n/a
Collard greens	Brassica oleracea	Consumption	n/a

	var. medullosa		
Armenian cucumber	Cucumis melo var. flexuosus	Consumption	n/a
Cucumber	Cucumis sativus	Consumption	n/a
Chard	Beta vulgaris subsp. vulgaris	Consumption	n/a
Parsley	Petroselinum crispum	Herb	n/a
Stripped zucchini	Cucurbita pepo var. cylindrica “Italian Striped”	Consumption	n/a
Chayote squash	Sechium edule	Consumption	n/a
*Watermelon	Citrullus lanatus	Consumption	n/a
*Cantalope	Cucumis melo var. cantalupensis	Consumption	n/a
Asylum flower	Alyssum maritimum	Pest management	n/a
Magnolia	Magnolia virginiana L.	Pest management	n/a
Beets	Beta vulgaris	Consumption	n/a
Cauliflower	Brassica oleracea var. botrytis	Consumption	n/a
*Grapes	Vitis vinifera	Decorative	n/a
Plums	Prunus domestica	Consumption	Share
*Chicken eggs	n/a	Consumption and waste	Share

Garden #3

Plant Name	Scientific Name	Plant Uses	Uses of Surplus
*Grapes	Vitis vinifera	Consumption	Wine
Green beans	Phaseolus vulgaris	Consumption	Share w/neighbors & church
Eggplant	Solanum melongena	Consumption	Share w/neighbors & church
*Tomato (10 varieties)	Solanum lycopersicum	Consumption	Preserve
*Peppers (9 varieties)	Capsicum annuum	Consumption	Share w/neighbors & church
Okra	Abelmoschus esculentus	Consumption	Share w/neighbors & church
Basil	Ocimum basilicum	Herb	Share w/neighbors & church
*Squash	Cucurbita pepo	Consumption	Share w/neighbors & church
Parsley	Petroselinum crispum	Herb	Share w/neighbors & church
Cilantro	Coriandrum sativum	Herb	n/a
Mint	Mentha longifolia	Herb	n/a
Sage	Salvia officinalis	Herb	n/a
Peach tree	Prunus persica	Consumption	Preserve
Orange tree	Citrus sinensis	Consumption	Juice/preserve

Cherry tree	Prunus serotina	Consumption	preserve
Apricot tree	Prunus armeniaca	Consumption	preserve
*Apple tree (3 varieties)	Malus domestica	Consumption	Preserve/apple butter
Persimon	Diospyros kaki	Consumption	wine
Lemon	Citrus limon	Consumption	Share w/neighbors & church
Meyers lemon	Citrus × meyeri	Consumption	Share w/neighbors & church
Cucumber	Cucumis sativus	Consumption	Share w/neighbors & church
Strawberry	Fragaria × ananassa	Consumption	Share w/neighbors & church
Avocado	Persea americana	Consumption	Share w/neighbors & church
Blueberry	Vaccinium corymbosum	Consumption	Share w/neighbors & church
Blackberry	Rubus fruticosus	Consumption	Share w/neighbors & church
Chard	Beta vulgaris subsp. vulgaris	Consumption	Share w/neighbors & church
Plum tree	Prunus domestica	Consumption	Preserve
Stevia	Stevia rebaudiana	Herb	n/a
Onions	Allium cepa L	Consumption	Share w/neighbors & church
Collard greens	Brassica oleracea var. medullosa	Consumption	Share w/neighbors & church

Mustard greens	Brassica juncea	Consumption	n/a
*Watermelon	Citrullus lanatus	Consumption	Share w/neighbors & church
*Potato	Solanum tuberosum	Consumption	Share w/neighbors & church

Garden #4

Plant Name	Scientific Name	Plant Uses	Uses of Surplus
Green bell pepper	Capsicum annuum	Consumption	Share
Yellow bell pepper	Capsicum annuum	Consumption	Share
Dahlia	Dahlia	Decorative	n/a
Jalapeño	Capsicum annuum "Jalapeño"	Consumption	Share
Crono di toro ChilI	Capsicum annuum	Consumption	Share
Green chard	Beta vulgaris subsp. vulgaris	Consumption	Share
Sun gold tomato	Solanum lycopersicum	Consumption	Share
Cherry tomato	Solanum lycopersicum var. cerasiforme	Consumption	Share
Early girl tomato	Solanum lycopersicum "Early Girl"	Consumption	Share
Celebrity tomato	Solanum lycopersicum "Celebrity"	Consumption	Share
Diva cucumber	Cucumis sativus	Consumption	Share
Zucchini	Cucurbita pepo var. cylindrica	Consumption	Share
Italian basil	Ocimum basilicum	Consumption	n/a

Thyme	Thymus vulgaris	Consumption	n/a
Sage	Salvia officinalis	Consumption	n/a
Rosemary	Rosmarinus officinalis	Consumption	n/a
Chives	Allium schoenoprasum	Consumption	n/a
Yellow wax beans	Phaseolus vulgaris	Consumption	Share
Yellow pattypan squash	Cucurbita pepo	Consumption	Share
Heirloom tomato (German green)	Lycopersicon esculentum	Consumption	Preserve
Heirloom tomato (top of the world)	Lycopersicon esculentum	Consumption	Preserve
Heirloom tomato (Ed's melenium)	Lycopersicon esculentum	Consumption	Preserve
Heirloom tomato (carbon tomato)	Lycopersicon esculentum	Consumption	Preserve
Gold star cantaloupe	Cucumis melo	Consumption	Share
Pumpkin	Cucurbita pepo	Consumption	Share
Hale's best cantaloupe	Cucumis melo var. cantalupensis	Consumption	Share
Strawberry	Fragaria × ananassa	Consumption	Share
Mint	Mentha longifolia	Consumption	n/a

Garden #5

Plant Name	Scientific Name	Plant Uses	Uses of Surplus
Kale	Brassica oleracea var. sabellica	Consumption	Share
Basil	Ocimum basilicum	Herb	n/a
Marigold	Tagetes minuta	Pest management	n/a
Cauliflower	Brassica oleracea var. botryti	Consumption	Share
Serrano pepper	Capsicum annuum	Consumption	Dry
Jalapeño pepper	Capsicum annuum	Consumption	Dry
Yellow pepper	Capsicum annuum	Consumption	Share
Cherry tomato	Solanum lycopersicum var. cerasiforme	Consumption	Preserve
Beefsteak tomato	Solanum lycopersicum	Consumption	Preserve
Sun gold tomato	Lycopersicon esculentum	Consumption	Preserve
Tomatillo	Physalis philadelphica	Consumption	Share
Green beans	Phaseolus vulgaris	Consumption	Share
Eggplant	Solanum melongena	Consumption	Share
Lemon tree (2)	Citrus limon	Consumption	Share
Zucchini	Cucurbita pepo var. cylindrica	Consumption	Share
Napol cactus (8)	Opuntia ficus-indica	Consumption	Sell

Pumpkin (and flower for quesadilla)	Cucurbita pepo	Consumption	Share
Red amaranth	Amaranthus tricolor	Consumption	n/a
Fig tree (2)	Ficus carica	Consumption	Preserve
Peach tree	Prunus persica	Consumption	Share
Orange tree	Citrus × sinensis	Consumption	Share
Squash	Cucurbita pepo	Consumption	Share
Onion	Allium cepa	Consumption	Share
Garlic	Allium sativum	Consumption	Share
Gala apple tree	Malus domestica "Gala"	Consumption	Share
Iris	Iris germanica	Decorative	n/a
Poppy	Eschscholzia californica	Decorative	n/a
Dill	Anethum graveolens	Herb	n/a
Carrot	Daucus carota subsp. sativus	Consumption	Share
Sunflower	Helianthus annuus	Decorative	n/a
Aloe Vera (3)	Aloe vera var. chinensis	Medicinal	n/a
Cilantro	Coriandrum sativum	Consumption	n/a
Cabbage	Brassica oleracea var. capitata	Consumption	Share
Guava	Psidium guajava	Consumption	Share
Epazote	Dysphania ambrosioides	Herb	n/a
Persimmon	Diospyros kaki	Consumption	Share

Pomegranate	Punica granatum	Consumption	Share
Mint	Mentha longifolia	Herb/medicinal	n/a
Easter lily	Lilium longiflorum	Decorative	n/a
Oregano	Origanum vulgare	Herb/medicinal	n/a
Verdolaga (purslane)	Portulaca oleracea	Consumption	Share
Mastuerzo (garden cress)	Lepidium sativum	Medicinal	n/a
Strawberry	Fragaria × ananassa	Consumption	Share
Rubella	Arenaria rubella	Consumption	n/a

Garden #6

Plant Name	Scientific Name	Plant Uses	Uses of Surplus
Quinoa	Chenopodium quinoa	Consumption	n/a
Epazote	Dysphania ambrosioides	Herb	Share
Sunflower	Helianthus annuus	Decorative	n/a
Eggplant	Solanum melongena	Consumption	Share
Onion	Allium cepa	Consumption	Share
Cherry tomato	Solanum lycopersicum var. cerasiforme	Consumption	preserve

Beefsteak tomato	Solanum lycopersicum	Consumption	Preserve
Heirloom tomato	Lycopersicon esculentum	Consumption	Preserve
Alyssum	Alyssum maritimum	Pest management	n/a
Swiss chard	Beta vulgaris subsp. vulgaris	Consumption	Share
Cucumber	Cucumis sativus	Consumption	Share
Meyers lemon	Citrus × meyeri	Consumption	Share
Bay leaf	Laurus nobilis	Herb	Dry
Lime	Citrus × aurantiifolia	Consumption	n/a
Peach	Prunus persica	Consumption	Share
Persimmon	Diospyros kaki	Consumption	Share
*Squash	Cucurbita pepo	Consumption	Share
Strawberry	Fragaria × ananassa	Consumption	Preserve
Celery	Apium graveolens	Consumption	Share
Black mint	Mentha longifolia	Herb/medicinal	Preserve
Kumquat	Fortunella crassifolia	Consumption	Share
Blueberry	Vaccinium corymbosum	Consumption	Preserve
Passion fruit	Passiflora edulis	Consumption	Preserve
Apricot	Prunus armeniaca	Consumption	Preserve
Red raspberry	Rubus idaeus	Consumption	Preserve
Fingerling potato	Solanum tuberosum L.	Consumption	Share

Yukon potato	Solanum tuberosum L.	Consumption	Share
Purple potato	Solanum tuberosum L.	Consumption	Share
Basil	Ocimum basilicum	Herb	n/a
Sorrel	Rumex acetosa	Herb/medicinal	n/a
Ruby red grapefruit	Citrus × paradisi	Consumption	Share
Thornless blackberry	Rubus canadensis	Consumption	Preserve
Iris	Iris germanica L.	Decorative	n/a
Zucchini	Cucurbita pepo var. cylindrica	Consumption	Share
Serrano pepper	Capsicum annuum Serrano	Consumption	Share
Jalapeño pepper	Capsicum annuum “Jalapeño”	Consumption	Share
Cayenne pepper	Capsicum annuum “Cayenne”	Consumption	Share
Navel oranges	Citrus × sinensis	Consumption	Share
Oregano	Origanum vulgare	Herb	n/a
Thyme	Thymus vulgaris	Herb	Dry

Rosemary	Rosmarinus officinalis	Herb	Dry
Plum	Prunus domestica	Consumption	Preserve
Easter lily	Lilium longiflorum	Decorative	n/a
Rocoto (hot peper)	Capsicum annuum	Consumption	Share
*Grape	Vitis vinifera	Consumption	Share
Aloe Vera	Aloe vera var. chinensis	Medicinal	n/a
Kaffir lime	Citrus hystrix	Consumption	Share
Lime	Citrus × aurantiifolia	Consumption	Share
Kumquat	Fortunella crassifolia	Consumption	Share
*Banana	Musa	Consumption /decorative	n/a
Orchid	Orchidaceae	Decorative	n/a
Strawberry	Fragaria × ananassa	Consumption	Preserve
Sage	Salvia officinalis	Herb	n/a
Blood orange	Citrus × sinensis “Blood orange”	Consumption	Share
*Apple (4 graff)	Malus domestica	Consumption	Share
White peach	Prunus persica	Consumption	Share
Meyers lemon	Citrus × meyeri	Consumption	Share

Garden #7

Plant Name	Scientific Name	Plant Uses	Uses of Surplus
Poke salad (pokeweed)	Phytolacca americana	Medicinal	n/a
Pineapple mint	Phytolacca americana "Variegata"	Medicinal	Dry/share
Spearmint	Mentha spicata	Medicinal	Dry/share
Peppermint	Mentha × piperita	Medicinal/consumption	Dry/share
Lemon mint (lemon beebalm)	Monarda citriodora	Medicinal	Dry/share
Mint	Mentha	Medicinal/consumption	Dry/share
Lemon grass	Cymbopogon	Medicinal/consumption	share/trade
Blackberry	Rubus fruticosus	Consumption	Preserve /share/trade
Blueberry	Cyanococcus	Consumption	Preserve /share/trade
Red raspberry	Rubus idaeus	Consumption	Preserve /share/trade
Cucumber	Cucumis sativus	Consumption	Share/trade
Stinging nettle	Urtica dioica	Medicinal	Dry/share

Lemon balm	Melissa officinalis	Medicinal	Dry/share
Verdulaga (purslane)	Portulaca oleracea	Medicinal/consumption	n/a
Watercress	Nasturtium officinale	Medicinal/consumption	n/a
Southern mustered greens (wheat grass)	Thinopyrum intermedium	Medicinal/consumption	n/a
Italian bell pepper	Capsicum annuum	Consumption	Share/trade
Jalapeño pepper	Capsicum annuum "Jalepeno"	Consumption	Share/trade
Serrano pepper	Capsicum annuum "Serrano"	Consumption	Share/trade
Anaheim pepper	Capsicum annuum "Anaheim"	Consumption	Share/trade
Basil	Ocimum basilicum	Consumption	n/a
Alyssum	Alyssum maritimum	Pest control	n/a
Beefsteak tomato	Solanum lycopersicum	Consumption	Preserve /share/trade
Cherry tomato	Solanum lycopersicum var. cerasiforme	Consumption	Preserve /share/trade
Sun gold tomato	Lycopersicon esculentum	Consumption	Preserve /share/trade

Eggplant	Solanum melongena	Consumption	Share/trade
Cilantro	Coriandrum sativum	Consumption	Share/trade
Wild oregano	Origanum vulgare	Medicinal	Share/trade
Carrots	Daucus carota subsp. sativus	Consumption	Share/trade
Parsley	Petroselinum crispum	Consumption	n/a
*Potato	Solanum tuberosum	Consumption	Share/trade
*Pumpkin	Cucurbita pepo	Consumption	Share/trade
Spaghetti squash	Cucurbita pepo	Consumption	Share/trade
Strawberry	Fragaria × ananassa	Consumption	Share/trade
Aloe Vera	Aloe vera var. Chinensis	Medicinal	Share/trade
Tangerine (glean/trade)	Citrus tangerina	Consumption	Share
Peach (glean/trade)	Prunus persica	Consumption	Share
Avocado (glean/trade)	Persea americana	Consumption	Share
Green apples (glean/trade)	Malus domestica	Consumption	Share
Oranges (glean/trade)	Citrus × sinensis	Consumption	Share
Grapefruit	Citrus × paradisi	Consumption	Share

(glean/trade)			
Lemon (glean/trade)	Citrus × limon	Consumption	Share
Lime (glean/trade)	Citrus × aurantiifolia	Consumption	Share

Garden #8

Plant Name	Scientific Name	Plant Uses	Uses of Surplus
Blueberry	Cyanococcus	Consumption/ medicinal	Preserve
Blackberry	Rubus fruticosus	Consumption/ medicinal	Preserve
Goji berry	Lycium barbarum	Consumption/ medicinal	Preserve
Strawberry	Fragaria × ananassa	Consumption	Preserve
*Chiles (7)	Capsicum annuum	Consumption	Share
Onions	Allium cepa	Consumption	Share
Carrots	Daucus carota subsp. sativus	Consumption	Share
*Olive tree (2)	Olea europaea	Consumption	n/a
Zucchini	Cucurbita pepo	Consumption	Share

	var. cylindrica		
*Roses	Rosa	Decorative	n/a
Kale	Brassica oleracea var. sabellica	Consumption	Share
Radish	Raphanus sativus	Consumption	Share
*Pumpkin	Cucurbita pepo	Consumption	Share
*Sweet corn	Zea mays	Consumption	Share
Green beans	Phaseolus vulgaris	Consumption	Share
Sunflower	Helianthus annuus	Decorative	n/a
Okra	Abelmoschus esculentus	Consumption	Share
Lettuce (Greek)	Lactuca sativa	Consumption	Share
*Tomato (10)	Solanum lycopersicum	Consumption	Preserve
Basil	Ocimum basilicum	Herb	n/a
Gardenia	Gardenia jasminoides	Pest management	n/a
Pinto beans	Phaseolus vulgaris Pinto Group	Consumption	Share
Chrisanthemums	Dendranthema grandiflorum	Pest management	n/a
Cherry tree	Prunus serrulata	Consumption	Share
Myer lemon	Citrus × meyeri	Consumption	Share
Key lime (Mexican lime)	Citrus × aurantiifolia	Consumption	Share
Garlic	Allium sativum	Consumption	Share

Pomegranate	Punica granatum	Consumption	Share
Plum	Prunus domestica	Consumption	Share
Guava	Psidium guajava	Consumption	Preserve
Persimmon	Diospyros kaki	Consumption	Share
Figs	Ficus carica	Consumption	Preserve
Henna	Lawsonia inermis	Consumption/medicinal	n/a
Mint	Mentha	Herb/medicinal	n/a
Summer squash	Cucurbita pepo	Consumption	Share
Calamansi	Fortunella japonica	Consumption	Share
Aloe Vera	Aloe vera var. Chinensis	Medicinal	n/a
Cauliflower	Brassica oleracea var. botrytis	Consumption	Share
Asian pear	Pyrus pyrifolia	Consumption	Share
*Apple (2)	Malus domestica	Consumption	Share
Guamúchil (Nahuatl cuauhmochitl)	Pithecellobium dulce	Consumption	Share
Camellia	Camellia japonica	Decorative	n/a
Geraniums	Pelargonium	Decorative	n/a
*Potatoes	Solanum tuberosum	Consumption	Share
*Grapes	Vitis vinifera	Consumption	n/a

Tulips	Tulipa	Decorative	n/a
Peony	Paeonia	Decorative	n/a
Rosemary	Rosmarinus officinalis	Herb	n/a
Basil	Ocimum basilicum	Herb	n/a
Turmeric	Curcuma longa	Herb	n/a
Dalia	Dahlia pinnata	Pest management	n/a
Beets	Beta vulgaris	Consumption	Share
Kaffir lime	Citrus hystrix	Consumption	Share
Sweet potato	Ipomoea batatas	Consumption	Share
Eggplant	Solanum melongena	Consumption	Share
Durian tree	*Durio zibethinus*	Consumption /medicinal	n/a

Garden #9

Plant Name	**Scientific Name**	**Plant Uses**	**Uses of Surplus**
Nectarine	Prunus persica var. nectarina	Consumption	Share
Pomegranate	Punica granatum	Consumption	Share
White onion	Allium cepa	Consumption	Share
Red onion	Allium cepa	Consumption	Share
Oregano	Origanum vulgare	Herb	Dry

Cilantro	Coriandrum sativum	Herb	n/a
Rosemary	Rosmarinus officinalis	Herb	n/a
Red raspberry	Rubus idaeus	Consumption	Share
Apricot	Prunus armeniaca	Consumption	Share
Cucumber	Cucumis sativus	Consumption	Share
Zucchini	Cucurbita pepo var. cylindrica	Consumption	Share
*Plum	Prunus domestica	Consumption	Share
Apple	Malus domestica	Consumption	Share
*Avocado	Persea americana	Consumption	Share
Nopal	Opuntia ficus-indica	Consumption	Preserve
Loquat	Eriobotrya japonica	Consumption	Share
Kiwi	Actinidia deliciosa	Consumption	Share
Chayote	Sechium edule	Consumption	Share
Naranja agria	Citrus aurantium	Consumption	Share
Ruda (Common Rue, Herb-of-Grace,Bitterwort)	(Ruta graveolens L.	Consumption	n/a
Yellow pepper	Capsicum annuum “yellow”	Consumption	Share
Serrano pepper	Capsicum annuum “serrano”	Consumption	Dry
Jalapeño pepper	Capsicum annuum “jalepeño”	Consumption	Dry

Yellow peach	Prunus persica	Consumption	Share
White peach	Prunus persica	Consumption	Share
Concord grape	Vitis labrusca “Concord”	Consumption	Share
Spearmint	Mentha spicata	herb/medicinal	n/a
Yerba buena	Mentha spicata	herb/medicinal	n/a
Thyme	Thymus vulgaris	herb	n/a
Yellow passion fruit	Passiflora edulis	Consumption	Share
Purple passion fruit	Passiflora edulis	Consumption	Share
Meyers lemon	Citrus × meyeri	Consumption	Share
Guava	Psidium guajava	Consumption	Share
Coro di toro tomato	Capsicum annuum	Consumption	Share
Cherry tomato	Solanum lycopersicum var. cerasiforme	Consumption	Share
*Heirloom tomato	Lycopersicon esculentum	Consumption	Preserve
Beefsteak tomato	Solanum lycopersicum	Consumption	Preserve
Eggplant	Solanum melongena	Consumption	Share
Wisconsin pepper	Capsicum annuum	Consumption	Share
Parsley	Petroselinum crispum	Herb	n/a
Green onion	Allium fistulosum	Consumption	n/a
Mazano peper	Capsicum pubescens	Consumption	n/a

Marigold	Tagetes minuta	Pest management	n/a

Garden #10

Plant Name	Scientific Name	Plant Uses	Uses of Surplus
Cherry tomato	Solanum lycopersicum var. cerasiforme	Consumption	Preserve
Beefsteak tomato	Solanum lycopersicum	Consumption	Preserve
Sun gold tomato	Lycopersicon esculentum	Consumption	Preserve
*Heirloom tomato	Lycopersicon esculentum	Consumption	Preserve
Chard	Beta vulgaris subsp. vulgaris	Consumption	Share
White onion	Allium cepa	Consumption	Share
Green onion	Allium fistulosum	Consumption	Share
Bell pepper	Capsicum annuum	Consumption	Share
Serrano pepper	Capsicum annuum “serrano”	Consumption	Dry
Jalapeño pepper	Capsicum annuum “jalepeño”	Consumption	Dry
Kale	Brassica oleracea var. sabellica	Consumption	Share

Yellow summer squash	Cucurbita pepo	Consumption	Share
Green summer squash	Cucurbita pepo	Consumption	Share
Pinto beans	Phaseolus vulgaris Pinto Group	Consumption	Dry
*Avocado	Persea americana	Consumption	Share
*Apple	Malus domestica	Consumption	Share
Lemon	Citrus × limon	Consumption	Share
*Orange	Citrus X sinensis	Consumption	Share
Guava	Psidium guajava	Consumption	Share
Nopal	Opuntia ficus-indica	Consumption	Preserve
Apricot	Prunus armeniaca	Consumption	Preserve
Nectarine	Prunus persica	Consumption	Preserve
Mandarin	Citrus reticulata	Consumption	Share
Eggplant	Solanum melongena	Consumption	Share
White peach	Prunus persica	Consumption	Share
Aloe Vera	Aloe vera var. chinensis	Medicinal	n/a
Chives	Allium schoenoprasum	Consumption	n/a
Garlic	Allium sativum	Consumption	Share
Rosemary	Rosmarinus officinalis	Herb	n/a
Thyme	Thymus vulgaris	Herb	n/a

Cilantro	Coriandrum sativum	Herb	n/a
Cucumber	Cucumis sativus	Consumption	Share
Oregano	Origanum vulgare	Herb	n/a
Mint	Mentha	Medicinal	n/a
Yerba Buena	Mentha spicata	Medicinal	n/a

Appendix B: Garden Data

Gardens	Working or Retired	Self-identification/ ethnicity	Multi-generational house	Place of birth	Number of crops	Family members
1	Working	White	Yes	U.S.	30	6
2	Working	White	No	U.S.	48	5
3	Working	African American	Yes	U.S.	33	3
4	Working	White	No	U.S.	28	3
5	Working/ Retired	Mexican	Yes	Mexico	44	5
6	Retired	Peruvian	No	Peru	57	2
7	Working	White/Native American	No	U.S.	43	2
8	Working	Filipino	Yes	Philippines	56	4
9	Retired	Mexican	Yes	Mexico	44	5
10	Working	Mexican	Yes	Mexico	53	5
Average	70% working		60% multi-gen		41.8	

Appendix C: Recipes from the Garden

Over the course of this study, I have shared meals with many families who have provided their life histories, garden surveys, and expert knowledge. These are some of the recipes people have given me.

Chilacayote (Chiclayo) Beverage

Also known as *aqua de chilacayote*. The chilacayote squash is known as a fig-leaved gourd in the USA, shark fin melon in Asia, *cayote* in Argentina, *chila* or *gila* in Portugal, *potiron cheveux d'ange* in France, *calabaza de cabello de angel* (angels hair) in Spain, *alcayota* in Chile, & Chiclayo in Peru. It can grow as big as a watermelon and is cooked like summer squash when it is young. When it is mature it is a hard winter squash/gourd with edible black and/or white seeds, which can last for years when stored in a dry place. The mature squash can be cooked in many ways, including as a candy, a pudding, and a beverage for which a recipe follows.

Ingredients:
1 Chilacayote Squash (about 10-12 lbs.)
16 cups of water
1 Piloncillo Cone or 1 cup brown sugar
1 cinnamon stick (or 1 tsp. cinnamon)
1-2 limes and/or lemon (rind & juice), to taste
Fresh or canned pineapple (1 can optional)

Directions:
Wash the squash well and cut it into quarters. With a paring knife, chip off the hard shell of the squash (Do not boil the squash with the shell because there is a bitter substance in it). Chilacayote has the appearance of spaghetti squash. Remove most of the seeds and any yellowish strings/fibers, for these fibers will add a bitter taste to the drink. It is not necessary to remove all the seeds at this point. They can be removed after boiling. Cut each quarter in half and put all the pieces in a large stockpot, adding approximately 2 quarts of water. It is not necessary for the squash to be submerged. Add the sugar to the pot, and simmer for 1 to 1-1/2 hours until tender. Remove squash from pot and let it cool. Save the water from the pot for later.

Remove seeds from the cooled pieces of squash, and process the pieces in a food processor or blender until smooth, adding liquid from the pot as needed. Pour into a large pitcher or container.

Add about 2 quarts of cool water to the pitcher. Add juice and rind (cut into pieces) of lime or lemon, and stir.

Pineapple is a nice addition and can be used to adjust the sweetness to your likeness. Either cut up the fruit into pieces or process it in a blender and add to the pitcher. Makes about 4 quarts.

Serve cool or room temperature. Stir before pouring.

Zucchini Bread

Ingredients:
3 large eggs
1 cup (235 ml) olive or vegetable oil
1 3/4 (350 grams) cups sugar
2 cups grated zucchini
2 teaspoons (10 ml) vanilla extract
3 cups (375 grams) all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon cinnamon
1/8 teaspoon nutmeg
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon (6 grams) table salt
1/2 cup (55 grams) chopped walnuts or pecans (optional)
1 cup (115 grams) dried cranberries, raisins or chocolate chips or a combination thereof (optional)

Directions:
Preheat oven to 350°F.
Grease and flour two 8×4 inch loaf pans, liberally. Alternatively, line 24 muffin cups with paper liners.

In a large bowl, beat the eggs with a whisk. Mix in oil and sugar, then zucchini and vanilla.

Combine flour, cinnamon, nutmeg, baking soda, baking powder and salt, as well as nuts, chocolate chips and/or dried fruit, if using.

Stir this into the egg mixture. Divide the batter into prepared pans.

Bake loaves for 60 minutes, plus or minus ten, or until a tester inserted into the center comes out clean. Muffins will bake far more quickly, approximately 20 to 25 minutes.

Yield: 2 loaves or approximately 24 muffins

Ratatouille

Ingredients:

- 2 medium eggplant, cut into large dice (approxamently 1 inch pieces)
- About 3 tbs. olive oil
- 1 large onion, diced (approx. ½ inch pieces)
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 medium bell pepper red or green, cut into ½ inch pieces
- 2 medium zucchini, cut into ¾ inch pieces
- 3-4 medium ripe tomatoes diced or 1 can diced tomatoes (26 oz), with juice
- 1 tbs dried oregano
- Salt& pepper to taste

Optional:

- Depending on your taste, 1 medium jalapeño or serrano pepper minced or a ½ tsp dried chili flakes
- Can substitute basil for oregano (fresh, chopped or dried)
- Can add meat; i.e. 1 lb ground beef crumbled and browned with the onions and garlic *(normally, Ratatouille is vegetarian)*
- Finish with 2-3 tbs chopped herbs (parsley, cilantro, basil)

Instructions:

1. Heat a heavy-bottomed deep pan or pot. Add about 2 tbs oil and the diced eggplant, lightly salt & pepper, and cook over medium heat until soft and medium browned; about 15 minutes. Use a spatula to prevent sticking and add a small amount of more oil if needed to prevent sticking. Once browned and soft, remove and set aside. You will notice that the eggplant shrunk a bit. You can cook the eggplant in batches if the pot is not big enough.

Note: It is not necessary to salt or peel eggplant for bitter juices if the eggplant is relatively young. If you choose to, lightly sprinkle the diced eggplant with salt and put in a strainer to drain for approx. 30 mins. Dry off the eggplant with a paper towel before browning.

2. If adding ground beef to recipe, brown the meat in the same pot with salt and pepper, and the remaining tablespoon of olive oil for about 5 minutes. Set meat aside for later. With the pot heated to medium-low and oil added, add the onions, hot peppers (fresh or dried) and garlic and cook until onions soften, about 2 minutes. Then add the chopped bell (sweet) pepper and cook 3-5 minutes. Add more oil if needed.

3. Stir in the zucchini, cooking for about 2 minutes, followed by the tomatoes (juice and all) and oregano. Adjust salt and pepper to taste. Simmer for about 5 minutes. Stir in the reserved eggplant and meat (if included in recipe), simmer on low about 10 minutes more, stirring occasionally to prevent sticking of the vegetables. Add the optional 2-3 tbs chopped fresh parsley, cilantro, or basil depending on your taste.

Serve this dish warm or cold. Serve with a side of rice, especially if it was made with meat. It tastes even better the next day. You can also mix it with pasta sauce and serve with spaghetti or ziti. After refrigeration, reheat or bring to room temperature. Serves about 6.

Pomegranate and Persimmon Salad

Ingredients:
4-6 Persimmons
1 Pomegranate
1 Jalapeño
Cilantro

Directions:
Peel the persimmons, then cut them in half and cut into 1/4 inch slices. Place in salad bowl. Add about half of the pomegranate. Dice and de-seed jalapeño. Add to bowl. De-stem cilantro and add to your liking. Leave the salad at room temperature for around an hour to allow juices to mingle. Serve.

Tostadas *Michoacanas*

Ingredients:
12 tostadas (half a package, usually)
3 15-oz. cans black beans, or 6 cups cooked beans (black, refried, pinto)
4 large potatoes, sliced into 1⁄4 inch rounds
1 head cabbage, shredded finely
1 package queso fresco / fresh Mexican cheese
3 tomatoes, cut in wedges
1 red onion, sliced thin
1 bunch radishes, sliced thin
3 avocados, sliced
3 navel oranges, peeled and sliced into rounds

Optional: shredded chicken or turkey
For garnish: Mexican limes, sour cream or plain yogurt, red hot sauce (see next page for recipe)

Directions:

1. First, cook potatoes. Place sliced potatoes in a medium saucepot and cover with water. Cook until a knife pierces potato easily, about 15 minutes.
2. For each serving, place a tostada on a plate. Spread beans in a thin layer over the tostada.

3. Place rounds of cooked potatoes over the beans. If using chicken or turkey, add on top of potatoes.
4. Place a small mound of cabbage on top of the potatoes.
5. Slice a piece of *queso fresco* and crumble it over the cabbage.
6. Arrange tomato, avocado, and orange slices decoratively around the tostada.
7. Top with radish and onion slices, then garnish with lime juice, sour cream/yogurt, and hot sauce.

Red Hot Sauce

For Tostadas Michoacanas (see previous recipe)

Ingredients:
1 cup dried chiles *japónes*, stems removed
1 1⁄2tsp salt
1 tsp dried oregano
1⁄2 tsp granulated garlic, or
1 clove fresh garlic, minced
1 15-ounce can tomato sauce

Directions:
Sauce Makes: About 1 cup of hot sauce Prep time: 10 minutes

1. Toast chiles on a griddle until they turn dark. Keep a close watch, because they can burn quickly.
2. Place chiles in a blender and add salt, oregano, garlic, and tomato sauce. Fill tomato sauce can halfway with water and add to blender.
3. Blend on high speed until smooth. If sauce is too thick, add more water until it reaches the consistency you would like.

Veggie Guiso with Quinoa

2 tbs. olive oil
2 onions, chopped
3-5 cloves garlic, minced
5 scallions, chopped
1 serrano chili
7-9 tomatoes, chopped
2 medium zucchini, chopped (can substitutes with 2-3 handfuls chard,
purslane/verdulagas
1/4 - 1/2 tsp salt
1/2 tsp ground cumin
3/4 cup cheddar cheese for garnish

5 springs cilantro, chopped for garnish
2 cups quinoa

Directions:

1. Put quinoa and 1 cup water in a medium pot. Bring to a boil, then cover and simmer 15 minutes. Turn off heat and let rest 5 minutes. Fluff with fork.
2. Meanwhile, rinse, dry, and chop all vegetables.
3. Add oil to a large skillet. When it's hot, add onions, garlic, scallions, chili, salt, and cumin. Cook 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until onions are a deep caramelized brown. If the onions start to burn, turn the heat down. You want them sizzling, but not blackened.
4. Add tomatoes and cook until skins are softened, about 5 minutes. Stir in black beans and cook until heated through, about 2 minutes.
5. Serve over quinoa (or brown rice). Garnish with grated cheddar cheese and cilantro. Alternatively, serve the guiso with whole grain tortillas. Enjoy!

Chayote, Tomato, and Jalapeños

Ingredients:
2-3 chayotes, peeled and sliced
1 onion, roughly chopped
1 jalapeño, diced
2 garlic cloves, diced
2 ripe tomatoes, chopped
olive oil
cilantro for garnish
salt to taste

Directions:

1. Over medium heat, warm olive oil
2. Add onions and cook until fragrant, 3-5 min
3. Add chayote and cook until soft, 8-10 min
4. Add garlic and jalapeño, cook for 3 more minutes
5. Add tomato and reduce heat, cook for another 5-8 minutes

Serve on a warm plate and garnish with cilantro. The perfect complement for this dish is fresh pinto beans and warm corn tortillas.

Appendix D: Oral History Interview Schedule

Name (*Nombre*):
Age (*Edad*):
Place of birth (*Lugar del nacimiento*):

Tell me about your childhood? (*Hablame de su juventud?*):
    Did you have a garden? (*Tiene un jardin?*):
    Tell me about the garden? (*Hablame de su jardin?*):
    What did you grow? (*Que hiciste cultivar?*)
    Who worked it? (*Quien trabajo en el jardin?*)
    Who taught you? (*Quien te ensaño?*)
    Did you like working in the garden when you were younger? (*Te gusto como trabajar en el jardin cuando eres un niño?*)

Did your family cook food from the crops in the garden? (*Su familia cocinar los alimentos de los cultivos en el jardín?*)
    Who did the cooking? (*Quien cociar la comida*)
    When did you learn to cook? (*Cuando te aprende a cocinar?*)
    Who taught you? (*Quien te ensaño?*)

When did you move here? (*Cuando se mueven aqui?*)
    Tell me about the move? (*Hablame un pocito sobre el movimeinto?*)
    What was San José like when you moved here? (*Lo que fue San José como cuando se mueven aquí?*)
    The economy? (*El economia?*)
    The society? (*La sociadad?*)
    The population? (*La populacion?*)
    The politics? (*Los politicos?*)
    The environment? (*El medio ambiente?*)

How long have you been gardening here? (*Cuantos años ha estado cultivando este jardín?*)
What types of plants do you like to grow? (*Que tipos de alimentos te gusta cultivar?)*
    Why? *(Por que?)*

Tell me about your experience with LMV? (*Hablame sobre sus experiencias con LMV?*)
Why do you grow food? (*Por que cultivar alimentos?*

Appendix E: Interview Questions of **La Mesa Verde**

Many of the interviews that took place during this study occurred while I was in the garden, at events and workshops, or while sharing a meal with participants. As a result, these questions did not occur in a linear order as listed below, but rather occurred over various trips or meals with gardeners, organizers, and Master Gardeners.

Themes:

Families	Master Gardeners	LMV Organizers
Garden	Knowledge	Empowerment
Community	Practice	Knowledge
Health	Garden	Practice
Knowledge	Health	Community
Culture		Networks
		Goals

Interview Questions:

General

1. How old are your?
2. Where are you from?
3. Why did you join/volunteer for this program?
4. How long have you been gardening/farming?
5. What do you hope to get out of this program?

Families

Garden

1. How many years have you been gardening?
2. What are the benefits of gardening?
3. What does the garden provide?
4. What types of relationships does the garden create?
5. How do you use the food you produce in the garden?
6. What does your garden represent to you?

Community

1. What types of community relationships does this program create?
2. Does this program create trade networks? i.e. seed, food, resources
3. Does this program benefit the community? Why or why not?
4. Does this program promote community self-sufficiency? Why or why not? How?
5. What is the role of food (growing, preparing, and sharing) in this community?

Health

1. Where do you usually buy your groceries? How far from your home is it?
2. Have you seen any personal health benefits from gardening?
3. Have you seen any social health benefits from gardening?
4. How often do you cook/use food from your garden?
5. Has your diet changed since you started growing your own food?

Knowledge

1. How much gardening/farming knowledge did you have before this program?
2. Does this program respect your previous knowledge?
3. What is the relationship between you/gardeners and the master gardeners?
4. Do participants share or teach others about their previous gardening knowledge?
5. Are there opportunities for the community to influence planting/harvesting practices?

Culture

1. Does the program promote food that is culturally and nutritionally rich?
2. Does food contribute to community? How? Why?
3. What is the "La Mesa Verde" culture?

<u>Master Gardeners</u>

Knowledge

1. What is the role master gardener?
2. How do master gardeners respect the traditional knowledge of participants?
3. What types of relationships are created while working with LMV participants?
4. How do master gardeners promote future community-based master gardeners?
5. How do master gardeners use the existing knowledge of the community?

Practice

1. What types of techniques do master gardeners teach participants?
2. What are some of the benefits of the techniques used or taught?
3. Do you see participants transforming their gardens to meet their own cultural/nutritional needs?
4. How do you see the community (or individuals/families) interacting in the garden space?
5. How do the master gardens help preserve and revitalize traditional agricultural techniques?

Garden

1. What does the garden represent for the families (and for you)?
2. How does the garden address issues of access? What are its shortcomings and how can they be addressed?
3. Have you seen participants, families, or the community change since the introduction of this program? How? Why?
4. How much food can be produced in the average garden?

5. Do you see the garden change participants/families? How? Why?

Health

1. What are the personal health benefits of growing your own food?
2. What are the agro-ecological benefits of growing your own food?
3. What are the social benefits of growing your own food?
4. Other than growing food, what tools do you teach participants to improve their health? (i.e. canning or drying fruit)
5. Can kitchen gardens truly address food insecurity in San José?

La Mesa Verde Organizers

Goals

1. What are the goals of LMV?
2. How does LMV position itself in the greater food movement project?

Knowledge

1. How does this program respect traditional land-based knowledge of some of its participants?
2. How does this program promote land-based knowledge of its participants?
3. How does this program utilize the knowledge of the community?
4. How does this program promote the sharing of land-based knowledge and practices?
5. How does LMV nurture a culture of food self-sufficiency by providing knowledge about cultivation and cooking while as reinforcing family and community relationships in a network of urban gardeners.

Networks

1. How does food function as a network of exchange and how does LMV promote this?
2. How are common resources (knowledge, tools, seed, labor) used within the community?
3. What types of alternative networks (economies) have arisen from the community?
4. Is an alternative food network truly possible? If so, what is the role of home kitchen gardens?
5. What types of relationships are created through the LMV project (community, family, land)?

Practice

1. What is the role of LMV?
2. How does LMV promote a self-sufficient community?
3. Explain to me the role of the guilds? How do they promote community interaction?
4. What does LMV hope to accomplish through its workshops?
5. What practices (day-to-day activities) does LMV see as the most important to achieve the vision of the program and Sacred Heart in general?

Empowerment

1. Is growing food empowering? How? Why?
2. Aside from decreasing food insecurity, what other types of empowerment are being accomplished or attempted within this program?
3. How does LMV ensure that this remains a community based/centered project?
4. How does LMV assure that the community has a voice in the outcome of the project?
5. What are some of the obstacles that LMV runs up against (state, county, local, etc.)?

Community

1. If this is a community-centered project, what is the role of community or community building in its outcome?
2. What is the relationship between food and community and how does LMV seek to maintain/transform it?
3. What are some of the differences you have noticed since beginning the project?
4. What is the role of LMV in being the mediator between languages within the community?
5. What would you say the strongest aspect of this program is in promoting a "community united"?