

Reframing Farmworker Justice:
Decolonizing Land Stewardship

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Abstract

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The following work is a speculative design project about rethinking the future of our current industrialized agricultural system as a community-based, reciprocal system led by the very people who are currently exploited in current extractivist land paradigms. Indigenous Latinx farmworkers are people who make a living out of their metabolic interchange with nature. They spend their days sustaining the soil as well as their community and food culture because they have a direct interest in defending nature, and they believe in the integrity of human-nature relationships. Latinx farmworkers make sustainable choices on behalf of future generations and non-humans while living and working under conditions of social subordination and dispossession, while fighting the ecological contradictions of capitalism. While indigenous Latinx farmworkers suffer from exploitation, they also uphold stories of resilience and resistance. Immigrants from Mexico, many carry traditional ecological knowledge of tending to the land with them as well as ways of collective land ownership. This thesis explores their methods of placemaking and grassroots organizing in the face of hegemonic structures. This project is heavily rooted in history, but most importantly, it builds on the work of local activists and grassroots organizations who are on the ground advocating for farmworker justice.

This thesis is a call to action to the field of landscape architecture to rethink the space we occupy within collective liberation. The issues surrounding farmworkers are at the nexus of land, health, ecology, justice, and policy, which is where landscape architecture also finds itself. There are groups of revolutionaries in the margins that have already begun to imagine an alternative future for agricultural spaces. They are leading efforts for full farmworker autonomy. While addressing an agricultural system that is rooted in structural racism, I explore what this system would look like if we leveraged the knowledge of those who tend to agricultural land and if we considered how landscape architectural tools can make a contribution. These tools entail telling stories, shaping spaces, and thinking across multiple scales.

This thesis was explored through the use of decolonizing and feminist methodologies. I applied methods of historical analysis, community outreach, mapping, interviews, and contemporary archival research to learn from the perspectives of different disciplines, amplify the voices of Latinx farmworkers and activists, and leverage traditional ecological knowledge from Latinx farmers. These methods are key to preserving biodiversity and protecting agroecosystems.

REFRAMING FARMWORKER JUSTICE: DECOLONIZING LAND STEWARDSHIP



ALEXANDRA BURGOS MLA THESIS 21'

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Thank you to my thesis advisers, Catherine De Almeida and Lynne Manzo. Your patience, guidance, and confidence in me, even when I could not find it within myself, was integral throughout this entire journey. It has been a pleasure learning from you and working alongside you.

Thank you to my best friends, cousins, and to my sister, Nicole, for your constant support and for being the world's best cheerleaders. To my cohort, *mi gente*, you all are amazing, what a journey this has been. To Jocine and Ry, I have learned so much from you, I am so happy to know you.

To Richard, for never leaving my side, and being the most supportive partner and nourishing me with food and love.

To my amazing parents. My greatest sources of inspiration, and for whom I owe the world to. My love and appreciation for you both is not something I can put into words. Thank you, I love you.

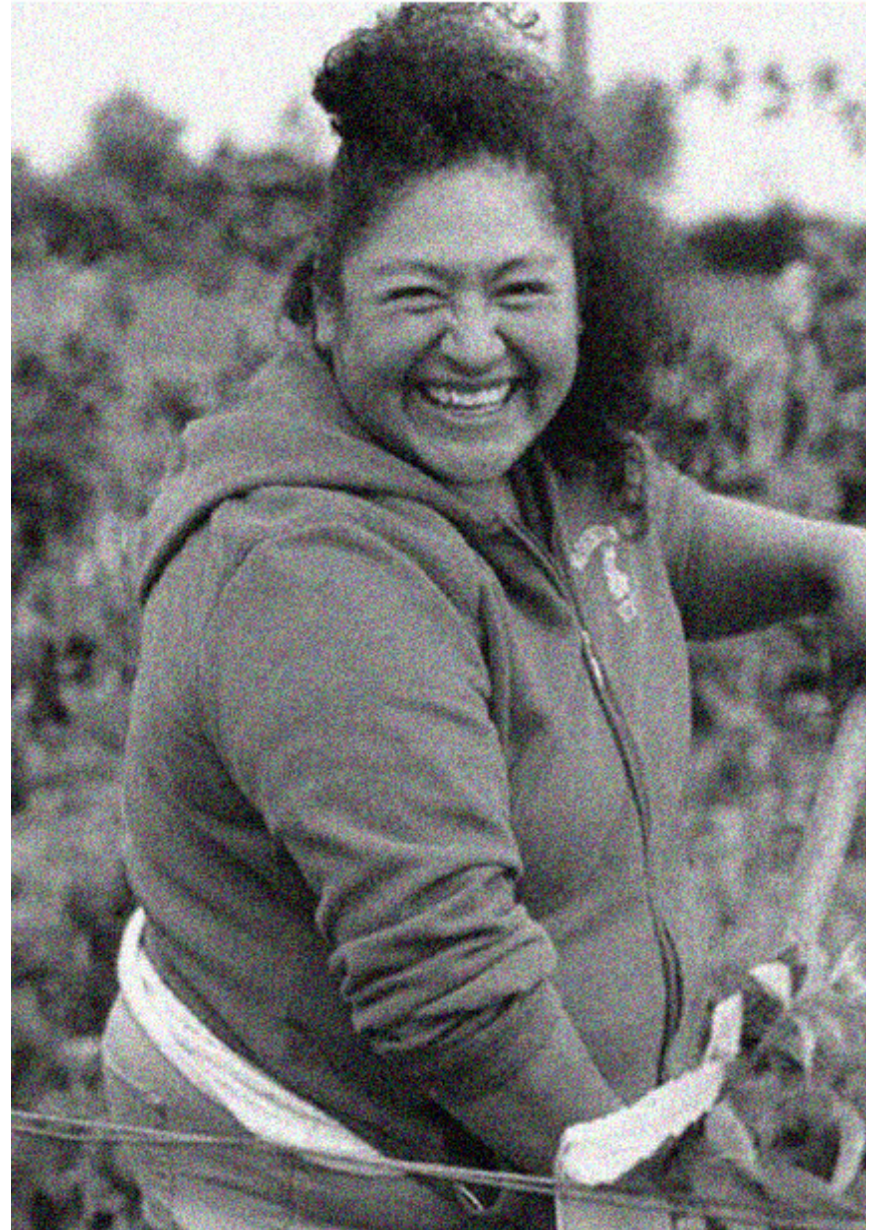
Lastly, to the farmworkers harvesting our food, thank you. May you someday acquire the liberation you deserve. *La lucha sigue.*

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I do not use the word decolonization lightly, and I proceeded with caution when using this word and when writing this thesis.

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HONOR
LABOR

Boycott
Driscoll's
Berries

RESPECT
the hands
that pick your
FRUIT

Campesinos
no son
MAQUINAS!

Justicia
Para
Todos

Boycott

1. FOUNDATION

Growing up in Southern California, I bore witness to the agricultural labor required to produce our food. Before there were endless rows of condominiums and track homes, the fields of Orange County that surrounded our home throughout the duration of my childhood were groves of oranges and strawberries. Driving along the road, I saw workers in fields picking berries under the hot sun. From a young age, I knew who was working in the fields, but I did not know why. As I got older and more aware of the injustices in the world around me, I learned of the injustices happening in these contested landscapes. This stark contrast between the beauty of the strawberry fields in a southern California landscape, with the harsh conditions of workers bent over for what seemed like endless hours, is something that will live in my memory forever. I remember the moment I realized that these people literally shape California, that their work was foundational to our lives. I remember the way the kids at my school spoke about agricultural workers, and about gardeners, as that was all they knew and could attribute to Latinidad. I recall the pain that brought me. This pain and disgust towards ignorance have only grown since then. Throughout the course of this work, I have felt angry and sad. However, I have learned so much more beyond the pain - I have been able to revel in farmworker's resilience and have been introduced to the beauty within the margins. As I've heard their stories through this project; they feel like poetry. I did not have the same experiences as these farmworkers, but I want to listen and learn, to acknowledge the pain and to seek the beauty.

The following work is a speculative design project about rethinking the future of our current industrialized agricultural system as a community-based, reciprocal system led by the very people who are currently exploited in current extractivist land paradigms. I classify indigenous Latinx farmworkers¹ as people who make a living out of their metabolic interchange with nature. They spend their days sustaining the soil as well as their community and food culture² because they have a direct interest in defending nature, and they believe in the integrity of human-nature relationships. Latinx farmworkers make sustainable choices on behalf of future generations and non-humans while living and working under conditions of social subordination and dispossession, while fighting the ecological contradictions of capitalism.³

This project is heavily rooted in history, but most importantly, it builds on the work of local activists and grassroots organizations who are on the ground advocating for farmworker justice. The impetus for this thesis stemmed from a personal passion for justice for farmworkers, and a curiosity about what a reciprocal relationship between indigenous Latinx farmworkers and landscape designers could be. The issues surrounding farmworkers are at the nexus of land, health, ecology, justice, and policy, which is where landscape architecture also finds itself. I believe that a landscape architect can and should occupy such a space within the existing movement for farmworker liberation. As landscape architects, we should be leveraging critical knowledge of land and water maintenance from people who have a deep bond with the Earth. The discipline is not doing enough to include the Earth's guardians and laborers in our design processes.

The framework for this thesis was organized into three themes: (1) Disruption, (2) Response + Repair + Recovery, and (3) Re-imagining the Future, which make up chapters 5, 6, and 7. In Disruption, I will review the historical context of this topic to demonstrate how the policies in place have affected and continue to affect the land. The second section, Response + Repair + Recover, is the core of this thesis. It is a deeper look at the movements happening in the margins, places where society has hidden secrets about the real impacts of economic

growth, environmental destruction, and white privilege.⁴ The movements in the margins are in response to unjust policies in order to repair the effects on the land and people, and restore ancestral knowledge and ties to the land. It is an exploration of the ways that racism shapes agricultural landscapes, and the revolution that is catalyzing a paradigm shift. Lastly, the section Re-imagining the Future offers speculative design work that considers the future of agriculture and what it would take for full farmworker liberation at both large and small scales. Through speculation, I envision what the future would look like when society truly values the labor of Latinx farmworkers.

Speculative design thrives on the imagination to open new perspectives in the face of complex problems. It enables designers to challenge social norms and assumptions, imagine alternative ways of being, and envision unknown trajectories.⁵ Speculative design involves building narratives that describe radical shifts in society such as demographic transitions, new social values and economic structures, and altered politics.⁶

In addition to speculative design, I was also inspired by non-solutionist design, which urges designers to frame a problem as a conscious activity that precedes *solving*.⁷ It creates spaces for discussion and steers away from landscape solutionism and problem-solving methods designers typically rely on. Solutions are not the problem, but solutionism is. It restricts designers by possibly limiting the scope of the landscapes they consider by ignoring ecological or social aspects that do not present as problems, but are important to be well versed in. In addition, solutionism could lead to reaching for known solutions that might not fit the context of a situation, or possibly avoiding what feels like unsolvable problems, and therefore not engaging with a litany of issues that are then left ignored.⁸ Through speculative and non-solutionist design, I have explored an alternative future of our agricultural landscapes in a socio-political context.

The current industrialized agricultural network is not a food system, it is a structure that manufactures food for export and profit. Most farmworkers in the U.S. are predominantly Latinx,⁹ and they face harsh conditions in agricultural

fields. Many of the policies that continue to degrade farmworkers date back to the dark era of slavery in the U.S.,¹⁰ and continue via neoliberal policies, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), that exploit both the land and those who tend it. Thus, farm work has been seen as unskilled, and the farmers themselves stigmatized as less-than-human. Not only is there a disregard for the humanity of farmworkers, but there is no consideration for the important, traditional knowledge that they bring to sustain agroecosystems.

There are groups of revolutionaries in the margins that have already begun to imagine an alternative future for agricultural spaces. They are leading efforts for full farmworker autonomy. This thesis seeks to highlight and learn from some of this important work. While addressing an agricultural system that is rooted in structural racism, I explore what this system would look like if we leveraged the knowledge of those who tend to agricultural land and if we considered how landscape architectural tools can make a contribution. These tools entail telling stories, shaping spaces, and thinking across multiple scales. I seek to understand how the two movements of landscape architecture and farmworker justice come together to create a desired future. This is not to romanticize farm work nor to ignore that this is often an act of survival.

What I am positing in this thesis is that the farm work, from the hands of displaced Latinx peoples, is an act of resilience, and when those same hands become farmers who own their own farms, that is an act of resistance. In this research, I hope to uphold traditions and amplify marginalized voices. What you will read about are radical acts of survival. Indigenous bodies are a radical act of survival. Indigenous women's bodies are a radical act of survival. Continuing indigenous traditions under the gaze of capitalism is a radical act of survival.

For this thesis, I posed three driving questions:

1. What would the future of agriculture be when society values the labor and lives of indigenous Latinx farmworkers?
2. What would a reciprocal relationship between indigenous Latinx farmworkers and landscape architects be?
3. What tools could landscape architecture bring to the effort to envision new ways of working agricultural lands and centering Latinx farmworkers?

The goals for this thesis are to:

- Propose a landscape design framework that works toward collective liberation
- Increase knowledge of exploitative practices of land + people by corporate agriculture
- Celebrate the embodied ecological knowledge Latinx farmworkers brought with them from their homelands
- Raise awareness of existing movements towards a revolution in agricultural practices and draw inspiration from those efforts
- Present speculations, not a single solution to industrialized agriculture
- Inspire a sense of optimism for the future of agricultural landscapes

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework for this thesis, as depicted in Figure 1.1, graphically represents the way I connect large concepts, such as settler colonialism, neoliberalism, decolonization, and traditional ecological knowledge, that are all at play in this project. It begins in the left corner with the term “settler colonialism” which is the current context and point of entry for addressing my topic. Following the trajectory of farm work in this country, the term “Plantation-based farming” in Figure 1.1. lies above “settler colonialism” and on the horizon

line of the field. This is to illustrate that current agricultural practices are still a form of plantation-based farming, as farm owners are in “control of life and death”¹¹ and farmworkers' value is to produce maximum profit; similar to the era of enslaved African American farmworkers. Plantation-based farming is embedded in the culture of the U.S. and the current treatment of agricultural field workers has not evolved very far. “Neoliberalism” is a dominant term in the graphic because it is the overarching political-economic context under which marginalized peoples must work and live. From neoliberalism comes free markets, and the increasing industrialization of agriculture. On the right side of the graphic is the theme “Decolonization.”

In this thesis, I interpret decolonization in the context of agriculture as the effort to obtain full agency for indigenous food systems. Attached to decolonization in the figure are solidarity economies, ecofeminism, autotopography, food sovereignty, and agroecology, all of which are the resilient responses emerging from the margins in opposition to neoliberalism. They are all a part of a larger decolonial project that seeks collective liberation for marginalized peoples.¹² All of these concepts are grounded in “Traditional ecological and indigenous knowledge,” which serves as the foundation for farmworker autonomy.

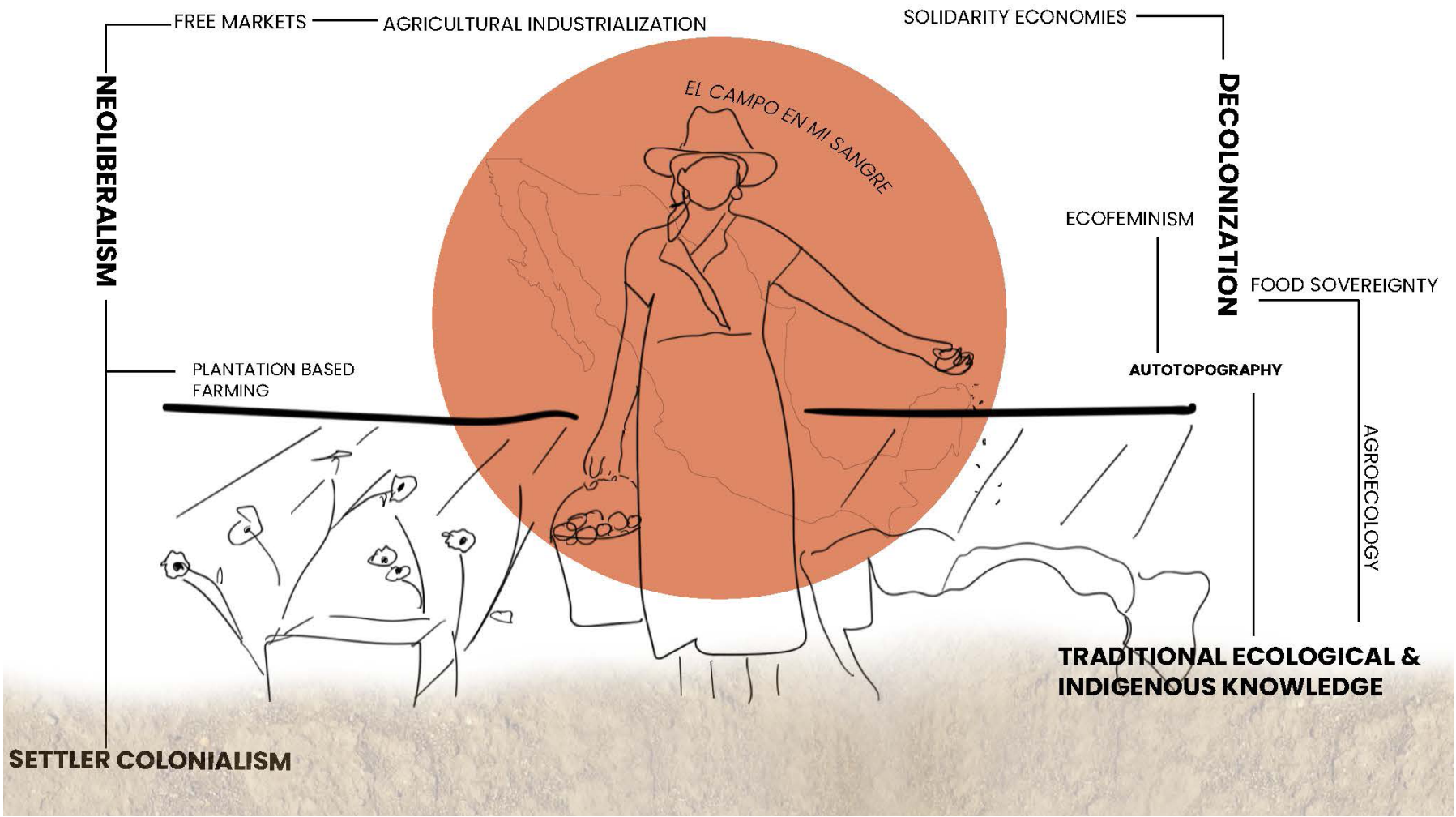


Figure 1.1 Conceptual framework.

ENDNOTES

1. I use the term indigenous Latinx farmworker responding to a quote from a farmworker, noting that they were not an immigrant, rather an exploited indigenous person who was displaced, kept out by a border, then titled, “undocumented”. Throughout this thesis I use two terms, “indigenous Latinx farmworker” and “Latinx farmworker.”
2. Bowens, *The Color of Food*, 28.
3. Barca, “Ecologies of Labour, an Environmental Humanities Approach,” 32.
4. Baptista, “Finding Hope at the Margins,” 65.
5. Burnette, “New Ruralism.”
6. Darling, “Radical Speculations.”
7. Holmes, “The Problem with Solutions.”
8. Ibid.
9. Peña and Valle, “Statement on the Climate Crisis.”
10. Perea, “Echoes of Slavery.”
11. Carrasquillo, “Race and Ethnicity from the Point of View of Farmworkers,” 126.
12. See glossary of terms.

2. LEARNING + UNDERSTANDING

In this chapter, I describe my research process and the ways that I sought to understand this complex topic. To begin, it is helpful to clarify the ways I differentiate methodologies from methods. **Methodology** is the theory and analysis of how research is done, and a **method** is the technique for gathering evidence.¹ In this journey, I have worked to be mindful of the nuances between both of these, given both the importance of this topic and that this was my first time being in a position of “power” as a researcher. I carefully sought out my methodologies and methods to prevent the further exploitation of Latinx indigenous farmworkers. Before diving into research, I needed to understand how my own vocabulary and ways of understanding the world were constructed. As I have learned from a feminist research methods class led by Professor Kemi Adeyemi, the ethics in the methodologies that we choose reflect our personal, political, social, and cultural investments, and our methods are our commitments to our sites of analysis, or in other words, the subject of my research. I would not be able to do this work without insight from Latinx farmworkers, from the activists whose tireless efforts for justice shed light on the issues at hand, and from these field sites. As a researcher, I had to think about how to honor them, so it was important to let my ethics and values guide me through this journey.

METHODOLOGIES

Indigenous peoples have far too long been treated as either “objects of study” or victims who speak to pain and suffering to an audience of potential settler saviors.² Research has historically been used to dehumanize indigenous peoples. We need research that both acknowledges complex personhood and the importance of collective relationships to a place.³ This entails centering people’s lived experience of place, and putting their epistemologies and goals at the forefront of research. As will be discussed later in this thesis, transnational Latinx communities bring special ways of placemaking with them. These ways of making place should be leveraged in the research process

for a deeper understanding of different communities’ relationships to a place to inform future decision making. I have used decolonizing and feminist methodologies throughout this research because they are grounded in anti-racist practices and post-colonial thought. These methodologies shift the focus of research from the dominant, patriarchal perspective to an alternative, non-hegemonic one where minoritarian peoples embody essential knowledge. The people and natural resources that are the subject of this project have been exploited nationally and globally by colonialism and imperialism. Colonialism and imperialism are methods of extraction that have been used to subjugate indigenous communities by research. Decolonizing methodologies reckons with this violent history of research. As I have learned from Ngati Awa and Ngati Porou scholar, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, these methodologies elevate the importance of the indigenous perspective on research to shift the power from the colonizers to the colonized.

Decolonizing methodologies have many important elements. For example, Shawn Wilson explains how indigenous research understands knowledge as “acquired by local peoples through daily experience”.⁴ Additional examples listed below provide an overview of how I applied this framework to this research and project. First, it is important to be critical of history by acknowledging its writing as an expressions of power through stories of domination. Decolonizing methodologies entails deconstructing scientific, linear concepts of history that perpetuate false narratives that history is always progressing and moving forward. This history is also made up of inaccurate depictions of Black and indigenous peoples’ inability to progress alongside it.⁵ Using a decolonizing framework, I am engaging in other ways of knowing that are not dominated by colonial ways of thinking and treating Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).

Three indigenous research methods each taken from Tuhiwai Smith’s *Twenty-Five Indigenous Projects*,⁶ have inspired me. These include storytelling, celebrating survival, and envisioning a new future. The goal of the first method, storytelling, is to listen to new stories that will contribute to a greater compilation

of knowledge for a more complete collective history. It is a way to pass down knowledge from generation to generation, understand different peoples' ways of knowing, and connect the past with the future. Next is the celebrating survival method, which is a way to change the narrative usually told in research. More often, it has been the demise of indigenous cultures' that has been documented historically, but celebrating survival instead focuses on indigenous survivance. According to Chippewa scholar, Gerald Vizenor, "**survivance**" means "...the degree to which indigenous peoples and communities have retained cultural and spiritual values and authenticity in resisting colonialism" and "events and accounts that focus on the active resistance are important not just because they speak to our survival, but because they celebrate our being at an ordinary human level and affirm our identities as indigenous women and men".⁷ Beyond methods of celebrating survival are methods of envisioning a new future.. The goal of envisioning a new future is to bind people together politically in a collective imagining endeavor so they can rise above present-day situations.⁸ This method heavily informed my research as the imagination plays a key role in the work to decolonize land stewardship and advocate for farmworker justice. It is a form of resilience to the capitalist, oppressive systems under which we live and work. Being able to present a new model for an agricultural system is to bind people together who share the same vision to dream of a new future.

In addition to decolonizing methodologies, feminist methodologies also informed my research methods. As the topic of farmworker justice has everything to do with power, or for some, the lack thereof, a feminist approach provided a useful lens. It helped me to address questions about how past and present socio-political structures have impacted farmworkers and the land, how current discourse surrounding indigenous and immigrant farmworkers is framed, and who is communicating the story. To consider these questions, the discourse in feminist methodologies was critical because it works in direct opposition to white, patriarchal, and hegemonic forms of research by centering women's voices as well as other marginalized perspectives. It challenges the objectivity conventionally used in research, and urges the researcher to recognize their

positionality. Feminist methodologies have also informed my critiques of current research studies surrounding Latinx indigenous farmworkers. First, it is important to understand power relations between researchers, who have historically been white males, and farmworkers, who are subjugated studies of research. Secondly, as will be explained in further detail in later chapters, *campesinas*,⁹ or the women working in the agricultural fields, are arguably the most exploited by the neoliberal food regime. They are also largely absent from mainstream research surrounding Latinx farmworkers. Feminist methodologies aim to support research that values women, which will, in turn, lead to social change or action that will benefit women.¹⁰ Applying this approach, I sought research that elevated *campesinas*' lived experiences and values their critical knowledge of seed and food harvesting.

Together, both indigenous and feminist methodologies offer an alternative approach to research, one that is based in ethics of care. They are principles that can advise environmental ethics. Ethics of care, which stems from feminist moral philosophy, questions the common misconceptions of nature as dominant by using anticolonial epistemologies to express the wisdom of relation-centered traditions and practices between humans and nature. Care ethics are "approaches to moral life and community that are grounded in virtues, practices, and knowledge associated with appropriate caring and caretaking of self and others".¹¹ Indigenous care ethics in environmental movements emphasizes the importance of the awareness of one's place in a web of different connections, including human and non-human entities and collectives. They help us understand moral connections as involving relationships of interdependence that motivate reciprocal responsibilities. They also hold value to certain skills such as the wisdom of elders, attentiveness to the environment, and indigenous stewardship practices. Indigenous care ethics also seek to restore peoples who have been affected by injustices by rebuilding relationships to environmental challenges. This includes biodiversity protection amidst climate change, and political autonomy to protect the stewards of lands and their crucial environmental quality.¹² Similarly, feminist care ethics

related to the environment understands individuals, whether human or animal/plant kin, as interdependent, while still autonomous. This ethic of care is also commonly associated with women and subjugated peoples. It is attentive to the contexts of problems and moral questions, and recommends caretaking as a remedy for healing against histories of harm.¹³

Indigenous and feminist care ethics diminish the binary between nature and human kin and their diverse relationships by reframing and reclaiming the very fabric of personal and ecological being. Care ethics promote human and environmental well-being and create a framework that can help guide environmental research and decision making. Indigenous and feminist ethics of care have helped me through my research in understanding the deep, embedded connections between ecology and ecological stewards, and reminds me that the care of nature should include care of the people who depend on nature. Latinx indigenous farmworkers, and more specifically, *campesinas*, are the ecological stewards of agricultural land. They therefore need to be included in the environmental research and decision making of these landscapes as they continue to be impacted by climate change and exclusionary policies.

METHODS

For this project, I have used five methods to conduct research: historical analysis, community outreach, mapping, interviews, and contemporary archival research. For the community outreach portion of this project, I consulted Viva Farms, a farm incubator program operating in King County and the Skagit Valley in the state of Washington, which has assisted in establishing seven Latinx-owned farms by facilitating access to land and capital. Their guidance helped me connect with the seven Latinx farmers and situate this research in the Skagit Valley in order to understand local struggles and resistance.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

In this research, I drew on books, articles, essays, webinars, and documentaries to analyze the history of immigration and farm work. By using historical

analysis, I sought to connect the current exploitation of farmworkers to the roots of migration and farm work in the U.S.; keeping in mind what I have learned from decolonizing methodologies -- that history is not linear, and it is typically spoken from a white, heteropatriarchal colonial perspective.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Viva Farms connected me to the Latinx farmers whom they helped to start their own farms. I was introduced to the work of Viva Farms from author and Director of Food Studies at Syracuse University, Laura Anne Minkoff-Zern who had visited Viva Farms as one of her study sites in her book, *The New American Farmer*. After familiarizing myself with the work of Viva Farms, I knew it was a great opportunity to meet with Latinx farmers and gain insight into the sustainable farming industry. In January 2020, I reached out to Andrew Ely, who is the Farm and Education Manager of Viva Farms. I gave him a synopsis of my work and asked if they would be interested in participating in a collaborative project. Andrew accepted my proposal for a participatory project and kindly invited me to meet in person at their King County location. We spoke for about an hour as he gave me a tour of the farm. We brainstormed ways that this project could benefit both Viva Farms and me. We agreed that getting in touch with Rob Smith, the Director of Programs and Operations, was the best course of action for getting in direct contact with the farmers. In addition, Andrew put me in contact with Kate Smith, the Project Coordinator of Pequeñas Granjas, which is part of the Washington State (WSU) Food Systems Program and the WSU School of Environment. She works directly with Latinx farmers in the Skagit Valley to provide support to small and beginning farmers by offering bilingual English/Spanish workshops and courses focused on farm business topics such as production and business management. Having a personal relationship with the Latinx farmers of Viva, Kate offered resources that shared the farmers' stories that would prove to be essential to this project. In addition to introducing me to Kate, Andrew introduced me to Danielle Halmstead, the Development and Communications Manager. Danielle gave me the idea to create a project pamphlet (Figure 2.1) that explained to the Latinx farmers

exactly what my project was and made it clear what I was asking from them. On February 24, 2021, Rob invited me to a farmer meeting and allotted 10-15 minutes after the meeting to meet with the Latinx farmers to introduce my project.

The name of the Latinx farmers and farms with whom I learned from are as follows: Mauricio Soto and Senaida Vela of Arado Farms, Francisco and Zochitl Cabrera of Cabrera Farms; Francisco, Juan, and Sergio Farias of Farias Farms; Nelida Martinez of Pure Nelida Farm, Regino Flores and Martina Gutierrez of Regino's Farm; Sabino Flores of Sabino's Farm; and Pablo and Maura Silva of Silva Family Farms. In keeping my research ethics, I am calling out the farmers by name and place to recognize their value as people and as stewards of the land. The overall goal of forming relationships with the Latinx farmers was to conduct ethnographic interviews with the farmers and learn about each person's farm.

HOLA!

Me llamo Alejandra Burgos y soy una estudiante en la universidad de Washington obteniendo una maestría en la carrera de arquitectura paisajista. Me encantaría trabajar con ustedes y aprender de ustedes.

ACERCA DE MI:

Tengo 27 años, originalmente provengo del sur del estado de California. Mis padres son nacidos en Chile y Honduras.

oy una opositora de la gastronomía y en el aprendizaje de cómo crear un sistema agrícola más sustentable. También, me considero una activista en la lucha de justicia social.

Cuando no estoy estudiando, estoy bailando, me encanta la cocción, montar en mi bicicleta y también pintar.



MI PROYECTO:

Mi proyecto está enfocado en replantear el sistema de agricultura en los Estados Unidos. Yo pienso que el sistema actual está basado en la explotación del campesino, quienes en su mayoría son latinos. Estoy explorando las formas de saber cómo sería un sistema agrícola donde la gente que cuida y trabaja la tierra tenga el poder de tener total control sobre la producción y administración de la tierra.

Como ustedes y Viva Farms ya han comenzado un movimiento revolucionario para tener un sistema de alimentos que sea sustentable. Yo firmemente creo que una alternativa en el futuro es posible. Espero aprender y desarrollar nuevas formas y modelos que sean menos abusivos y que tengan un sentido de sistema agrícola en beneficio comunitario.

SU PAPEL POTENCIAL:

Espero poder hablar con ustedes y visitar sus campos para hacer trabajo en terreno y aprender de ustedes.

PRÁCTICA AGRÍCOLA

Deseo aprender sus prácticas y conocimiento y como cultivar la tierra con respeto.

CONTAR HISTORIAS

Estoy trabajando con Viva Farms, escuchando y documentando sus historias, saber cómo comenzaron a trabajar la tierra, cuáles son sus sueños y esperanzas para el futuro de la agricultura y saber como ustedes han aportado al sistema agrícola actual.




SU FUNCIÓN POTENCIAL:

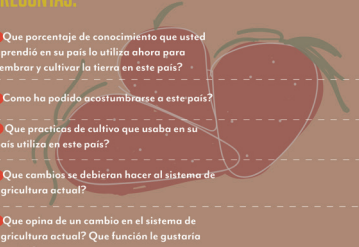
Para poder conocerlos, espero trabajar con 3-4 granjeros Latinxs en entrevistas de una hora de duración.

Estaré respondiendo a preguntas y espero que 1-2 entrevistados me permitan visitar sus granjos o ranchos para hacer trabajo en terreno.

HORA: Mi horario es flexible y me puedo acomodar a sus horarios. Puedo comenzar tan pronto como Marzo 1, 2021 y continuar durante el verano para poder visitar sus ranchos en día y horas que les

PREGUNTAS:

- Que porcentaje de conocimiento que usted aprendió en su país lo utiliza ahora para sembrar y cultivar la tierra en este país?
- Como ha podido acostumbrarse a este país?
- Que practicas de cultivo que usaba en su país utiliza en este país?
- Que cambios se debieran hacer al sistema de agricultura actual?
- Que opina de un cambio en el sistema de agricultura actual? Que función le gustaría aportar?



PARA USTED:

- A través y trabajando con Viva Farms, mi deseo es amplificar sus historias y que sean conocidas por una multitud de gente, de esta forma hacer un esfuerzo para que ustedes tengan mas acceso a beneficios, inversión y recursos.
- Si existen otros lugares donde ustedes desean compartir sus historias y conocimientos, yo puedo colaborar en hacerlo una realidad. Si ustedes necesitan ayuda con las redes sociales o internet, yo los puedo ayudar.
- En agradecimiento por su tiempo de colaboración en mi proyecto, les ofrezco mi trabajo voluntario en alguna faena que sea necesario en su rancho.



Figure 2.1 Project pamphlet for Latinx farmers.

MAPPING

To understand the geography of the Skagit Valley, I mapped the variety of crops grown in the valley using GIS (Geographic Information System). In addition to mapping the crops, I also used existing GIS data to gain a basic understanding of the water quality of the Skagit River that runs through the valley and learn about the levels of toxins in the river.

INTERVIEWS

As this topic is transdisciplinary, I tried to reach out to as many people as I could to learn more about the subject. This was not only to expand my point of view, but also to construct my own knowledge building off of their perspectives. Through networking or emails, I approached different folks in a variety of disciplines and sectors such as anthropology, humanities, geography, local activism, photojournalism, organic seed alliances, farm incubators, farm extension programs, and landscape architecture. I conducted one-hour interviews with each person to learn about their knowledge of the topic. In the end, I interviewed seven people with particular knowledge related to my topic. These individuals are whom I call “interlocutors” on this project. In contrast to conventional research practices that seek to anonymize research participants and informants, I chose to identify the activists I interviewed by name and provide detail on their areas of knowledge to honor their expertise and lived experience. The interlocutors were as follows:

Devon G. Peña, PhD, Professor of American Ethnic Studies and Anthropology, University of Washington, Seattle / Acequia Farmer and Founder of the Acequia Institute

Fellow classmates recommended I reach out to Devon Peña because of his work in environmental and food justice movements and his research, experience, and teachings of agroecology. In addition, I wished to learn about his sustainable farming methods on his acequia farm in Colorado. After exchanging emails, in the Autumn of 2020, I participated in an independent research study with Devon Peña. He would assign scholarly readings for me to analyze, and the two of us would meet every other week via zoom for one hour to discuss the

discourse and expand my learning. Devon Peña played an integral role in the foundation of this thesis work and introduced me to important organizations, articles, authors, and key concepts. Most notably, he taught me the importance of autotopography, and introduced me to the understanding that Latinx indigenous farmworkers bring their traditional knowledge with them.

Carrie Freshour, PhD, Assistant Professor of Geography, University of Washington, Seattle

Through one of my thesis advisers, Catherine De Almeida, I was introduced to Carrie Freshour. Carrie’s work aligns with my values by way of labor, immigration, racial capitalism, food, and feminist theory. Having had done research with farmworkers in Eastern Washington, Carrie provided valuable insight into the research process and helped me gain perspective from a geography standpoint, and understanding labor and immigration geographies and the way they shape landscapes. Carrie and I met a total of five times over zoom throughout the year.

Adam Romero PhD, Assistant Professor of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences, University of Washington, Bothell

Through Carrie Freshour, I was connected to Adam Romero, as I was interested in gaining deeper insight into the industrialization of agriculture. Adam’s current research delves into the political economic origins of agrochemicals in US agriculture, and how toxic chemicals became necessary for industrial agricultural production. Adam helped me think about industrial agriculture as well as assisted me in critically thinking about the organic food industry and its consumerist point of view.

Alison Hirsch, PhD, Director of Graduate Programs in Landscape Architecture, University of Southern California

I reached out to Alison via email after I learned about her similar research via the Landscape Architecture Foundation. I connected with Alison to learn more about the graduate thesis studio she led focusing on issues of environmental

and socio-economic injustices, particularly in agriculture, in the San Joaquin Valley. I was most interested in speaking with Alison as she is a big advocate for using landscape architecture interventions to address the issues surrounding Latinx farmworkers to look toward a resilient future. It was exciting to discuss this topic with a landscape architect who shares the same vision as me. We met on zoom for an hour.

Laura Anne Minkoff-Zern, PhD, Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies, Food Studies and Affiliated Faculty, Departments of Geography and Women's and Gender Studies and the Lerner Center for Public Health Promotion, Syracuse University

Laura Anne Minkoff-Zern is the author of the *New American Farmer*, which offers a new perspective on racial inequity and sustainable farming. This is a text that will be heavily referenced throughout this work. In my interview with her, I inquired about her experience in writing this book as she used ethnographic methods to conduct research and gained a lot of personal insight from Latinx farmers. Her other writings are also essential in the conversation regarding Latinx farmworkers. Laura Anne Minkoff-Zern and I met via zoom for an hour.

Cathleen McCluskey Outreach Director of the Organic Seed Alliance

Through their partnership with Viva Farms, Andrew Ely connected me with the Organic Seed Alliance (OSA). Personally having no knowledge about seed harvesting and understanding seed's crucial role in food sovereignty, I emailed Cathleen McCluskey to discuss how the topic of seed saving fit into my thesis work. Over the course of an hour via zoom, Cathleen gave me a detailed run down about seeds, the harsh reality of corporate seed patenting, and how essential seed sovereignty is to the revolution in the food industry.

David Bacon, Photojournalist, Author, Political Activist, Union Organizer focused on immigrant labor

In most of the discourse surrounding farmworker justice, there is a familiar name that accompanies pictures and articles: David Bacon. David has written

extensively on NAFTA, farmworker organizing both here in the U.S. and Mexico, and protests along the U.S./Mexican border. Further, his photography is a method of storytelling for farmworkers and union organizers. As a result, he is a positive, impactful voice in the discourse surrounding labor and migration. I was elated when he responded to my email because of his direct connections with grassroots organizations along the West Coast, including Washington State, and his role as an organizer for the United Farmworkers. David was able to give me a glimpse into the efforts and strength it takes to fight for farmworker justice. David and I spoke about displaced ecologies, but he also reminded me that farmworkers do not just bring ecological knowledge, but knowledge of governance and collective land ownership.

With the exception of Devon Peña, Carrie Freshour, Andrew Ely, and Rob Smith, I spoke with each of the other interlocutors in one meeting and completed semi-structured interviews with each. The interviews were based on a list of questions I had prepared beforehand. While each interview varied depending on the person's specialty, there were a few questions that were asked of each of these people. The questions were 1) "what is your hope for the future of Latinx farmworkers?" and 2) "How do you envision a better future for the farmworkers, and what is necessary to do that?" While these questions are not easy to answer, and there is no one right answer, this was for speculation about the desired future from a wide range of people's imaginations. From these questions I was able to draw on what policies, structures, and stigmas people believed were essential to abolish or reframe. Although these conversations were a time for imagination, they were also realistic conversations, discussing how challenging this will be and the powers we are up against. Despite the realities of the situation, all of the interlocutors were optimistic. Hence, they were dedicated to fight to change the industrialized agricultural system, and elevate the much deserved rights of Latinx farmworkers.

I recorded these conversations with the voice recording app on my iPhone or with Zoom recordings. After each conversation, I revisited the recording and coded the narrative. For this content analysis process, I used the open coding

technique to identify key concepts and themes. Part of this coding process involved flagging each time I heard an interesting term and/or noting when I heard overlapping thoughts and opinions. This data analysis process connects interviewees comments with specific codes, enabling me to extract key quotes from the interviews. I organized the key themes, codes and quotes in an Excel spreadsheet. As similar concepts emerged across interviews, I organized phrases into different themes with supporting statements from the interlocutors. This organization of the interview data then informed the structure of the narrative around my findings in chapter 6.

CONTEMPORARY ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

To support my community outreach efforts, and celebrate the knowledge and labor being done by Latinx farmers as well as local grassroots organizers, I collected materials related to Viva Farms with their mission, vision, and outreach strategies. This exercise was to understand how activists and farmers were approaching their work on food sovereignty, indigenous practices, and collective action. In addition to the Latinx farmers listed above, I also included Community 2 Community (C2C), Familias Unidas por la Justicia, and Tierra Y Libertad. These organizations in Western Washington served as inspiring case studies of how to empower farmworker justice efforts. To understand these key organizations and how they function, I content analyzed their websites, Facebook, and Instagram postings. In addition, I analyzed interviews, newspaper articles, podcasts, webinars, book chapters about their work. I did this by successive reading of the material to identify key terms that reflected major philosophies and strategies. Similarly to the process listed above, I open coded and then pulled key quotes and concepts into an Excel spreadsheet.

After the initial open coding, I then organized the codes into broader themes or categories. These included: food sovereignty, reclamation, traditional and intergenerational wisdom, participatory democracy, alliance, land organizing, ecofeminism, reformation, visibility, political organizing, organic, sustainable farming practices and philosophies, education, and health. This method was vital for my comprehension of farmworker justice and it drove both

my conceptualization of the subject and the narrative for this thesis. These themes directly tie back to the conceptual framework presented in chapter 1. The categories listed above support the major concept of "Decolonization" presented on the conceptual framework. These themes found from open coding all support the effort to obtain full agency for indigenous food systems.

Historical analysis, community outreach, mapping, interviews, and contemporary archival research were all valuable methods that taught me new information and raised my awareness about important and exciting new concepts around traditional ecological knowledge, grassroots organizing, and the systemic racism embedded into the exploitation of farmworkers. My goal in approaching these methods with decolonizing and feminist methodologies was to elevate the perspective of subjugated peoples rather than the conventional, patriarchal narrative that usually surrounds the work of farmers and farmworkers. In addition, these methodologies provided me with a critical lens that edified how I perceived each author and interlocutors' opinions and teachings, and how I perceived conventionally presented history. While it was important to analyze history to establish the foundations of farmwork and immigration, decolonizing and feminist methodologies also inspired me to focus on the resistance, and to celebrate marginalized peoples' ability to push past the current hegemonic paradigms and imagine a brighter future. Most importantly, these methods illustrated Latinx farmworkers', organizers', and allies', optimism for a paradigm shift. Through these frameworks, I was able to fill in the gaps of my knowledge, support my conceptual framework, and tell a fuller story.

ENDNOTES

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3. Ibid.
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5. Adeyemi, "Decolonizing Methodologies."
6. Smith, "Twenty-Five Indigenous Projects," 142.
7. Ibid, 243.
8. Ibid.
9. Spanish word for female farmworkers.
10. Burns and Walker, "Feminist Methodologies," 66.
11. Cuomo and Whyte, "Ethics of Caring in Environmental Ethics," 235.
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3. LANDSCAPE DESIGN AND COLLECTIVE LIBERATION

We are designing on stolen land. In addition, landscape architecture, a field riddled with whiteness and entangled in settler colonialism, has played its part in displacement, dispossession, and exclusion. Because of this, landscape architecture needs reconstruction. It needs changes, and it needs them now. Aside from BIPOC communities not being the main demographic for whom design is intended, landscape architects have historically, and presently, ignored the original occupants of the lands on which we live and work. Practitioners of landscape architecture prioritize *site*, existing conditions, and native plants, but bracket out native humans.¹

In addition, in the face of rising climate crises, marginalized communities are directly impacted. They are being forcibly removed from their homelands and are losing culturally important natural resources. Climate change is the dominant driver for design decisions in the field of landscape architecture. According to Billy Fleming, there is a myth that landscape architects are climate saviors.² We not only need to terminate this myth, but we need to rethink the role of landscape architects in the context of a climate crisis. While we are not the heroes in this narrative, we do have a platform that we can use to uphold those who do hold knowledge that can address climate crises. The very people subjugated are the ones who hold critical epistemologies to care for the Earth. This leads me to my main point: We need to turn the current state of landscape architecture into a discipline of inclusion, rather than exclusion. For far too long, we have not listened to the land and to the people of the land. This discipline has great potential for more positive impacts; it can be a field that can work with marginalized communities rather than against.

In this thesis I make a call to action: to rethink who and what we are designing for and to disrupt current design processes. I explore these ideas in this chapter by rethinking agricultural landscapes. In addition, I propose participation and community driven design, a reconsideration of labor through an ecological lens, and forming relationships with local activists. As landscape designers, we

do not hold all the answers to the world's problems, but we do have valuable skills. Landscape architecture is such an important field because of its use of transdisciplinary thinking and knowledge. But as a field working on indigenous lands, that thinks about a future impacted by climate change, we need to do more. This brings me to one of the driving questions for my work: what would a reciprocal relationship between Latinx indigenous farmers and farmworkers and landscape architects look like? Which leads to other questions like, what role could farmworkers play in the design process? What role could landscape architects occupy in the revolution for a just agricultural system? In the accompanying sections, I explain the importance for the discipline to include not only farmworkers, but all land stewards and land activists, as stakeholders of climate change. While this is a critical stance on the field of landscape architecture, I am not speaking from a place of cynicism, rather I am speaking from a place of optimism. Let's do better.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE AND THE AGRICULTURAL PARADIGM SHIFT

So, why agriculture? First, as designers, we need to stop ignoring rural landscapes. Rural landscapes have gained a stigma of places from the past, the place one finds themselves before the urban, and that it is only populated with white rural stereotypes. However, populations in our rural landscapes are quite diverse, with over half of Native American communities living in rural areas and a large number of refugees seeking home in small towns across the U.S.³ Rural landscapes “not only house and produce our most important natural resources, including food, water, minerals, and energy, but they also host future innovations in...land management practices and embody diverse cultures and histories.”⁴ While rural landscapes and agricultural landscapes are not synonymous, and urban agriculture has made its way to the dominant landscape architecture discourse, I am arguing that the same attention and awareness is given to rural agricultural landscapes. Landscape architecture is currently heavily concerned with the urban realm, granted the issues in urban environments are detrimental, so are the issues in rural landscapes. There is so

much rich cultural and plant diversity to work with, learn from, and protect in rural landscapes, that I urge us to shift our focus to the rural.

Secondly, landscape architects have skills that could be seamlessly integrated into designing and maintaining agricultural landscapes. According to Connie Migliazzo, ASLA, landscape architects are “generalists and synthesizers who design in complexity” with a skill set well suited for agriculture. They are “trained to understand both the human and large scales, grading and drainage, and the importance of cultural interpretation of the land....and can provide tactile interventions that can improve biodiversity and water usage.”⁵ With this understanding of a landscape architect’s skill set, there is room for the profession to intervene to improve agricultural landscapes and have a stronger impact in the transition into an alternative agricultural sector in the U.S.

Joan Iverson Nassauer, landscape architect and professor, provides valuable insight into the role a landscape architect has in the agricultural realm. In her text, *Design in Science Extending the Landscape Ecology*, Nassauer provides a “design of alternative landscape futures to affect agricultural landscape change,” an interdisciplinary research project modeling effects of alternative landscape design and management on water quality and biodiversity in Midwest agricultural watersheds.⁶ The research team consisted of experts from more than 10 disciplines, with landscape architects leading the project. For the landscape architects, the primary aim of the research was to facilitate the integration of disciplinary knowledge and support knowledge transfer between science and design. The design process included speculative thinking from national “experts” about policy relevant to possible changes in agricultural landscapes, and ended with designing three future alternative landscape patterns for two agricultural watersheds in the Midwest.

The design process consisted of a 3-day transdisciplinary visioning workshop, with all the members of the research team, held near the two watersheds of study. Landscape architects organized a sequence of activities for 25 participating scientists, stakeholders, and practitioners. They were placed in

teams and each was required to make transdisciplinary proposals for alternate landscape patterns to improve water quality or biodiversity while maintaining agriculture. Over the course of a year, each alternative future design went through a series of iterations. The final design was expressed by replicable design rules by which the present landscape could be transformed. GIS and other digital imaging simulations were used to communicate the designs and were paired with a performance assessment that included financial return to the land, farmer perceptions, multiple biodiversity and habitat measures, and hydrology. The project was eventually used for discussion of the federal farm bill in 2007, and policy experts believed the realism of the designs enhanced the opportunity for affecting federal agricultural policy.⁷ My key takeaways from this project are that design can be used as both a research activity and as a product of research. Rather than site design, in this instance, design was used to gather an interdisciplinary group of people to exchange skill sets. The design research was used to change conversations at the federal level to affect agricultural policy.

Conversations about landscape architecture’s role in policy making decisions are constantly circulating especially as we try to navigate our space within the Green New Deal, a congressional resolution that aims to tackle issues of climate change.⁸ This research project was an important case study on how to use design to inform policy changes., as the research team presented alternative futures to policy-makers at the federal level. While this project stands out because of its transdisciplinary approach, and its innovative ways of starting design conversations at the federal level, I must critique it. From what I understand, this research process is missing the folks who perform the labor of maintaining the design: farmworkers. This is addressed in the next section about engaging communities through participatory design in relationships with the land.

INTERROGATING DESIGN EXPERTISE THROUGH PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

To be able to design for a better world, designers must understand realities other than our own. Designing without context is a missed opportunity to better understand all the aspects of an issue and imagine a better future. Therefore, participatory design is crucial. It is so important that we “elevate the experts of the lived experience.”⁹ All communities have unique ways of shaping the world around them. In many cases worldwide, they use storytelling as a form of sharing intergenerational knowledge that is essential to collective community stewardship. Community members hold the knowledge necessary to preserve their landscapes and natural resources. While designers have a lot to offer, we should not be deemed the sole experts because of our degrees and license, rather it is the members of each community who are the experts of their owned lived experience and who rightfully take ownership of their spaces with knowledge that designers can learn from. It is the people living these realities that should not only be at the table but should be spearheading design decisions.

We need to restructure the current hierarchical relationship between designers and community members so that we are co-designing together. As Colombian-American Anthropologist, Arturo Escobar states, “the role of the designer should be that of a facilitator rather than an expert, and that design should aim to be user centered, participatory, collaborative, and radically contextual.”¹⁰ Participatory design can mitigate the current hierarchical structure between designer and civilian, and elevate the voices of community members. Central to participatory design is what Escobar calls autonomous design, “a design praxis with communities that has the goal of contributing to their realization as the kinds of entities they are.” It is a design proposition centered on the autonomy of the people and the understanding of the communal.¹¹ Autonomy for marginalized communities is the central goal for collaborative design; it is also the central goal for liberation.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE AND A NEW LENS ON ECOLOGY AND LABOR

As a discipline that credits itself as a leader of sustainable, ecological design, landscape architecture needs to catalyze a true sustainable design process that includes people in every part of the process. Here, “sustainability is a cultural process, rather than an expert one”,¹² meaning that sustainable design should also include the livelihoods and well-being of people whose livelihoods are directly connected to working the land. Ecological systems are not just plants, natural resources, and animal kin, it also includes people, and the people who not only depend on those natural resources, but also steward them. Ecological preservation and restoration are more than just protecting the biodiversity of natural elements, it is also about protecting and preserving indigenous peoples, languages, knowledge, and overall cultures. The effort to design ecological and sustainable landscapes “involves the defense of an entire way of life, a move of being ~knowing~ doing.”¹³ People who have been living in ways that are symbiotic to nature for centuries have insights that could influence our role as designers and how we reshape spaces and preserve ecological processes. The colonial construct that nature is pristine and that humans are separate and above it, needs to be abolished. As a society, we need to reframe and value the work of indigenous peoples who maintain nature and their traditional processes. To truly be sustainable designers, the field of landscape architecture needs to form reciprocal relationships with people of the earth.

In this section, I will speak about ecology through the lens of labor, by introducing the concept, ecologies of labor. As stated by environmental historian, Stefania Barca, ecologies of labor “is a materialist ecofeminist approach that calls attention towards labour as a key dimension of the material and cultural interchange between human and non-human nature. It tells us that class matters to ecology, i.e. the position one occupies in the social/sexual/colonial division of labour is a key element in determining how one is to experience this embeddedness with the ecological whole”.¹⁴ It is a concept that allows us to open the conversation about labor and working class peoples to see that

labor is not only production and exploitation, it is also interdependence and reproduction. Labor is related back to ecology in the ways in which it shapes and is shaped by the biophysical environment. Ecologies of labor rethink labor and the working class from an ecological perspective. The concept also emphasizes that "understanding ecology as something which profoundly affects labor and working class people" and the mutual interdependence between the two is vital.¹⁵

This ecological consciousness as developed in working-class communities is a distinctive type of environmentalism. In this framework, ecologists have much to learn from rural communities of color.¹⁶ This concept decenters the context away from the colonizing understandings of relationships to nature and the environment and focuses on the conversations of working-class peoples and labor that are usually left out of dominant environmental dialogue. White well-educated folks are seen as the face of environmentalism, leaving unseen low-income and racialized peoples such as indigenous communities, peasants, and farmworkers "whose bodies and territories are on the frontline of a global environmental justice struggle against the hazards of production."¹⁷ For this reason, I propose that landscape architecture needs to include labor in its design frameworks and centralize it in the discipline. Similarly, through the lens of labor and collaboration with laborers of the Earth, we could gain a deeper understanding of ecology and create inclusive environmentalist conversations. As it stands, the field of landscape architecture does not include labor in its framework. According to landscape design firm, Terremoto:

landscape architecture has a labor acknowledgment problem... As landscape architects, what we do and how we cultivate the land is intrinsically tied to the people who put in the physical work to realize these projects....this acknowledgement issue is by no means unique to landscape architecture. It pervades the greater design and culture sector of our economy, where a low-paid, largely undocumented labor force puts in the sweat equity while existing outside a formal economy that ensures their wages, benefits, and security... this tendency can become especially problematic in landscape architecture—when we tout our commitment to ecology, combating climate change, and creating resilient urban environments, without scrutinizing the structures and ethics of the labor we rely on.¹⁸

Unfortunately, the disconnection between design and labor too often fosters a class distinction and fails to recognize people who tend to the land as having a deeper connection to it. What would landscape architecture look like when physical labor is as equally regarded as design? Part of the participatory design process and the fight for autonomy should include those who labor the land, whether this be those who physically execute the design, or in the case of this project, those who shape the land with their traditional ecological practices to grow food. This design relationship should be sustained throughout the entirety of the design process from the concept plans, to construction, to reconceptualized management plans for built designs. Understanding the labor that goes into bringing designs to life could heavily inform the way that landscapes are designed. In addition, it could also create a stronger connection between the designer and the land. This relationship can educate designers on an emotional level to the land's natural processes. Because of labor, our designs come to life, and built environments, whether rural or urban, are made real. Labor sustains our discipline.

SOLIDARITY AND ACTIVISM: WORKING WITH POWER AND EMPOWERMENT

There is another form of labor that I believe is integral to expanding the field of landscape architecture. There is so much power in bottom up organizations that advocate for changing current oppressive structures. For example, there are already grassroots actions taking place in the margins for a just transition away from industrialized, exploitative farming. It is because of these organizations that farmworkers have achieved any semblance of justice. As part of a proposed design framework, we ought to work with local activists, organizers, and community leaders, i.e. agents of change, to recognize their political potential, and their voices in the realities around us. Landscape architecture's fight for environmental and social justice is missing the key voices of non-profit organizations and community activists advocating on behalf of their communities for healthier living and working conditions.

The building blocks for a transformative approach to environmental justice includes coalition building and grassroots organizing; as well as linking together the physical spaces that form communities along with the political, economic, and civil powers that can create more just places.¹⁹ We cannot speak about sustainability, without including marginalized communities and the activists on the ground as “sustainability without justice, is merely just sustained injustice”.²⁰ Liberation and justice will not come from top down structures, rather bottom up. According to photographer, political activist and union organizer, David Bacon, “systems don’t collapse by themselves, they change because people change them.”²¹ As designers, purposefully separating ourselves from politics and claiming to be neutral perpetuates design methods that uphold settler colonialism. As designers we need to be engaged in sociopolitical issues and let that drive design decisions. This is why I urge landscape architects to form stronger relationships with activists.

For landscape architecture to be a part of collective liberation, it is time that conversations of land, power, migration, and identity become dominant concepts of design. We need to reckon with the way that landscapes have been tainted by colonization, and the displaced peoples tending to the land despite these colonizing powers. This recognition is important to create design that is more attuned to the Earth and to justice. The discipline should recognize Earth stewards as key stakeholders in topics of climate change. Earth stewards hold place attachments, epistemologies, and cultural memory that are integral to climate justice. I could not agree more with Terremoto that “in many ways, this conversation is a scary one to have because it demands a fundamental reimagining of how landscape architecture offices and business models are structured.”²²

The challenges that I am presenting to the field require major paradigm shifts. This will take a lot of work and time, but as our climate worsens and those directly impacted continue to be silenced and left out of important conversations, this call for a radical shift in our discipline is evermore urgent. Learning from the design process of Joan Iverson Nassauer, design does not always mean site

design. Design can be used as a research tool, that then can be used to inform policy. In addition, a liberatory design framework would include community driven design that reconsiders labor, and cultivates relationships with local activists. Liberatory design for Latinx farmworkers means reframing agriculture to support the movement for a more just agricultural system, with those who are comfortable enough to share their traditional ecological knowledge of food harvesting and land stewardship leading the way.

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7. Ibid.
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11. Ibid, 200.
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14. Barca, "Ecologies of Labour, an Environmental Humanities Approach," 26.
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4. CONTEXTUAL GROUNDING

Today there is an estimated 2.5 million farmworkers in the U.S., 83% are Latinx,² most are immigrants from Mexico and Central America, and more than half are Mexican, many of whom are indigenous peoples who identify as Native Mesoamericans.³ This number of farmworkers includes those who are undocumented at an estimated 1.5 million nationwide.⁴ In agreement with prison abolitionist Ruth Wilson Gilmore, I would classify indigenous Latinx farmworkers as “marginal people on marginal lands... people exhausted by the daily violence of environmental degradation, racism, underemployment, overwork, shrinking social wages, and the disappearance of whole ways of life” but [they] are also people who refuse to give up hope.⁵

The story of immigrant farmworkers is that of displacement, dispossession, and exploitation, but also resilience, strength, and resistance. One cannot speak of domination without talking about resistance. It is a conversation of power, and a central figure is the *campesinx*.⁶ Farmworkers are among the many who are a part of the colonialist-induced diaspora, whose forgotten labor and overlooked realities sequester them in the forgotten places of agricultural landscapes. Forgotten places are places experiencing abandonment due to capitalist and neoliberal systems. They are places that are both symptomatic of and shaped by crises.⁷ In this instance, the crises are climate change and racism. Through these crises, two movements are tied together. The food justice movement and the farmworker justice movement. The following sections are both a review and a critique of conversations around food and farmworker justice.

In an effort to address the crises listed above, the food justice movement has been established and is quickly gaining recognition amongst environmentalists. Food justice is a “holistic and structural view of the system that sees healthy food as a human right and addresses structural barriers to that right.”⁸ The food justice movement draws in part on environmental justice, which “is a movement primarily led by the people most impacted by environmental problems, connecting environmental health and preservation with the health of vulnerable communities.”⁹ Food justice not only strives for access to healthy food, but for

an end to the structural inequities that cause unequal health outcomes. The title of this thesis, *Reframing Farmworker Justice*, is in reference to this project’s attempt to understand the different components necessary for farmworker justice. In this thesis, farmworker justice is defined as taking the food justice movement a step further by including justice for food laborers, and specifically Latinx farmworkers, who are constantly in danger from climate change and systemic racism. Farmworker justice also includes envisioning a new food system that elevates respectful farming practices and indigenous knowledge. Farmworker justice finds itself at the nexus of land, labor, migration, and ecology. To understand farmworker justice, I draw on writings from geography, anthropology, feminist studies, sociology, humanities, activism, and food studies to inform my work. Within this literature, I pay special attention to concepts relating to labor, migration, agroecology, sustainability, immigration, indigeneity, environmental justice, radical place-making, Chicanx studies, and socio-political systems.

HISTORY OF EXCLUSION IN FARMWORK

The current literature surrounding farmworker justice is heavily informed by the history of farming in the U.S., a history riddled with the exclusion of BIPOC communities in the agrarian workforce. The foundation for farm work is rooted in systemic racism and stems from early 20th century settler colonialism. What is crucial to understand is that the current conditions of corporate agriculture are direct effects from purposeful, racist efforts to control the bodies of Brown and Black peoples from the time of emancipation to the current militarized status of the U.S./Mexican border. These conditions include significant challenges that Mexican immigrants are presented with when trying to start their own farm operation. These challenges are inherently connected to the agrarian history of both the U.S. and Mexico, They are also connected to “the ways in which specific classes of people have been racialized, and therefore marginalized in gaining access to land and capital over time.”¹⁰

Historically, farmers and landowners have taken advantage of the political

vulnerability of Mexican immigrants. As mentioned above, many Latinx farmworkers are undocumented, or more accurately, they are documented temporary workers with H-2A visas. Farmers and landowners use this status as reason to deny Latinx farmworkers human rights and a living wage.¹¹ In most of the literature on farmworker justice, there is one significant event that resonates as a time of major disruption of indigenous farmers in Mexico: The 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). An imperialist exchange, NAFTA forced around 15 million people into poverty, and another 1.2 million farmers to migrate north in search of waged work.¹² (For more on NAFTA, see chapter 5). These critical moments are important to understand what the farmworker justice movement is motivated by and up against.

ALTERNATIVE FARMING AND MISSING NARRATIVES

In this section, I will discuss the alternative food industry and elevate the voices of people who share one commonality: They are missing from dominant narratives in the food industry, and they have been dehumanized and marginalized. Yet, they have wisdom about sustainable land practices and are leading an alternative food industry. In the face of the neoliberal food regime, this alternative food industry has emerged to protect consumers and the Earth from the effects of industrial agriculture and its attendant mechanization and pesticides. This leads to the next point of discussion, the alternative food industry and the space that Latinx immigrant farmworkers hold within the food justice movement. This alternative food industry, which is a component of the food justice movement, aims to rehabilitate agricultural systems to reverse the detrimental effects of food corporations. Two major principles to alternative farming are regenerative agriculture and permaculture. Both regenerative agriculture and permaculture use organic methods to create a sustainable food system. Regenerative agriculture means working with nature as opposed to working against it with a set of farming practices that aim to regenerate the health of soil.¹³ Practices of regenerative farming include: cover cropping, growing a variety of crops and supporting crop diversity, eliminating pesticides to protect watersheds and soil, and integrating livestock into farms.¹⁴ In addition,

these practices enable farmers to sequester carbon and prevent carbon from being released into the atmosphere.¹⁵ Similarly, permaculture advocates to work with the land, and is often used to regenerate degraded landscapes.¹⁶ It supports a closed loop system, which is a system that provides its own energy, uses perennial crops rather than annual crops that require constant tillage, and water conservation. Another element of permaculture is agroforestry, which is the cultivation of edible tree crops and understory plants.¹⁷ While the main goal of regenerative agriculture is to protect the soil, the main goal of permaculture is to create a permanent agricultural system. Yet both utilize Earth's natural resources in sustainable ways.

However well-intentioned these movements for a sustainable food system are, they do not address human social and political issues such as barriers for Latinx and indigenous farmworkers. The idea of farmworker justice has been missing from these movements thus far. Even within the alternative food industry, there is a predominantly white demographic, as the stories of white farmers are more visible than those of BIPOC farmers. On social media, 10 indigenous leaders released a statement called "Whitewashed Hope" with the intention to invite proponents of western ecological agriculture to go deeper, to not just "take" practices from Indigenous cultures without their context, but to embrace other Indigenous worldviews with more intention. There are some crucial lessons from this statement. These indigenous leaders are reminding us that people ARE nature and we must strive to fulfill our roles as Mother Earth's caregivers. As creative thinker/artist and daughter of a migrant farmworker, Maria Guillen Valdovinos notes, "*Nosotros no somos mejores que las plantas y animales; somos todos parte del mismo ambiente* (We are not above the animals and plants; we are all part of the same environment)".¹⁸

Part of a sustainable food system includes recognizing and processing the emotional traumas held in the bodies of indigenous peoples as descendants of assaulted, enslaved, and displaced peoples. Most importantly, this recognition involves returning the rights to care for and harvest from the land that birthed indigenous peoples.¹⁹ Chicana scholars Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga

refer to this as “theory in the flesh” wherein embodied entanglements are the experiences of people of the land that are the very constructions of land and place: “the making and unmaking of land and place in and through our bodies require us to unlock the way we carry land and place in and through our bodies....This opens new ways to think about the embedded possibilities within these paths toward healing from historical traumas and to understand that dolor, has a myriad of ways of expressing itself.”²⁰ We must have an intimate approach to the land to deepen connections to it by taking into account the materiality of everyday bordered bodies²¹ and the different forms of violence on these bodies.²²

Most farmworkers migrating from Mexico were farmers in their homelands, coming from generations of farmers before them. They carry traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), which is a “cumulative body of multigenerational knowledge, practices, and beliefs”,²³ and is its own form of place-based knowledge of biophysical qualities in a given place, including plant and animal species.²⁴ According to Valdovinos:

“Engaging communities that have been historically excluded from the alternative foods movement is critical for food justice. One has to go deep, and this means respecting local knowledge, wherever and whenever it is found... there is a wealth of multi-generational knowledge within Native communities in the United States. However, there is also wealth of this knowledge in diasporic and immigrant communities that have faced parallel histories of colonization, displacement, and environmental racism.”

Travels of the Diaspora, 183

Despite this critical knowledge of tending to the land and fulfilling unmet needs in the current alternative farming system, there is not enough recognition of Latinx indigenous farmworkers and their importance to sustaining a just food system.

ORGANIC WITH A LITTLE "o"

The organic food industry has become another alternative to corporate agriculture that prohibits the use of pesticides to protect the consumer, the soil,

water, and air. Organic certification has become what consumers think of as sustainable farming.²⁵ The term “organic” is a term regulated by the USDA.²⁶ In order to be able to obtain organic certification, you must be approved by a certifying agency. This process of organic certification can omit farmworkers because of race, class, and gender.²⁷ For example, foreign born, non-English speaking Latinx farmers often find themselves excluded from the organic food industry as there are barriers in the certification process that make it difficult to obtain the title. These barriers include large amounts of paperwork and the difficulty in filling out the forms because of struggles with language and literacy,²⁸ the inability to present citizenship documents, and not being able to pay for the high price of the certification process. Without the certification, Latinx farmers are prevented from selling their food at farmer’s markets as organic. The conversation surrounding “organic” is a tricky one as there is good intention to create a sustainable food system, but on the other hand, major corporations like Pepsi, Coca-cola, and Quaker Oats also get certified, perpetuating the model of corporate agriculture and contradicting the goal of the organic food industry.

In addition, buying organic still does not ensure the safety and protection of immigrant farmworkers. While organic industry standards are a step in the right direction to end the current harmful food system, buying organic does not change the system enough. It does not consider the labor conditions of the farmworkers, or any of the other hands packing and transporting food.²⁹ The current organic farm industry is more concerned with consumer safety. While this is important, so are the lives of the laborers providing the food. As Adam Romero states, “you can still exploit your labor force and be organic. People need to matter”.³⁰ The unfortunate exclusion from the organic certification disregards the fact that some who hold traditional ecological knowledge of growing food have had ancestors growing organically for centuries. As Ramon Torres of Tierra y Libertad states, “farming organic isn’t a way of growing that belongs to white, wealthy people. It’s traditional, and a practice passed down through generations”.³¹ The very title of this section, Organic with a Little “o” is

intended to convey this idea that organic can be more inclusive. It was inspired by a conversation with Cathleen McCluskey, Outreach Director at the Organic Seed Alliance. This notion of little “o” organic, is in response to the exclusion faced Latinx farmers and other diaspora communities who are challenged by the organic certification process. This phrase calls us to think more deeply about what “organic” means and to remember that while the certification provides safe food for the consumer, there is still more to do to provide better working conditions for the food laborers.

LAND JUSTICE IS FOOD JUSTICE

“Land is the basis of all independence. Land is the basis of freedom, justice, and equality.”

Malcom X, Message to the Grassroots

Another important narrative often missing from the food justice movement is about the land itself. According to the 2012 U.S. Census of Agriculture, 96% of all primary farm operators are white, and 98% of privately owned farmland is white owned.³² However, this could change. The U.S. is entering an era where nearly half of all farm operators are reaching retirement age.³³ The international movement bringing together millions of landless and indigenous peoples, migrants, and small size farmers, La Via Campesina, notes that throughout the next 40 years, the U.S. will see a change in hands for 400 million acres of farmland. The biggest question is whether this land will continue to support large corporations, or if it will eventually change to small family farms and indigenous and Black ownership.³⁴ The fate of the future for agriculture rests on access to land and resisting neoliberal land grabs.

Land is power, and it is the basis for life. However, capitalism views land as a commodity, as something to own and control, and to exploit for its resources. Understanding the evolving combination of land and labor, how they shape the food system, and how the current food system exploits both is the first step in bringing justice to both food systems and to Latinx farmworkers.³⁵ Adam Romero reminds us that “you can train all the farmers in the world organically,

but if you don’t have land, then there is not much you can do.”³⁶

Land and capital are the biggest barriers for Latinx, Black, and Native farmers in implementing their sustainable ways. The food justice movement needs to strive to occupy land to provide a physical space for communities to dismantle the neoliberal food regime³⁷ and to decolonize ways of growing food. This would allow indigenous peoples and Black communities to have autonomy of their food systems. Winona LaDuke, Ojibwe economist and environmentalist reminds food justice advocates that when indigenous people are able to practice their traditional farming methods, they can create restorative, sustainable landscapes and contribute to national foodsheds. To do this, however, they must reclaim their land.³⁸ The control of Native lands is hindering the food justice movements’ capability of completely transforming the current dominant agrarian structures. That is why land justice, which understands land as a resource, territory, and landscape³⁹ is essential to include in the food justice movement, and is integral to indigenous Latinx farmworker liberation. You cannot discuss the mistreatment of Latinx farmworkers without speaking of the injustices against land, as land and the people who steward the land are directly connected.

A FOOD SYSTEM THAT INCLUDES CLIMATE, FOOD, AND FARMWORKER JUSTICE

Agroecology is a movement that seeks to move us toward complete social transformation. Agroecology can be defined as “the application of ecological concepts and principles to the design and management of sustainable agro-ecosystems.”⁴⁰ This approach emphasizes a farm’s internal biological processes rather than chemical and external inputs.⁴¹ La Via Campesina sees agroecology as a “social, cultural, and political process and a tool for the collective transformation of reality. Agroecology, as shown in Figure 4.1, creates the social and material infrastructure for food producers of all kinds to remain on the land... and to break ‘free’ from white supremacy, colonialism, patriarchy, and other forms of exploitation.”⁴²

Not all indigenous cultures have the same way of farming, but they share a goal for food sovereignty, to foster a reciprocal relationship to the land, and to protect the water, soil, and air. As it stands, agroecology is practiced on small-scale farms. The challenge will be thinking of how to scale up these systems. Among the most important goals of an agroecology approach is protecting biodiversity. According to Native author, Nick Estes, “land still managed by indigenous people worldwide protects and sustains 80% of the world’s biodiversity - practices anathema to industrial agriculture.”⁴³ Diverse ecological biodiversity is interlinked with cultural diversity,⁴⁴ and they are both being lost to violence and extraction. It is not a coincidence that the cultures protecting the world’s biodiversity are amongst the most vulnerable under the grip of capitalism, and that biodiversity is at risk. For this reason, it is important to recognize that ecology is always social, political, and historical.⁴⁵



Figure 4.1 Agro-ecological model. (C2C)

RADICAL RESILIENCE AND PLACEMAKING

“Like the aspen growths that sprout in the aftermath of wildfires when disturbed land begins to heal, marginalized racial and ethnic communities survive capital’s ‘scorched Earth’ policies by reinventing themselves out of ecological, economic, and cultural devastation”

Silvia Patricia Solis, Chicano Culture, Ecology, Politics: Subversive Kin, 13

Tending to the land and caring for the food being grown is a way for indigenous peoples to heal from colonial trauma. In this section, I will discuss radical resilience and the ways displaced people create a sense of home. Essential to this thesis is understanding that there are existing spaces of resistance where people are taking a stance against the brutal, unjust structures under which marginalized people live and work. Farmworkers’ lives and their ways of retaining knowledge are a radical act of survival in the face of ecocide and ethnocide. As long-term knowledge is being lost to violence, remembering longstanding practices and ways of relating to the land is essential for Latinx farmworkers. Remembering is a decolonial practice against the violence of settler colonialism.⁴⁶ Important to displaced peoples’ way of making place is with the body. Our bodies and the stories they hold shape the physical spaces we inhabit. Indigenous and Latinx peoples are amongst those who have a deeper connection to the land, the water, the air; the people whose bodies become part of the Earth through land stewardship.

Our bodies are a cartography of stories, and bodies are part of the land. Devon Peña, Professor of Anthropology at University of Washington and acequia farmer, refers to this as *autotopography*- self-telling through place shaping⁴⁷ and reshaping landscapes using storytelling and knowledge. Through these new land-based identities comes a feeling of home in new lands. In addition to storing knowledge in their bodies, displaced peoples also bring physical manifestations of their homelands. Maria Guillen Valdovinos shares what her mother used to tell her:”

“Nuestra tierra y gente siempre nos han levantado” (our people and our land have always lifted us). As resilient and self-sufficient displaced peoples, we brought a bit of our sacred homeland

in our heirloom seeds. Mi mami dijo que, “Cada semilla tiene una historia, cada planta tiene vida; lo que le hacemos a los demas nos regresa mucho mas fuerte” (Each seed has a story; each plant has a life; what we do to others will return to us with greater force).

Travels of the Diaspora, 174.

While this story of Latinx farmworkers in the U.S is painful and unsettling, there is beauty in this story nonetheless, and it lies in marginalized peoples’ refusal to give up hope.

Radical resilience and place-making of Latinx farmworkers is supported by movements and philosophies of abolition ecology, ecofeminism, chicanx environmentalism, and Latinx geographies. These discourses provide revolutionary stories from within the margins of BIPOC communities maintaining their traditional foodways and protecting their embodied knowledge in the face of global capitalism. These are the traditions and principles that should be leveraged to change the current food system successfully. The following sections elevate the perspective of Latinx peoples and their radical resilience and place-making skills, and steers the narrative away from white patriarchy.

ABOLITION ECOLOGY

Abolition ecology builds on the environmental justice movement’s call to liberate the environment and abolitionists commitment to liberated ways of life through radical placemaking.⁴⁸ Abolition ecology is rooted in “pushing forward through well informed and deliberate organizing and continued theorizing against and about the continued existence of white supremacist logics that continue to produce uneven radical development within land and property relations.”⁴⁹ Abolition ecology seeks to build upon processes that explicitly focus on access to land, fresh air, and clean water etc. This philosophy sees the ways that coalition land-based politics dismantle oppressive institutions, and most importantly “rather than define communities by how they suffer, abolition ecologists call attention to the radical place-making and the land, air, and water based environments in which places are made.”⁵⁰ Abolition ecology “not

only thinks through the priorities of difference, but also whose right to land and water should shape our discussions—including our non-human relations.”⁵¹ The abolition ecology ethic provides a lens through which society can value BIPOC relations to land and non-human kin. It provides a possible framework for the food justice movement to use to reframe discussions surrounding sustainable foodways.

ECOFEMINISM AND CHICANX ENVIRONMENTALISM

Ecofeminism and Chicanx environmentalism provide an even more specific understanding of marginalized people’s resilience through the lives of women and Chicanx peoples. Ecofeminism, as a philosophical and political movement, suggests that “the domination and exploitation of women and of the environment are interconnected”⁵² as it is understood that women and nature are intrinsically connected and have a harmonious relationship with one another.⁵³ Ecofeminism is also centered on the critical analysis between dominant groups and those that are marginalized. The control of land in the current white patriarchal society is highly gendered, a parallel to society’s control of the bodies of *mujeres*,⁵⁴ and often, the unpaid / underpaid, exploited labor of *campesinas*⁵⁵ whose struggles go unrecognized, albeit their work is integral to the system and to sustaining traditional knowledge from their mothers and grandmothers. According to Angie Carter, Assistant Professor of Environmental/Energy Justice at Iowa State University, “The lack of research about women farmland owners, even as their numbers are in near parity with men, is an example of ‘conceptual imperialism; in which the standpoint of men assumes the knowledge of women.’”⁵⁶ Genuine change in the current food system requires valuing women’s work on the land,⁵⁷ and is crucial to creating a sustainable future is women’s liberation, in this case, *campesinas* liberation.⁵⁸ It is women who are leading many struggles and grassroots movements, such as Community 2 Community (C2C), and enacting paradigms of care (for more on C2C, see chapter 6).

Aligned with ecofeminism is Chicanx environmentalism. Chicanx is a term used

to describe people of Mexican descent born in the U.S. Famous Chicax leaders include Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez, both of whom are substantial contributors to the history of farmworker justice. Chicax environmentalism is necessary because Chicax populations are suffering from the effects from the global process of environmental violence.⁵⁹ While most of the agricultural labor force are foreign born, their children who are born in the US would be considered Chicax. In addition, the traditions of Chicax communities are similar to those of Mexican immigrant communities, as they both carry traditions from their Mexican roots and hold stories of their ancestors. Chicax studies are rooted in the struggles of Aztlan peoples, farmworkers, immigration/border rights activists, and Brown feminists.

Chicax environmentalism involves the “struggle for economic and environmental justice, a demand for healthful living and working conditions, increased democracy in local communities and workplaces, and the maintenance of traditional agricultural practices that link ecological and cultural survival.”⁶⁰ Like indigenous practices worldwide, both ecofeminism and Chicax environmentalism both see people connected to the non-human world in a profound way and understand that the domination of women is equal to the domination of nature.⁶¹ While their main focus is on somewhat different things, both ecofeminism and Chicax environmental dignify the connections of BIPOC people, especially women, to the environment thus offering key insights into Latinx farmworker liberation and new ways of living and working with the land

LATINX GEOGRAPHIES

Lastly, the discourse from Latinx geographies has been essential in this research. This work highlights the ways Latinidad shapes the world around us. Latinx geographies is an emerging body of work in the field of human geography. This work draws together concepts such as immigration and labor inequalities with the work on Chicax studies to offer an analysis of the political, cultural, economic, and ecological aspects of Latinx societies and struggles. These

struggles include those around environmental justice, race and immigration processes, and gender and labor structures. This “nuanced research highlights the silenced, marginalized and under-valued production of knowledge of Latinx communities that centers and prioritizes our own ways of knowing and being. Scholars such as social scientist Laura Pulido, for example, highlight the activism of both rural and urban Latinx communities for environmental justice. Notably, Latinx geographies are about more than Latinx place-making – they are about how Latinx world-making reveals other ways of world-making, world-seeing, and world-knowing.”⁶²

FARMWORKER JUSTICE IN CONVERSATION WITH NATIVE AMERICAN JUSTICE

What is not prevalent in the dialogue around farmworker justice is how it correlates with Native American justice and the efforts for land reclamation, the returning of Native land. As sustainable as alternative farming may be, it is on occupied Native land. How, then, are Native Americans included in the conversations for Latinx farmworker liberation? Have there been conversations to combine these two movements to create one solidarity movement to dismantle the current system and transition to an honorable, reciprocal food system? Carrie Freshour, Assistant Professor of Geography at the University of Washington, asks, “what is ‘traditional’? What if you’re an indigenous person in Mexico and come to farm on other indigenous lands here in the U.S.? What are the memories and practices you’re bringing?”⁶³ I would add the question: How are these memories and practices of land cultivation that people use speaking to those of different Native American tribes? Farmworker justice is not an isolated movement, it also includes the liberation of Native Americans and Black communities; all peoples deserve full environmental justice.

This chapter was an introduction of farmworker justice and a review of the current discourse surrounding farmworker justice. It provides an overview of essential concepts inviting the reader to acknowledge, and hopefully appreciate the role that Latinx farmworkers have within the food and environment justice

movement. While the current literature for farmworker justice is sparse, there are important concepts, theories, and philosophies that inform the critical dialogue and uphold the lived experiences of Latinx peoples that support the farmworker justice framework. This literature directly responds to the conceptual framework introduced in chapter 1 as themes of agroecology, ecofeminism, and traditional and indigenous knowledge all stand with the concept of "Decolonization". With this conceptual foundation laid, the following chapters will explore farmworker justice more deeply.

ENDNOTES

1. Carrasquillo, "Race and Ethnicity from the Point of View of Farm Workers," 121.
2. Perea, "The Echoes of Slavery," 133.
3. Peña and Valle, "Statement on the Climate Crisis."
4. Carrasquillo, "Race and Ethnicity from the Point of View of Farm Workers," 121.
5. Gilmore, "Forgotten Places and the Seeds of Grassroots Planning," 32.
6. Gender neutral Spanish word for "farmworker."
7. Gilmore, "Forgotten Places and the Seeds of Grassroots Planning," 31.
8. Foodprint, "Food Justice."
9. Ibid.
10. Minkoff-Zern, *The New American Farmer*, 31.
11. Ibid.
12. Walia, *Undoing Border Imperialism*, 43.
13. Israelson, "Regenerative Agriculture a Game Changer for Farmers."
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Bloom, Boehnlein and Kearsley, *Practical Permaculture*, 12.
17. Barth, "Permaculture: You've Heard of it, but what the Heck is it?"
18. Valdovinos, "Travels of the Diaspora," 176.
19. Yuan, "A Message from Indigenous Leaders: Why Regenerative Agriculture is not Enough."
20. Solis, "Del Olivio y Coraje La Tuna Nacera," 170.
21. See glossary of terms.
22. Solis, "Del Olivio y Coraje La Tuna Nacera," 64.
23. Watson and Davis, *Lo-TEK: Design by Radical Indigenism*, 18.
24. Ludden, Minkoff-Zern and Welsh, "Immigrant Farmers, Sustainable Practices," 964.
25. Minkoff-Zern, *The New American Farmer*, 7.
26. Ibid, 57.
27. Ibid, 52.
28. Guillen, "Growing Justice in the Fields," 237.
29. Interview with Adam Romero.

30. Burton, "Berry Farmers Break Free From Big Agriculture."
31. Ibid, 298.
32. Minkoff-Zern, *The New American Farmer*, 4.
33. Brent and Kerssen, "Grounding the U.S. Food Movement," 320.
34. Ibid, 292.
35. Interview with Adam Romero.
36. Brent and Kerssen, "Grounding the U.S. Food Movement," 309.
37. LaDuke, "Recovering our Land to Decolonize Food," 9.
38. Brent and Kerssen, "Grounding the U.S Food Movement," 285.
39. Brescia, *Fertile Ground*, 6.
40. Ibid.
41. Whyhunger, *The People's Agroecology Process*, 5.
42. Estes, "Bill Gates is the Biggest Private Owner of Farmland in the United States."
43. Valdovinos, "Travels of the Diaspora," 170.
44. Jacobs, "From Novel to Relational," 26.
45. Solis, "Del Olivio y Coraje La Tuna Nacera," 18.
46. Valdovinos, "Travels of the Diaspora," 177.
47. Ibid, 74.
48. Heynen, and Ybarra, "On Abolition Ecologies," 1.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid, 10.
51. Ibid, 53.
52. Peña, *Chicano Culture, Ecology, Politics*, 14.
53. Ibid.
54. Spanish word for women.
55. Spanish word for women farmworkers.
56. Carter, "Changes on the Land," 104.
57. Alkon and Guthman, *The New Food Activism*
58. Peña, *Chicano Culture, Ecology, Politics*.
59. Peña and Valle, "Statement on the Climate Crisis."
60. Kirk, "Ecofeminism and Chicano Environmental Struggles," 182.
61. Ibid, 188.

62. Ybarra, "On Becoming a Latinx Geographies Killjoy."
63. Interview with Carrie Freshour.

5. DISTRUPTION

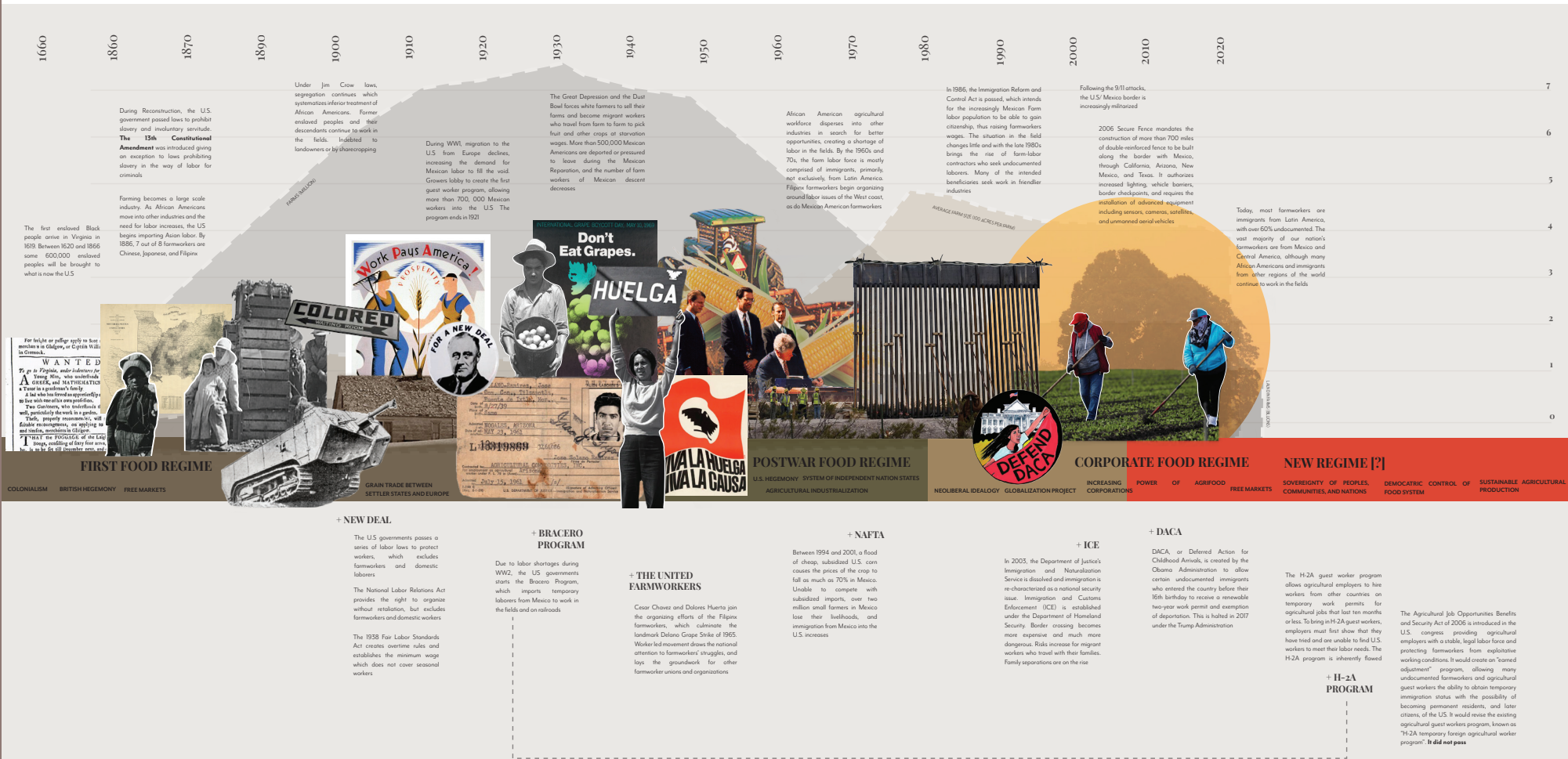


Figure 5.1 Historical timeline of farmwork and immigration in the U.S.

SETTLER COLONIALISM: FROM SLAVERY TO NOW

Ingrained in the history of farm work is a theme of disruption, which I define in this context as the vicious separation of people from culturally sacred lands, the forced migration of indigenous and people of color by colonization, and the powers endangering indigenous foodways. In addition, disruption is connected to the corrupt immigration policies that hinder the lives and dignity of Latinx farmworkers. Disruption is also in response to the disturbance of natural systems by the decisions of corporate agriculture. These decisions directly impact the health of soil, water, and air.

This chapter offers a historical analysis to understand race, class, immigration, and labor, and how they inform one another and the struggle for Latinx farmworkers to obtain land (Figure 5.1). Barriers to BIPOC land and farm ownership are preceded by how land ownership was originally obtained, through the theft of Native American lands. Throughout the Americas, pre-colonized native lands were used for agriculture, grazing, and other livelihoods. Despite indigenous practices being more intensive and effective than those of white settler farmers, native farmers and ranchers were not seen as knowledgeable agriculturalists. Their practices did not produce enough capitalist accumulation, and they were violently removed from their lands.¹ Agricultural labor in the U.S. has depended on the displacement of Indigenous people and the exploitation of people of color since the arrival of white settlers. To move forward and envision a new way, it is important we understand the systemic issues embedded in agriculture.

SLAVERY + EMANICPATION (1600s-mid 1900s)

The theme of farm work being done by displaced populations begins with the violent removal of African peoples from their homelands. The first enslaved African Americans were brought to this country in 1619, arriving in Virginia to work in the fields and as domestic laborers. Between 1620 and 1866,

approximately 600,000 enslaved peoples were brought to the U.S. The vast majority worked on plantations, which are “agricultural operation[s] on which slaves were systematically put to work to produce marketable crops such as rice, tobacco, sugar, and cotton”.² While the word “plantation” is mainly associated with the era of slavery in the U.S., it is still the primary model used in farm operations to this present day.³ Plantation owners were “in control of life and death”⁴ and the food system’s purpose was to obtain maximum profit from the slaves who worked on the plantation.

Today, industrialized agriculture still uses quasi-slavery methods to maximize profit, disregarding the humanity of Latinx and other farmworkers. During 1865-1877, the Reconstruction era, the U.S. government passed laws to prohibit slavery and involuntary servitude. In 1865, the year of emancipation, farming became a large-scale industry, but African Americans started to move into other industries, increasing agricultural labor shortages. In response, the U.S. began to import labor from Asia. By 1886, seven out of eight farmworkers were Chinese, Japanese, and Filipinx (Figure 5.2). Despite the emancipation of African Americans, white landowners continued to exploit them. The same year of emancipation, the 13th Constitutional Amendment was also introduced, making labor for criminals the exception to laws prohibiting slavery.



Figure 5.2 Asian farmworkers. (Farmworker Ministry).

Emancipation gave former slaves a false sense of hope that they would now be able to own land and run their own farms. Specifically, previously enslaved people were promised "forty acres and a mule", a policy created by Clinton B. Fisk, a senior officer in the federal Freedman's Bureau. Fisk believed that African Americans would benefit from land reform as reparations for generations of unpaid labor following the Civil War. However, land claimed during the Civil War was returned to its white owners, rather than being returned to the enslaved Black communities who had worked it. Politicians in both the north and south viewed land ownership by Black people as a threat, and the cheap labor of Black workers as economically viable, as industries relied heavily on recently emancipated slaves.⁵ "Black Codes" were developed in southern states to target recently freed slaves. This included laws that restricted mobility and prevented former slaves the right to own property or lease land.⁶ These laws were repealed in 1866. From 1881 to 1964, the segregation administered by Jim Crow laws systematized inferior treatment of African Americans. Jim Crow laws, passed by the U.S Supreme Court, orchestrated two unequal realities for the people in the American South, and created legal separation by race. These laws aimed at denying equality and freedom to African Americans.⁷ Former enslaved peoples continued to work in the fields either because of debts to landowners or by sharecropping, where white and Black farmers leased plots of land and harvested food with methods ruled by the landowner in exchange for a percentage of crops as income.⁸ However, as Dr. Monica White, a Black farmer's historian, states, the history of African American farming "is much richer than sharecropping, tenant farming, and slavery. We have legacies of innovative and cooperative agriculture, traditional food ways, family heritages and powerful stories rooted in the land".⁹

THE NEW DEAL (1930s)

The post-emancipation era was not the only time that non-white farm work was the target of unjust policies. The New Deal Era, although generally considered progressive, is notable in the timeline of farm work in the U.S., for solidified exclusionary policies that continue to this day. Leading up to the New

Deal was the first world war from 1914-1918, and the Great Depression which lasted from 1929-1933. During World War I, European migration declined, and Mexican labor was left to fill the void in agricultural work. Growers lobbied for the first guestworker program to secure labor to work their land. Although this guestworker program would come to an end in 1921, it brought over 700,000 Mexican workers to the U.S. However, due to the lack of job opportunities during the Great Depression, more than 500,000 Mexican workers were then deported.¹⁰

Following the Depression, at the early stages of the second world war, the U.S. prioritized economic development. Thus, President Franklin D. Roosevelt created a safety net aimed to prevent white Americans from falling into poverty. This was known as the New Deal.¹¹ In an effort to restore prosperity to Americans, President Roosevelt enacted legislation and a series of programs, public work projects, and regulations.

While the New Deal legislation was meant to protect workers, there were two agreements that excluded both agricultural and domestic workers. The 1935 National Labor Relations Act, which provided the right to organize without retaliation, and the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act, which created overtime rules and established minimum wages, but did not cover seasonal workers. Omitting these specific types of workers was an example of overt racism. Among the New Deal era regulations, the most blatantly exclusionary is Section 152(3) of the National Labor Relations Act, a federal law whose validity has never been questioned. This act does not consider agricultural or domestic workers, thus stripping them of labor protections.¹² Both the National Labor Relations Act and the Fair Labor Standards Act had a significant impact on African Americans, but today as the demographics of the agricultural labor force has changed to predominantly Mexican workers, these two acts continue to degrade Latinx workers, of whom make up 83% of the agricultural workforce.¹³ In the next section, I explain to the reader a famous policy that is significant to the growth of a predominantly Latinx labor force in the agricultural sector.

WORLD WAR II AND THE BRACERO PROGRAM (1940s-1960s)

During WWII, the Bracero Program was created in 1942 to address yet another shortage of labor in the U.S., and poverty in Mexico. This program solidified an agricultural workforce from Mexico, it imported temporary laborers from Mexico to work in the fields or on railroads (Figure 5.3). Until the time of its termination in 1964, more than two million Mexican workers came to the U.S. under this program. Bracero workers were not allowed to change jobs if they were abused or found their job expectations unreasonable. Many growers would trick Braceros into free labor by allowing the workers to stay longer, then calling deportation services to avoid paying the workers at the end of the season.¹⁴ Bracero workers were regularly denied their full pay. Braceros helped shape agriculture in the U.S. for two decades, yet it set a precedent that foreign-born and racialized Mexicans did not need to be paid or treated as well as U.S. citizens.¹⁵

The Bracero Program provided labor incentives for growers that were directly linked to making U.S. farms competitive in the world market. The farms that benefited from bonded labor were not small-scale family farms, but rather large-scale corporations that exported crops for a world market.¹⁶ Anti-Mexican rhetoric grew alongside the demand for Mexican labor. This tension was expressed in the fabric of rural areas. In response to this anti-Mexican rhetoric, the first federal program to organize deportation of Mexicans, racistly called Operation Wetback was launched in 1954. This program targeted and deported 1.3 million Mexican immigrants. Most deportees were temporary guest workers, but they also included U.S. citizens of Mexican descent. This program was also the first to militarize the U.S./Mexican border.¹⁷

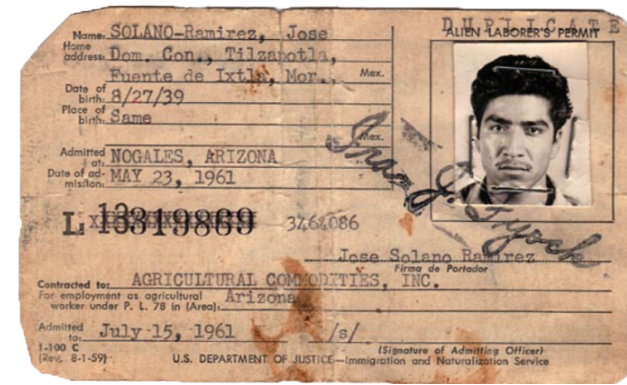


Figure 5.3 Bracero Program temporary work visa. (Farmworker Ministry)

CIVIL RIGHTS (1960s-1970s)

The liberatory movements during the 1960s and 1970s are also important to the history of farm work in the U.S. While this chapter focuses on the disruptive policies that affect farm work today, there were also civil rights leaders fighting for better working conditions and for the rights to form unions, leading the way for current farmworker activists. In search of better opportunities, the African American agricultural force dispersed to other industries, and by the 1960s and 70s, most farm labor consisted of immigrants, primarily from Latin America. Also, around this time, Filipinx farmworkers began organizing around labor issues on the West Coast, as did Mexican American Farmworkers. Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta joined the organizing of farmworkers, which culminated in the infamous Delano Strike of 1965. This organizing effort created the well-known organization, the United Farm Workers of America. The United Farm Workers based their organizing strategy on coalition building to put pressure on farm owners to negotiate contracts that protected farmworkers who suffered from exploitative conditions.¹⁸ Such worker-led movements drew national attention to farmworker struggles and laid the groundwork for other

farmworker unions and organizations. While it is crucial to recognize the historic work of Larry Itliong, Dolores Huerta, and Cesar Chavez (Figure 5.4) and their historic fights for the rights of farmworkers, we must remember that there were other folks who were dedicated to this effort who didn't get the spotlight but who were motivated around environmental questions and racial issues.



Figure 5.4 Collage of the Civil Rights Organizers.

NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT (1990s)

Despite the successful organizing efforts of the United Farmworkers movement, one trade agreement would cause a substantial amount of disruption. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was a significant moment in U.S. history that is very influential to agricultural farm work practices today. This agreement between Canada, the U.S., and Mexico created a trilateral trade that forced many indigenous people and campesinx from Mexico and Central America to travel north for survival¹⁹ (Figure 5.5). Between 1994 and 2001, a flood of cheap, subsidized U.S. corn caused the prices of the crop to fall as much as 70% in Mexico. Mexico was forced to eliminate subsidies for corn, while corn produced in the U.S. remained subsidized. This made U.S. corn cheaper to buy inside Mexico than Mexican corn.

This trade agreement caused displacement and dispossession. It destroyed food sovereignty for indigenous and peasant peoples. As farmers around the world were faced with agribusiness and industrial farming taking their small farms, generations of land practices were, and continue to be ruined.²⁰ By 2000, many indigenous peasant farmers who were sustaining themselves on their own agricultural cultivation were being undersold by subsidized U.S. crops, specifically corn, forcing these farmers to sell their own labor to survive.²¹ Over 15 million Mexicans were forced into poverty, and 1.5 million Mexican farmers²² who lost their farms had to undertake a risky migration to the U.S. in search of waged work; often finding themselves working for the very corporations that displaced them from their lands. Some of these farmers' stories are shared in Figures 5.7-10. Immigration from NAFTA increased. At the same time Operation Gatekeeper was created and millions of dollars were spent to increase border patrols and surveillance. The American Civil Liberties Union estimates that since the year NAFTA was signed, 5,600 migrants have died while crossing the border.²³ Unfortunately, "this ongoing process of dispossession and dislocation keeps capitalism supplied with a vast and underpaid reserve army of labor."²⁴



Figure 5.5 NAFTA being signed.

STORIES OF NAFTA:



Figure 5.6 Floriano and Efejinia Garcia Delfin grow four types of native corn on a hectare of community-owned farmland in a remote region of eastern Oaxaca called “la Chinantla.” The Delfins’ seeds were passed down through generations. (David Bacon)



Figure 5.7 Maria Martinez working on her father’s farm in the highlands of Mexico. Martinez’s farm was among many that have taken a hit by the agricultural trade relationship between Mexico and the U.S. (Johanna Hucka)

STORIES OF NAFTA:



Figure 5.8 Zocarias Salazar, an indigenous farmworker from Oaxaca, plows corn behind oxen. Because of NAFTA it is almost impossible to grow and sell corn in Mexico any longer. It is now only for the sustenance of his family. (David Bacon)



Figure 5.9 Farmers sell produce on Juxtlahuaca's market day. A large percentage of migrants have left to work in the U.S. Despite the enormous difficulties, some people try to stay on the land and farm. (David Bacon)

THE CRIMINALIZATION OF IMMIGRATION + H-2A (2000-Present)

Presently, the H-2A visa program, a renewed Bracero Program, has become another avenue to import foreign workers (Figure 5.10). It is a temporary guest worker program that allows agricultural employers to hire workers from other countries on temporary work permits for agricultural jobs that last ten months or less.²⁵ This usually happens when there is a shortage of workers in the U.S. (an underlying message: white, US born citizens will not do this work). Typically, temporary guest workers are employed because foreign workers are economically desperate, and therefore more willing to take on undesirable work.

Furthermore, temporary workers lack full rights to their working and living conditions, and to the food they have (or don't have) access to. There are no anti-discrimination laws that apply to H-2A employers and they are exempt from paying social security and unemployment taxes on guestworker wages.²⁶ H-2A workers arrive in the U.S. to find a harsh reality such as social and geographic isolation, lower than advertised wages, less work than promised, dirty and dilapidated housing, and dangerous working conditions.²⁷ Guestworkers must obey employer instructions, and no matter the circumstances, they are not allowed to form unions, they must work for only one employer, and they are often threatened with termination and/or deportation if they defend themselves. Faced with the threat of deportation, farmworkers have no agency over their lives.

As a policy, H-2A is, "a perfect example of laws and regulations that have been put together to exploit a very specific group of workers."²⁸ It helps maintain a vulnerable foreign labor force comprised predominantly of Latinx immigrants, which allows employers to squeeze out maximum productivity at minimal labor cost. An example of the horrors supported by the H-2A program is with the story of Honesto Silva Ibarra. He was an H-2A worker at Sarbanand Farms in Washington State. He was picking blueberries during wildfire season in

exploitative work conditions. He told his supervisor he wasn't feeling well and was told that "unless he was on his deathbed, he had to keep working." He eventually collapsed and passed away. The worst that happened to the farm was it was fined.²⁹ In response, community activists took to the streets to fight for justice on behalf of Ibarra (Figures 5.11-12). Unfortunately, this farm continues to use the H2A program today. The conditions faced by H-2A workers are hauntingly similar to that of enslaved African Americans. Farmworkers are forced from their homelands, only to be faced with terrible work conditions here in the U.S. This has "created a system that is the modern-day version of slavery. The food system has come full circle".³⁰



Figure 5.10 Farmworker holds his H-2A visa.
(Farmworker Justice)



Figure 5.11 Protest for Honesto Silva Ibarra. (Cecilia Deleon)



Figure 5.12 Protest against H-2A. (Brenda Bentley)

While agricultural labor continues to depend on a displaced Latinx labor force, the militarization of the U.S./ Mexican border and the creation of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) penalizes the very people that support and nurture our country with food. Following the 9/11 attacks, the U.S. border has become increasingly militarized. In 2002, immigration was re-established as a national security issue and ICE was created under the Department of Homeland Security.³¹ With most farmworkers being immigrants from Latin America, and over 60% being undocumented, agencies such as ICE threaten the lives of farmworkers and puts them in a constant state of precariousness.

According to Rosalinda Guillen, the United States' immigration system is fed by displaced peoples. Once landowners in Mexico, agricultural workers who were forced off their land from trade agreements such as NAFTA. They now face the possibility of sitting in detention centers as immigration is criminalized.³² As noted with the H-2A program, the citizenship status of undocumented farmworkers is often met with threats of deportation by white farm owners to prevent workers from speaking up against cruel working conditions and wage thefts, or collectively unionizing against corporate control. Immigration policies continue to be blatant attacks on farmworkers as many do not have documentation and are trapped in the violent grip of ICE. The fields are constantly terrorized by ICE raids, and outside of the agricultural fields, farmworkers continue to face harassment through racial profiling.³³ This leads me to my final points on migration and farm work, and to the concept I call displaced ecologies (Figure 5.13), which is central to this work. Indigenous people have been mobile for centuries as they move with the seasons, or with the water. Migration in general is not new, nor is it bad. However, what makes migration harmful is forced removal from one's homelands that is exacerbated by trade agreements and climate change. Migration is dangerous because of imperialist borders, and militarized organizations like ICE. Through historical analysis, I have learned of the effects of NAFTA, and that many farmworkers here are displaced farmers from Mexico. These farmers hold a lot of traditional

knowledge about tending to the land and sustainably harvesting food and that does not disappear because of a border. Instead, this knowledge comes with them. This embodied traditional knowledge that is brought with migrants from Mexico is what I call “displaced ecologies.” This process of displacement and dispossession is a continuous cycle in the agrarian industry that farmworkers cannot escape. I will describe this concept further and will manifest itself in the following chapters.



Figure 5.13 Displaced Ecologies.

ENDNOTES

1. Minkoff-Zern, *The New American Farmer*, 32.
2. Carrasquillo, "Race and Ethnicity from the Point of View of Farm Workers," 125.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, 126.
5. Madrigal, "We are Human!" 258.
6. Minkoff-Zern, *The New American Farmer*, 33.
7. Tischauser, Jim Crow laws.
8. Minkoff-Zern, *The New American Farmer*, 34.
9. Bowens, *The Color of Food*, 15.
10. National Farm Ministry, "Immigration and Farmworker Policy in the U.S."
11. Carrasquillo, "Race and Ethnicity from the Point of View of Farm Workers in the Food System," 127.
12. National Relations Board, "National Relations Act."
13. Perea, "The Echoes of Slavery," 133.
14. Minkoff-Zern, *The New American Farmer*, 41.
15. *Ibid.*
16. Madrigal, "We are Human!" 259.
17. Minkoff-Zern, *The New American Farmer*, 42.
18. Carrasquillo, "Race and Ethnicity from the Point of View of Farm Workers," 128.
19. Valdovinos, "Travels of the Diaspora."
20. Walia, *Dismantling Imagined, Militarized, and Colonial Borders*.
21. Madrigal, "We are Human!" 262.
22. Walia, *Undoing Border Imperialism*, 43.
23. *Ibid.*
24. Brent and Kerssen, "Grounding the U.S. Food Movement," 309.
25. Farmworker Justice, "No Way to Treat a Guest."
26. *Ibid.*
27. Guillen, *No Way to Treat a Guest*.
28. Bacon, *No Way to Treat a Guest*.
29. C2C, "Honesto Silva Ibarra Presente."

30. Carrasquillo, "Race and Ethnicity from the Point of View of Farm Workers," 130.
31. National Farm Ministry, "Immigration and Farmworker Policy in the U.S."
32. Guillen, No Way to Treat a Guest.
33. Ibid.

6. RESPONSE + REPAIR + RECOVERY

"Another world is not only possible; she is on her way"

Arundhati Roy, C2C

The previous chapter focused on the disruptive history of farm work and immigration in the U.S. and the past and present policies that support the mistreatment of Latinx farmworkers. This chapter dives deeper still into farmworker justice. It is an exploration of how farmworkers, activists, and allies respond to unjust policies and inhumane exploitation of farmworkers by repairing the damage done to the land and people, recovering ancestral knowledge of harvesting food, and recovering as a community to empower one another towards full liberation. This chapter highlights the work already being done within the margins of Western Washington by agents of change, such as Community 2 Community (C2C), Familias Unidas por la Justicia, Tierra y Libertad, and Viva Farms.

In addition, as discussed in chapter 2, I also reached out to Latinx farmers from Viva Farms. These conversations also inform the content of this chapter. From the farmworkers' perspectives, I gained insight into ways of using organic methods of food harvesting in response to previous, exploitative farm work. From this analysis, I identified four overarching themes that have helped me approach the topics of response, repair, and recovery. Within those broader themes additional specific themes were developed that include: food sovereignty, ownership over land, collective and cooperative approaches, and traditional and intergenerational wisdom through the lens of grassroots organizing and placemaking. The section below explores these themes in more detail.

Before exploring stories of resistance, it is important to exemplify what the organizations listed above are in opposition to. The following graphics (Figures 6.1-3) are organized by the season, starting with the beginning of the farming season. These graphics represent the industrialized practices that exploit land, water, and people.

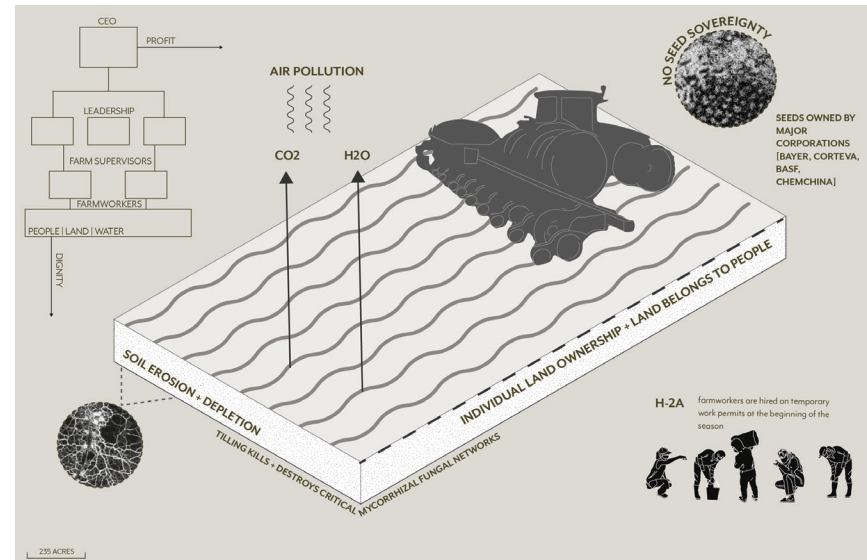


Figure 6.1 Beginning of the farming season.

Modern agriculture adds to the current environmental crisis. The impacts of H-2a and the industrialized model of agriculture are detrimental to the lives of farmworkers, as well as *Pachamama*. It is a model that people at the top of the hierarchical business structure use to base their decisions solely on profit, leaving those at the bottom (people, land, and water) to suffer. At the beginning of the season, farmers prepare for harvest by a highly mechanized practice: tilling. Tilling destroys the soil and kills critical mycorrhizal fungal networks while causing air pollution. The soil begins to erode and lose its productivity because it becomes depleted of its nutrient reserves.¹

In addition, seeds that hold cultural value are currently being consolidated by four major corporations, Bayer, Corteva, NASF, and Chemchina patent and control the use of seeds, making it harder and harder for small scale farmers to have any seed sovereignty. Cathleen McClusky of Organic Seed Alliance reminds us that "whoever controls the seeds, controls the people."²

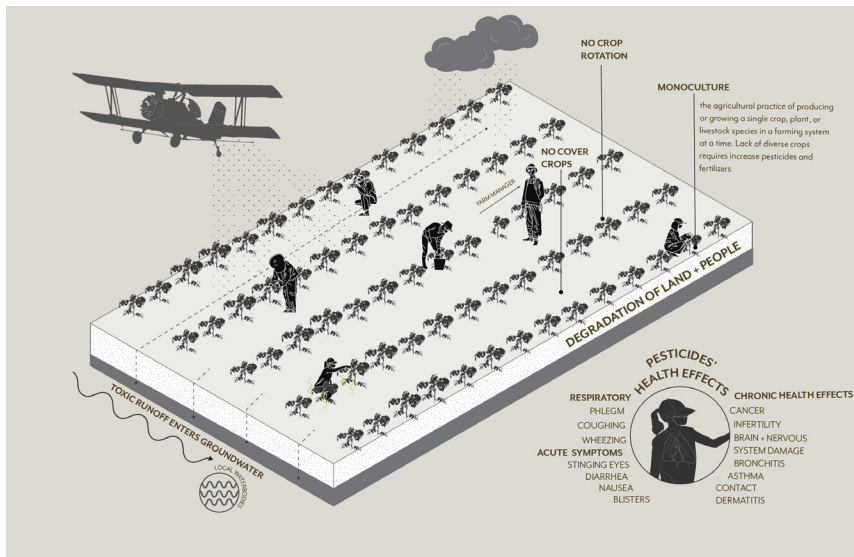


Figure 6.2 Harvest.

Throughout the growing season, the land and people continue to be degraded. Currently, large, corporate farms use monocultures, the agricultural practice of producing or growing a single crop, plant, or livestock species, variety, or breed in a field or farming system at a time.¹With its lack of diversity, it is linked to an unstable agroecosystem and is susceptible to pest outbreaks, increasing the need and use of toxic pesticides and fertilizers.² Toxic pesticides run into the water table and eventually make its way to the groundwater. With no regard to the humans in the fields, crop dusters often drop pesticides right next to the workers.

The detrimental health effects of industrial farming is due to the toxic use of pesticides in addition to air pollution and heat exposure. The heavy use of pesticides can lead to acute symptoms such as the stinging of eyes, diarrhea, nausea, and blisters or more seriously contact dermatitis, cancer, infertility, and brain and nervous system damage. In addition, farmworkers are exposed to air pollution, including carbon monoxide and nitrogen oxide, from various farming activities such as tractor driving. The effects of air pollution on farmworkers includes respiratory problems like asthma, bronchitis, lung cancer, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.³ Lastly, because of their physical exertion, outdoor work and sometimes limited water intake,⁴ farmworkers feel the impacts of prolonged heat exposure with heat related illness (HRI).⁵ Examples of HRI range from heat rash to heat stroke, which can be fatal. From 2005 to 2014, of the heat related deaths in the U.S, 20% occurred on a farm.⁶ Rising temperatures due to climate change are increasing the risk of HRI experienced by farmworkers.

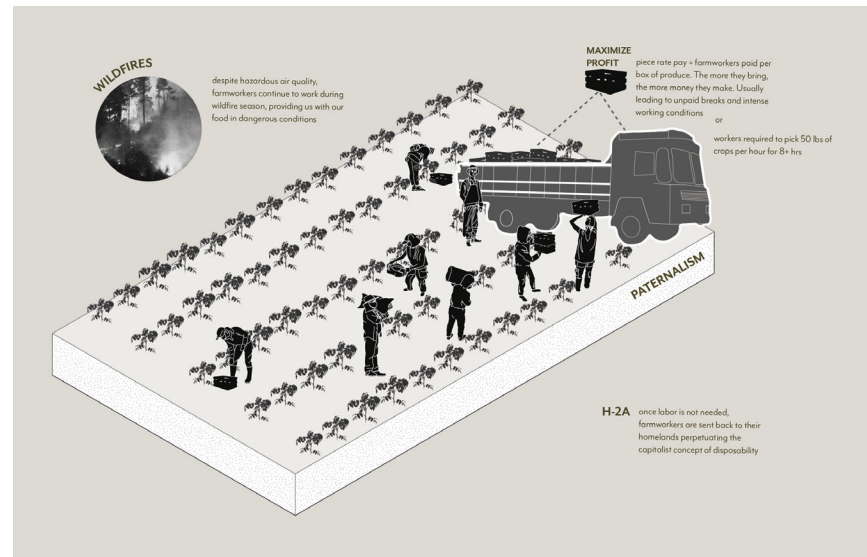


Figure 6.3 Production.

Lastly, the production of food is met with paternalism. Where the main goal is to maximize profit with things like piece rate pays, where the amount of money a farmworker makes for the day is dependent on how much produce they produce per hour, or workers are required to pick 50 lbs of crops per hour for 8+ hours. According to Ramon Torres, he would show up to work at 4:30am, work at least 8 to 10 hours in the mud and rain, and wait for supervisors to announce a break, only for the end of the day to approach and for them to realize they never actually had a break. As wildfires run rampant in the West during wildfire season and we are faced with unhealthy air conditions, farmworkers are still required to produce as much food as possible, thus providing our food in dangerous conditions. This also marks the end to the H-2A season, and with the capitalist concept that they are disposable, workers are “returned” to Mexico and Central America.

GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING

First, it is important to expound upon placemaking and grassroots organizing. Farmworkers are familiar with cooperatives and forming collectives, and they developed traditions of revolving credit and mutual aid that are vital to farmworker liberation.¹ These organizing strategies allow us to shift our perspectives beyond the limited parameters of regions, nations, and borders. For example, Triqui and Mixteco speaking migrants from Oaxaca and Guerrero are building social and political networks that span North America into Southern Mexico.²

This chapter explores the current activism that has been integral to the radical shift in agriculture in Western Washington. According to qualitative social scientist, Laura Pulido, activism is a particular way of placemaking. As we have learned from the United Farmworkers in chapter 5, and from what is going to be discussed in this chapter with the story of Familias Unidas por la Justicia, many Latinx farmworkers are activists. These activists are part of a lineage of freedom fighters. “For some, the Mexican Revolution never ended, but is still fought by peaceful farmworkers with berries instead of guns.”³ When accompanied by allies in solidarity with their struggle, Latinx farmworkers can organize and win. To peacefully change an exploitative system, it is necessary to have the resources and support of a community.⁴ This project has been heavily inspired by the work of grassroots organizers who tirelessly fight for a just transition to farmworker liberation. There is power in collective, bottom-up organizing. As American author and women’s rights activist, Adrienne Maree Brown says, “what we practice at the small scale sets the patterns for the whole system”.⁵

PLACEMAKING

Migrant workers are archival bodies⁶ that hold stories of resilience. The way displaced ecologies are adapted to new climates and push past often violent barriers is essential to understanding the power of resistance. People bring place-making with them, they even bring their seeds and their root stock. While most traditional knowledge is place-based, that does not mean indigenous people who are displaced and forced to migrate are going to stop making place through traditions of environmental knowledge.⁷ In this context place is not just the built environment, but, according to Ruth Wilson Gilmore, place is also freedom, and Latinx indigenous farmworkers deserve that place. Place is also the body and the body is land. Place therefore also includes the embodied knowledge that indigenous women hold that is essential to the preservation of traditional ecological knowledge.

From a diasporic perspective, land, and the memories of one’s homeland, often manifest themselves in the knowledge of mothers and grandmothers and this is a vital part of indigenous placemaking.⁸ As indigenous people and women, *saberes*⁹ are the most vulnerable to impacts from climate change, we must protect their bodies before their knowledge and their memories are lost. In this instance, remembering is then another form of making place as people reshape spaces and meaning by inscribing memories on particular sites of their natural and cultural landscapes.¹⁰ Inscribing memories involves “remembering” which is defined by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, as a process within indigenous and decolonizing methodologies that “relates not so much to an idealized remembering of a golden past but more specifically to the remembering of a painful past, remembering in terms of connecting bodies with place and experience, and importantly, people’s responses to that pain”.¹¹ Despite being a predominantly landless people, Latinx farmworkers, among other diaspora, maintain connections to the land, to *Pachamama*,¹² from stewardship and preserving the memories they bring from their homelands. These connections to land provide opportunities to heal from colonial traumas.

Ultimately, grassroots organizing and placemaking are not only ways of survival, but also ways of establishing a new home and creating a new way of life. This both draws on memories of home and is a reimagination of the future, thus creating a hybrid version of the places they remember, and the realities of this new life.¹³ The following section will take a closer look at grassroots organizing and placemaking by discussing the tireless efforts of C2C.

SEEKING FARMWORKER JUSTICE WITH COMMUNITY 2 COMMUNITY



Community to Community

Figure 6.4 C2C's logo.

"We strive to reclaim our humanity by redefining power in order to end settler colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy in their external and internalized forms"

C2C

C2C (Community 2 Community) is a grassroots, women-led organization located in Bellingham, Washington that addresses problems related to racism, immigration, capitalism, and patriarchy. The organization develops projects that are led by marginalized groups to restore food and land justice and promote community relationships and self-reliance. Their work is informed by an ecofeminist lens, which provides a comprehensive framework to address intersecting oppressions with the food system.¹⁴ Their mission is to work in solidarity with those who strive towards human rights for all races and genders, and empower under-represented people to have an equal voice in decision making processes.¹⁵ They are concerned with farmworkers facing structural barriers to owning land and have taken inspiration from the organizing efforts of Cesar Chavez, and the values and principles of the World Social Forum

developed in Porto Alegre, Brazil. For example, they are working on building capital for indigenous farmworkers in Western Washington so they may buy land (100 acres) to live and grow food.

C2C has three major programs: Participatory Democracy, Food Justice, and Movement Building. These programs inform each other in an intersecting, reciprocal process. Participatory Democracy is defined by C2C as "the movement to create opportunities for all members of a society to make meaningful contributions to decision-making and which seeks to broaden the range of people who have access to such opportunities."¹⁶ Under this program, C2C focuses on civic engagement and training newly registered Latinx and immigrant voters on effective ways to participate in our democratic system. This program also leads Farmworker Tribunals, which provides an opportunity for Washington state farmworkers to speak with elected officials about policy changes and share their experiences in the fields. In addition, the Participatory Democracy program created the Dignity Campaign, which is a network of organizations and individuals who believe in the need for an immigration reform bill on human and labor rights. The Dignity Campaign proposes the decriminalization of immigration status and an end to temporary and guest worker programs.

Next, the Food Justice program's main goal is food sovereignty which is, "the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems".¹⁷ As of currently, farmworkers do not have access to the food they grow, and often suffer from malnutrition and diabetes. The organization uses food sovereignty as a lens for farmworker rights and transforming the food system. In their work for farmworker rights, as will be discussed in the next section, C2C supported the local campesinx union, Familias Unidas por la Justicia, a farmworker union, in their battle against Sakuma Brothers Farm. A battle that was won in 2016. In an effort to transform the food system, C2C is involved in a litany of movements and organizations such as the US Food Sovereignty Alliance, an alliance that works to rebuild

local food economies, and the Whatcom Food Systems Committee, which is committed to creating a healthy, and just sustainable food system; just to name a few. C2C aims to transform the food system by supporting the struggles of small-scale organic farmers who are up against an increasingly industrialized system. In continuation, to obtain food sovereignty, C2C encourages the use of agroecology, which is defined by C2C as the “the science behind sustainable agriculture, from the ground up. It encourages democratic, decentralized decision-making by farmers and incorporates practical, low cost and ecology-based technologies for productive farming.”¹⁸ To increase the knowledge of agroecology, C2C takes agroecology into action with a hands-on, community based, teaching garden in Bellingham, WA, where local farmworkers can learn and practice agro-ecological farming methods. This is important to the organization because they believe that in the face of today’s climate, agro-ecological farming methods strengthen economic and ecological resilience. These methods offer paths forward for growing food to feed us all.¹⁹

Lastly, Movement Building is a program where C2C acts as an active participant with other self-determined people’s movements, as they believe the revolution lies in community. To build movements, C2C fights alongside all farmworkers, but the organization is mostly focused on the precariousness of immigrant and undocumented farmworkers.²⁰ For example, on their website you can see slogans like “ICE watches us, we watch ICE”. C2C organizes, leads and participates in strikes and protests in solidarity with farmworkers who demand better working and living conditions as well as marches for the dignity of farmworkers. For C2C, it is important to listen “to those voices that are too often silenced. We need to hear from people who shoulder more of the burdens of our food system while reaping fewer of its benefits. Their personal stories, experiences, ideas, and insights tell us of an inter-woven story about the root causes of injustice in our food system.”²¹

FROM EXPLOITATION TO EMPOWERMENT: FAMILIAS UNIDAS POR LA JUSTICIA



Figure 6.5 Familias Unidas por la Justicia logo.

The empowering story of Familias Unidas por la Justicia is a salient example of farmworker’s repair, response, and recovery from exploitative farming practices. C2C supported Familias Unidas por la Justicia (FUJ), an independent farmworker union led by Ramon Torres and Edgar Franks that formed in response to problematic treatment of workers at Sakuma Brothers Farms (Sakuma Bros.). C2C fought alongside the union to negotiate contracts and provide administrative support. FUJ represents over 500 Triqui, Mixteco, and Spanish speaking workers in Washington state.

Located in the Skagit Valley of Washington, Sakuma Bros. is the largest berry farm in the state of Washington. It has been accused of a variety of workers’ rights violations including racist abuse from supervisors and wage theft. They hire about 450 workers every year to pick strawberries and blueberries from June to October. In 2013, when Federico Lopez, an employee at the time, asked for a raise and was fired immediately, 248 out of 278 workers went on strike. Familias Unidas Por La Justicia organized and led the worker strike. While the workers were on strike, Sakuma Bros. had the audacity to try to hire H-2A workers, but was rightfully denied, leaving them to rehire the workers on strike. After nearly four years of fighting with the Sakuma Bros., Familias Unidas Por La

Justicia finally reached an agreement that guarantees a \$15 hourly wage, sets up a process to calculate a fair piece-rate wage for berry pickers, establishes a grievance process, and protects against arbitrary termination, amongst other protections of basic worker rights.²²

COLLECTIVE SENSE OF BELONGING: TIERRA Y LIBERTAD

“Immigrants can organize and win”

Edgar Franks, Tierra y Libertad



Figure 6.6 Tierra y Libertad logo. Inspired by the Zapatista movement.

While the success of Familias Unidas por la Justicia’s negotiations is something to celebrate, Ramon Torres, one of the leaders of the farmworker union, was ultimately terminated. However, as part of the efforts of FUJ, Ramon Torres, Pedro Torres, Modesto Hernandez, and Tomas Roman²³ (Figure 6.7) formed a farmworker cooperative (co-op) called Tierra y Libertad, where members own and live on the land they farm. C2C supported this transition from farmworkers to farmers by training the workers on how to form a farm cooperative using a culturally relevant curriculum. While the four worker-owners tend to the land and ultimately make all the decisions, C2C offers administrative work, and marketing.²⁴

The farmworkers’ co-op was founded in 2013, and it demonstrates the power of collectives and mutual aid. As a direct opposition to the low wages, unpaid breaks, and exposure to pesticides that Torres and his fellow workers endured, this new co-op seeks to continue meeting consumer demand for berries, but under non-exploitative conditions and for fair pay. Located in Everson, WA, the 65-acre land co-op grows raspberries and blueberries, with plans to grow corn to make tortillas and teach the agricultural practices of Oaxaca. The workers take breaks when they need to, and when another heat wave or wildfire ensues, they will have the option to choose as a collective whether to work that day. Members own and live on the land that they farm because, for Torres, owning and operating the land is the only way to ensure a better life for themselves. For Torres and the other founders, simply pushing for better pay and working conditions was not enough. They wanted more control over the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers that were damaging their health, and for their voices to be heard in an era driven by racism, marginalization and climate change. In addition, the farmers believe that farming organic is traditional, and a practice passed down through generations.²⁵ By working with C2C and forming partnerships with local Coast Salish Tribes, their 10 year vision is for the co-op to expand to 100 acres that include living areas, community spaces, and places to practice their native art.



Figure 6.7 Modesto Hernandez (left) and Ramon Torres (right). Source: Matt Curtis

Central to Tierra y Libertad's collective goal is to develop a model that showcases how to grow food without pesticides and how to live and work in reciprocity with the land. Figure 6.8 compares the business models of Sakuma Bros. and Tierra y Libertad. On the left is the conventional business structure of corporate agriculture. At the top of the hierarchy sits CEO, Danny Weeden. At the bottom lies the farmworkers. In contrast, Tierra y Libertad's model is cyclical and composed of worker owners who are operating within a solidarity economy. This is an economy where decisions are made together through participatory practices. These practices include financial decisions, maintaining the commons, and developing accountability methods that build and repair relationships. Its economic development prioritizes people and the Earth over profit. This means that skills are relearned to listen to the logic, rhythm, reasoning, and methods that the Earth communicates. This is an economy where we can all be healthy and happy. This would look different depending on each place because this approach responds to the unique characteristics

of a given place and community.²⁶ As this section discussed activism and the important formation of a cooperative, the next section describes an example of farmworker and ally responses to industrial agriculture through a farm incubator program.

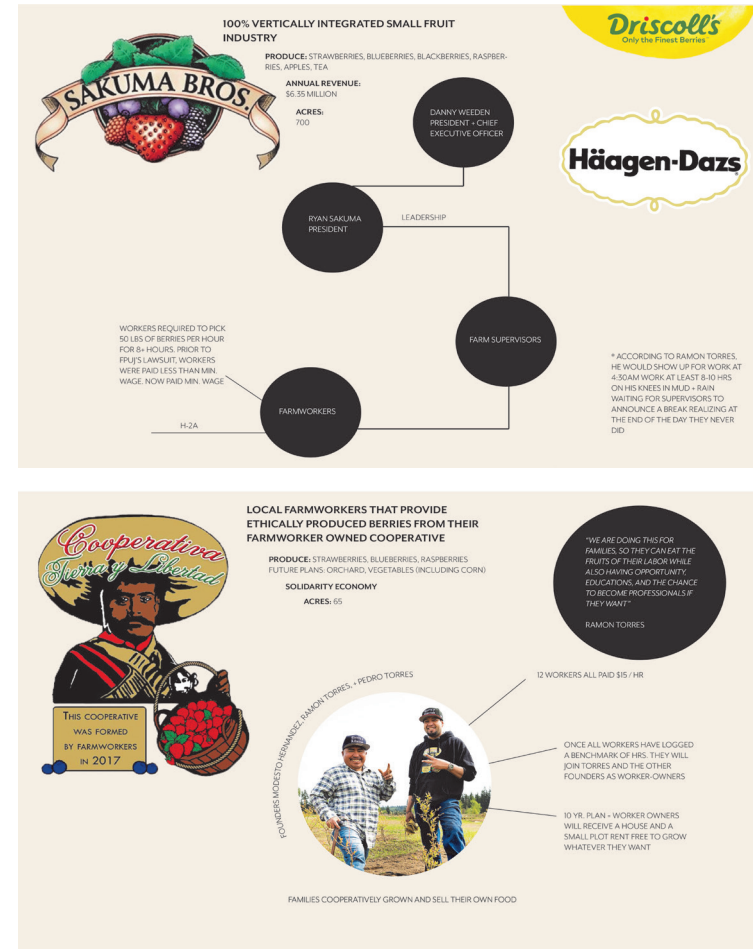


Figure 6.8 Comparing Business Models of Sakuma Bros. and Tierra y Libertad.

LAND ACCESS: VIVA FARMS



Figure 6.9 Viva Farms logo.

In addition to farm co-ops, there is a rise in Latinx owned farms nationwide.²⁷ This section looks at the stories of Latinx farmers who were able to obtain land through a farm incubator program known as Viva Farms. The mission of this program is to empower aspiring farmers who currently have limited resources. Viva Farms provides bilingual training in holistic organic farming practices, as well as access to land, infrastructure, equipment, marketing, and capital to create a resilient and just local food system. The farms currently operate on 119 acres in two locations, Skagit Valley and King County, WA. Currently, they are incubating 29 farm businesses, seven of which are Latinx owned. To ground myself in a “site” and to form relationships with Latinx farmers, I partnered with Viva Farms in the Skagit Valley.

The Skagit Valley is located in Skagit County which is named after the Skagit River, whose name derives from the Native Skagit tribe. It is the richest agricultural area in the Western Hemisphere, with some of the best soil in the world.²⁸ The economy is largely impacted by agricultural production, producing 300 million dollars annually in over 90 food crops, and bringing in thousands of migrant workers to work in large-scale berry, tulip, apple, and dairy farms. The number of farms in Skagit County has decreased 14% from 2006 to 2017, and it is designated the fifth most threatened agricultural region in the nation.²⁹ Figure 6.10 maps the geography of the Skagit Valley, illustrating the crops that are grown there. Each crop is ranked by color from yellow to green according to labor intensity; the need for manual labor is ranked high, dark yellow, whereas the use of the machines that could replace people is low, dark green.

Through this mapping, I am making the assumption that more labor intensive farms, with crops like berries and vegetables that require hands-on labor, have a higher possibility of exploitation. Viva Farms and Sakuma Bros. are also located on this map, and as it happens, Sakuma Bros. is Viva Farm’s neighbor. While one farm perpetuates toxic agriculture and is being confronted with lawsuits and strikes, the other is supporting the resistance and is assisting the revolution in Latinx owned farms. These tensions are creating two realities in the valley.

According to 2017 data from the Census of Agriculture, Skagit County is losing medium-sized farms and seeing a growth in small, organic farms as well as mega farms of over 2,000 acres. The middle is emptying out. This could be attributed to rising land costs and an increase in irrigated land. As temperatures rise, farmers are making sure they are getting enough water on their land but this is expensive.³⁰ Another reason is aging farmers. We are facing an interesting time in agriculture, where in the next 20 years, all of Washington State farmers are expected to retire, and in the U.S. nearly half of all farm operators reach retirement age.³¹ With rising land costs and decreasing number of farmers, farm incubator programs such as Viva Farms that help farmers navigate the barriers to owning a farm, are more important than ever. Figure 6.11 is a close-up illustration of the mosaic of crops and livestock that make up the Skagit Valley. It also indicates the location of the Latinx farmers from Viva Farms. In addition, this map illustrates the toxins that run through the Skagit River. From brief research of each toxin, I concluded that much of the toxicity in the river is from agricultural runoff. As noted on the map, each toxin falls into categories, and while some are ranked by their danger levels, the river is not a superfund site. However, I have concluded that these toxins affect the local groundwater as more than 35 different pesticides have been detected in Skagit County surface water, and fifteen have been detected in stream sediments, which is as much as six times the amount considered toxic to stream life.³² This reminds us that organic, sustainable farming does not just protect the soil, water, and laborers, it protects the lives in local, surrounding agricultural communities.

The importance of Viva Farms' philosophy lies in its ability to assist limited resource farmers with access to land, as this is the biggest barrier to farmworker autonomy. According to author and Director of Food Studies at Syracuse University, Laura Anne Minkoff-Zern, "land access is the next big step for a big transition...if it's going to happen, it has to be a policy change."³³ In addition to policy changes, land sovereignty is necessary to implement sustainable ways of stewardship. Access to land and a place to ground displaced and traditional ecologies is vital. The organic methods that the Latinx farmers at Viva use are essential and their farm ownership is one step closer to creating a just agricultural system. In the next section, I discuss the growing philosophies of some of the Latinx farmers.

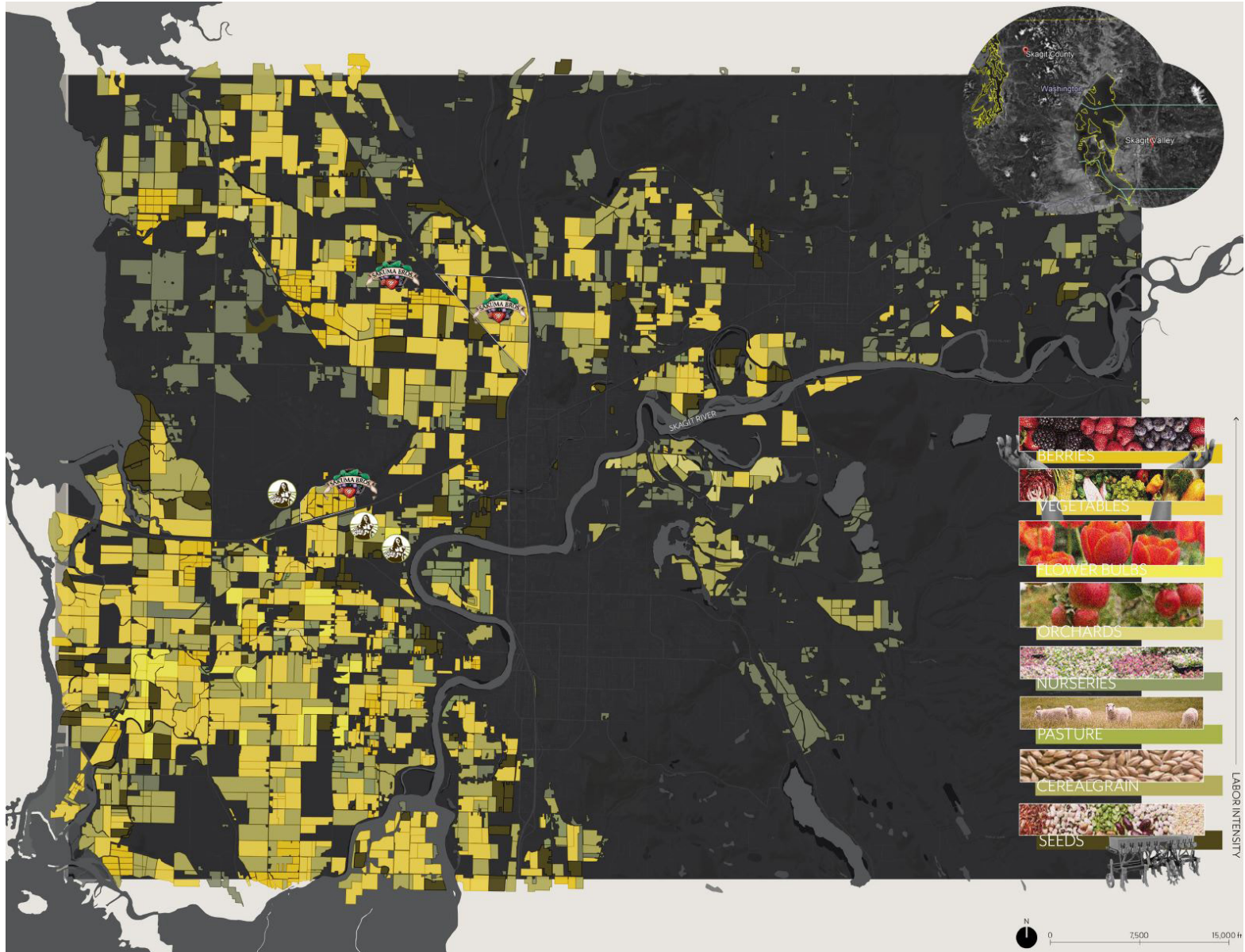


Figure 6.10 Map of the Skagit Valley noting the crops grown and assumed labor intensity throughout the valley.

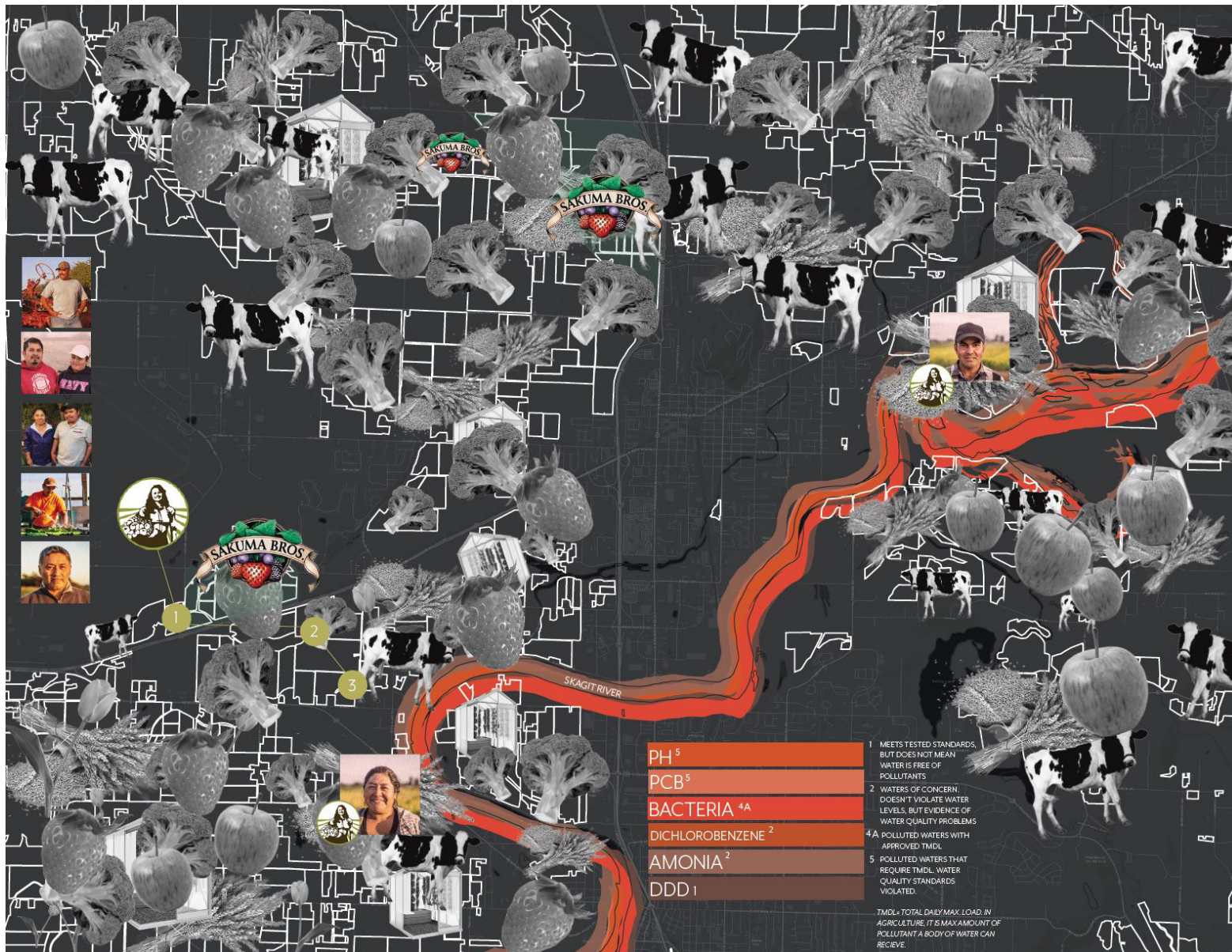


Figure 6.11 Closeup map of the Skagit Valley illustrating locations of Latinx farms and the effect of pesticides on the Skagit River.

FARMER'S PERSPECTIVES

All the Latinx farmers at Viva Farms are from different cities in Mexico, such as Oaxaca, Guerrero, and Michocachan. Yet, similar patterns of intergenerational knowledge and organic farming methods were woven into the stories of all these farmers. First, most of these farmers are a part of a lineage of farmers before them. For example, Mauricio Arado attributes his passion for agriculture from the values instilled by his father, having been raised growing products like coffee and bananas in Mexico. Pablo Silva says that agriculture is in his blood, and the Farias brothers come from generations of farmers who grew their own food. Farmers are also strong advocates for sustainable methods of growing food having experienced first-hand the negative health effects of chemical pesticides. For example, Silva Family Farm takes great care to be good stewards of the land through sustainable practices and never spray their products with harmful chemicals. Similarly, what drew the Farias Brothers to organic farming was the idea of clean food, food that is free of pesticides and chemicals, food that you can grab and eat right out of the ground. Nelida Martinez's passion for organic produce stems from her losing her son to leukemia. From all of these farmers, it is apparent that farming healthy food is their passion, and a family business in the hopes of bettering their and their children's lives.

A FARM OF HER OWN: PURE NELIDA FARM



Figure 6.12 Nelida Martinez tending to her farm. (Viva Farms)

While all of the stories of each Latinx farmer are important, one farmer's inspiring story stands out because of her ability to overcome hardships and run a farm of her own. Nelida Martinez, a mixteca woman from Oaxaca, Mexico, has a strong foundation in horticulture from a lifelong habit of growing traditional foods. She began farming at Viva in 2010 and she now owns Pure Nelida Farm. Nelida learned to cultivate fruits and vegetables in the fields of California where she worked as a berry picker from the age of 16. She eventually became a wife and a mother of six, her children joining her in the fields. She knew that she had to leave the harsh conditions that she and her family were living and working in when her son fell sick with leukemia, which she attributed to the heavy use of pesticides that he was exposed to. As Nelida noted:

"A lot of the farms I worked on would tell us that when we wash our clothes, we shouldn't mix our work clothes with our regular clothes because the chemicals will penetrate our clothes and our children's clothes and will be contaminated. So, I really started seeing that the environment where I was working was really bad for us, and it causes us to contract diseases and sickness. They are conscious of what they are putting on those plants and that they're putting us in danger."³⁴

She vowed to never return to where she was forced to work with cancer causing chemicals. Instead, she started her own farm, with the assistance of Viva Farms, now with four acres of farming land where she grows berry plants that were started by seed. One of her favorite things about farming is that she works for herself and no one else. While Nelida's story is inspirational, and she can farm with "lots of love and little compost,"³⁵ she sadly lost her son to cancer, another victim of industrialized farming.

SEED KNOWLEDGE

Nelida, whose nickname is La Estrella, because of her bright and shining personality, is also taking her traditional knowledge and sharing it in different realms. She partnered with the Organic Seed Alliance (OSA), an organization founded in Washington state. OSA provides information on how to grow,

save, and process seeds with the goal of educating farmers in seed production through participatory research. Nelida, Viva Farms, Salvador and Misael Morales of Northwest Green Farm, and OSA staff ran trials to test corn varieties similar to the ones of Oaxaca that would survive the climate of the Pacific Northwest. Eleven varieties were sourced and trialed in six sites around Western Washington. Field research focused on production qualities, but the real test was: how did they taste? Nelida, who brought the skill of tortilla making, led a tortilla tasting to see how these corn varieties compared to those from Mexico.³⁶ This is an incredible example of Latinx farmers using their expertise to lead research and educate us on the importance of traditional knowledge such as seed harvesting. This work is crucial because in addition to land, seeds are the foundation of the food system. They are the memories we hold of our ancestors and are pieces of home that diasporic communities bring with them. However, seed production, once in the hands of women, now lies in the hands of major corporations. A key element to farmworker liberation is recovering the relationship to culturally significant seeds.

VISITING VIVA FARMS

With permission from the folks at Viva, I visited the site which hosts the Latinx owned farms on June 4, 2021 (Figures 6.13-20). Walking around the site and taking a look at each farm, I could see the farmers preparing their harvest for the next day's farmers' markets or taking lunch breaks at picnic tables. What was most notable about this day, was that every farm was a family affair. Husbands and wives, some accompanied by their children, worked together to pick strawberries or prepare their greens such as asparagus, broccoli, and lettuce. Francisco and Zochitl Cabrera and their children, Belen and Aidet, were enjoying lunch together under a cabana. I overheard their laughter as Francisco was telling stories to the family in between taking business calls. Flying over my head I could see cropdusters moving to their next site somewhere in the valley, ready to poison farmworkers and pollute the land and water, but at Viva Farms, there were signs (Figure 6.20) at every entrance that noted that it was an Organic Zone and that the use of pesticides was prohibited. After visiting

Viva Farms, I ventured around the Skagit Valley, curious about what I would find. Interestingly enough I came across a huge sign from Sakuma Brothers Farm searching for more farmworkers. Having knowledge of the events that have taken place at there, and the mistreatment of workers at corporate farms, seeing this sign made a knot in my stomach.

VISITING VIVA FARMS:



Figure 6.13 With the help of their children, Pablo and Maura are now in their third season of growing strawberries on their own farm. Silva Family Farm specializes in certified organic Albion strawberries.



Figure 6.14 Mauricio Soto and Senaida Vela are the owners of Arado Farms. Mauricio says, “The “arado” or plow is the most modern tool I was able to use in my homeland, Nayarit, to turn up the earth...While the use of the traditional plow was discontinued in the U.S. by 1983, it is still used in several other countries. I am proud to have been able to experience this tool.”

VISITING VIVA FARMS:



Figure 6.15 Regino Flores and Martina Gutierrez specialize in strawberries and green beans. They are among the original Viva farmers, having been with the program since 2009.



Figure 6.16 Originally from Oaxaca, Mexico, Francisco and Zochitl Cabrera came to California in 2003 and then moved to the Skagit Valley in 2007. In California, Francisco worked primarily in strawberry production, but in the Skagit Valley, the Cabrerias specialize in lettuce, zucchini, and a variety of other vegetables. Their children, Belen, 4, and Aidet, 8, are the inspiration for their hard work, with the hopes of one day paying both through college.

VISITING VIVA FARMS:



Figure 6.17 Senaida and Mauricio joined Viva Farms' agricultural program in 2014 and they have been growing their berry farm since.



Figure 6.18 Sabino Flores specializes in chiles, and in 2016, received a Value Added Producer Grant to build a hoop house and produce chiles for processing.

VISITING VIVA FARMS:



Figure 6.19 Francisco, Juan, and Sergio, are all three founding members of Farias Farm. They were born in Michoacan, Mexico. Francisco and Sergio came to Washington state when they were teenagers while Juan arrived when he was five years old. Skagit Valley has been their home away from home ever since. In Mexico, the Farias family had been farmers for many generations growing their own food. Once in the U.S. all three brothers worked in agriculture for a large portion of their lives and eventually decided to start Farias farm. Farias farm is certified organic and uses sustainable



Figure 6.20 Signs throughout Viva Farms to prevent the use of pesticides.

This chapter provided insight into the way activists and farmworkers respond to disruption, their ways of repairing their connections to the land and to one another, and how they have begun their recovery from colonial domination. From the political organizing efforts of C2C and Familias Unidas por la Justicia, the collective formations of Tierra y Libertad, and the exemplary ownership and respectful treatment of land from the Latinx farmers at Viva Farms, this chapter was a mere glimpse into the powerful movements happening in Western Washington. These examples are all part of the transformation to a sustainable agricultural system. Indigenous Latinx peoples can guide a just transition from corporate control that harms people and the environment, to an ecologically sound food system. From the content analysis and community outreach that supported the content of this chapter, I have synthesized what I believe are crucial to farmworker liberation and autonomy: immigration reform, seed, food, and land sovereignty, and participatory democracies. As I explain this further in the next chapter, I will end this chapter by saying that overall there needs to be a shift in humanity. A shift from a farmworker being deemed unskilled and unworthy to revaluing the labor and the hands in the soil providing our food and recognizing them as humans who deserve respect and dignity. As Adam Romero puts it, we need to “revalue agriculture with labor at the forefront. What would agriculture look like if *people* mattered?”³⁷ Reframing what was once displaced ecologies and ecologies of fear, to valued ecologies.

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7. RE-IMAGINING THE FUTURE

Land Remediation and Land Justice movements become central for the food justice movement as the foundation for a transformation in the food system

Certified Organic Farming certificate is reformed to eliminate unjust barriers such as citizenship requirements, large amounts of untranslated paperwork, and high fees - Automatic qualification of certificate is given to Black and indigenous farmers

A monumental moment for seed stewards: a worldwide march against the "Big 4" (Bayer, Corteva, BASF, ChemChina) against the industrial consolidation of seeds raises awareness for seed sovereignty and begins conversations at the federal level to ban the use of seed patents by large corporations

Indigenous peoples become the integral leaders in the climate justice movement, being the voices formulating and creating environmental policies

By 2026, to protect the west coast from wildfires, together, indigenous leaders create the Fire Resiliency Act. A policy that allows the controlled burning by Native peoples to work with the deadly annual fires

The Seed Patent Watch, a coalition formed from the Organic Seed Alliance, that advocates against the utility patents of seeds which restricts people from continuing the co-evolution with plants for food security successfully, lobbies a new policy that protects seed stewards

Positive impacts of the Green New Deal in agricultural sector includes lowered greenhouse gas emissions, improved soil health in major regions of the country, and an increase in plant biodiversity nation wide

Budget for border enforcement, detention centers, and prisons is redirected to social services, healthcare, education, family reunification, sustainable food programs, and enforcing civil rights

The rise of unions, the diminishing of temporary guest worker programs, and the extinction of ICE and detention centers leaves corporate farms with labor shortages, causing corporate farmers no choice but to lease and most notably sell land to BIPOC agroecological farmers

Small scale sustainable farms become the dominant source of food, leaving industrialized, monocultural farms to become defunct

The Land Justice movement successfully grounds a just food system and provides communities with both a physical and political space to dismantle the neoliberal food regime. By 2042, more than half of previous Latinx immigrant farmworkers have access to land

Most farm owners are immigrants from Latin America, Native Americans, and Black communities with over 95% of Latinx demographic having been granted citizenship

The very last detention center, in El Paso, TX, shuts its doors and closes for good. This same year, the last inmates in the country housed in Washington State Penitentiary are released, marking the closure of all prison systems in the US

The last piece of the US | Mexican border wall is demolished, thus creating the new holiday, Sin Frontera



+ GREEN NEW DEAL

Green New Deal proposal is passed and taken into effect immediately

Conversations between farmworker justice activists and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez reform section G of the GND. Section G (iv) supports the agricultural labor of Latinx immigrant farmworkers, recognizing their knowledge of harvesting food as integral to a sustainable and just food system, protecting their autonomy

+ H-2A PROGRAM

In 2025 the H-2A Program comes to an end, and with that, no new temporary guest worker programs are created

Existing guest workers are free to organize and join unions, qualify for overtime, can sue over violations, are provided health care, and are not forced to work during wildfire season

Existing Guest worker Act grants citizenship to undocumented farmworkers and domestic workers with little to no

+ NAFTA

No new trade agreements are created in an effort to prevent the further displacement of marginalized people. Negotiations of NAFTA and other neoliberal policies begin between President Cori Bush and indigenous leaders and farmworkers

The first of many hearings collecting evidence of NAFTA's impact on displaced Mexicans and Mexican Americans commences, the first of its kind

+ ICE

Immigration Customs and Enforcement (ICE), is abolished. This same year, the beginning of deconstruction of the US | Mexican border wall begins

Figure 7.1 Speculative timeline offering a glimpse of a liberated future.

This chapter imagines an alternative future and paradigm shift in power. For this imagining, I was inspired by the concept of exploratory scenarios as described by Rob Holmes as, “narratives that explore probabilistic futures for a landscape, identifying forces that shape its trajectory and exposing their potential interactions over time.”¹ Using this method allowed my imagination to run free. Exploratory scenarios are much more about the process than the actual outcome and are a cognitive tool to discover threats and potentials. They require someone to work toward a desired state and work through possibilities while probing complex systems.² In this chapter, I am not presenting one single solution, but rather, offering a speculative future that elevates the humanity and dignity of Latinx indigenous farmworkers, as well as other subjugated peoples that are oppressed under the current power systems. While the idea of exploratory scenarios may seem “playful,” I took this chapter seriously and reflected deeply on this project. In order to do this, I had to reflect on the compartmentalized trauma I hold from white supremacist structures and colonization.

For oppressed peoples to imagine a different future for themselves does not come easy; in fact, it is a deeply personal and painful process that requires a marginalized person to reflect on these present day struggles and upsetting memories. It is a difficult balance between optimism, realism, and pessimism. While you wish for the best outcome, it is also a sad reality that the journey towards positive outcomes of change will be extremely challenging, as we are up against powerful hegemonic structures. Imagining a speculative future is an act of resistance, and it is a necessary first step towards radical change, which I believe is essential for oppressed peoples. Our imagination will set us free.

For this exploration, I use a revolutionary lens to look at what might be in a positive light. For understanding a decolonized future, I was informed by South Asian activist and writer, Harsha Walia’s “Journey Towards Decolonization”. Decolonization is imagining and generating alternative relations, resistance towards systemic hierarchies, and responsiveness to dismantling current colonial systems. Walia claims that striving towards decolonization means that

we challenge the dehumanizing social organizations that normalize a lack of care towards one another and the Earth. Decolonization of these colonized lands require a resurgence of local indigenous worldviews as the basis for another way of living.³

Decolonization presents expansive and universal for self-determination over our own bodies, lives, cultures, lands, and labor; where we strive for noncoercive communities committed to indigenous, racial, migrant, gender, economic, disability, reproductive, and environmental justice; where we can live free from cages, militaries, borders, reserves, segregation, toxic industries, corporations, sweatshops, and instead thread with unquenchable purpose, fullness, connection, joy, and nourishment.⁴

Decolonizing the future seeks full indigenous sovereignty of their lands and lives. This requires us to think with intentionality, creativity, humility, and most importantly, reciprocity, ultimately creating a decolonizing approach towards transformation and liberation.⁵

Taking everything I have learned thus far from farmworkers and organizers, and with assistance from the Green New Deal Superstudio⁶ and C2C,⁷ I created a speculative timeline (Figure 7.1) that explores a transformative future, one that honors the current work of activists, and puts indigenous leaders at the forefront of the environmental justice movement. The following description provides an overview of this possible future.

2021

Starting in 2021, the Green New Deal is put into effect immediately. The Green New Deal “is a congressional resolution that lays out the grand plan for tackling climate change...with goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in order to avoid the worst consequences of climate change while also trying to fix societal problems like economic inequality and racial justice”.⁸ Latinx farmworkers, in addition to other BIPOC, marginalized peoples, are directly impacted by the effects of climate change. As temperatures continue to rise, Latinx farmworkers

are working under extreme heat conditions putting their lives at risk. In addition, more extreme droughts are threatening our future, making it difficult for farmers to irrigate crops, risking food growth for us all. Enacting the Green New Deal means supporting the transition to a sustainable agricultural system, one that aims to protect Latinx farmworkers and to protect plant diversity and soil health. Activists Rosalinda Guillen, Edgar Franks, and Ramon Torres from C2C and Familias Unidas por la Justicia meet with Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to reform Section G (Figure 7.2), which in its first draft did not include Latinx farmworkers and organizers in the formulation of this policy. After meetings with Representative Ocasio-Cortez, this changes and Latinx farmworkers and activists' voices, visions, and knowledge move to the forefront of this new system. The proposed Green New Deal Resolution, HR109, Section G, reads⁹:

(G) working collaboratively with farmers, farmworkers, and ranchers in the United States to remove pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from the agricultural sector as much as is technologically feasible, including-

- i. by supporting family farming;*
- ii. by investing in the sustainable farming and land use practices brought by indigenous Latinx farmworkers that increase soil, plant, and human health;*
- iii. and by building a more sustainable food system that ensures universal access to healthy food;*

Simultaneously, land rematriation and land justice become central to the food justice movement as an organizing tactic to dismantle the neoliberal food regime. In 2023, the USDA Certified Organic Farming system is reformed to eliminate unjust barriers such as citizenship requirements, large amounts of untranslated paperwork, and high fees. With this reform, automatic qualification is given to Black and indigenous farmers who demonstrate organic farming methods. Seed stewards experience a monumental moment in 2024 as a worldwide march against the “Big 4” companies that have led the

industrial consolidation of seeds raises awareness for seed justice efforts and begins conversations at the federal level to ban the patents of seeds by large corporations. Indigenous people transition to being integral leaders in the climate justice movement as strong voices at the table discussing and deciding policies that will protect Mother Earth.



Figure 7.2 Activists from C2C and Familias Unidas por la Justicia meeting with Rep. AOC.

In 2025, because of the laboring efforts of farmworker justice activists, the H-2A program comes to an end, and with that, no new temporary guest worker programs are created. Existing guest workers are free to organize and join unions and qualify for overtime. They can sue over violations, are provided healthcare, and are not forced to work during wildfire seasons. A new policy, the Existing Guestworker Act, grants citizenship to undocumented farmworkers and domestic workers with little fees. Newly legalized peoples are entitled to public benefits, including land ownership. (Figure 7.3)

In addition, after tough negotiations, an ambitious Farm Bill was passed to redirect funding from corporate-owned factory farms to food hubs, farm co-ops, and Black and indigenous owned farming collectives.. To avoid further destruction caused by ravenous fires on the west coast, indigenous leaders



Figure 7.3 Citizenship granted to H-2A visa holders.



Figure 7.4 NAFTA hearings with President Cori Bush and Nelida Martinez.

create the Fire Resiliency Act, a policy that allows the controlled burning by Native peoples to work with the annual fires. The Seed Patent Watch,¹⁰ a coalition formed from the Organic Seed Alliance that advocates against the utility patents of seeds, successfully lobbies a new policy that protects seed stewards and bans the utility patents of seeds.

In April of 2022, NAFTA was replaced with USMCA (United States Mexico Canada Agreement). Under the leadership of the 45th administration, the trade agreement was an updated version of NAFTA and was meant to grow the North American Economy.¹¹ However, by 2029, in an effort to prevent the further displacement of marginalized people, no new trade agreements are created. Negotiations of what was once NAFTA and other neoliberal policies begin between President Cori Bush¹² and indigenous leaders and farmworkers (Figure 7.4). The first of many hearings collective evidence of NAFTA's impact

on displaced Mexicans and Mexican Americans commences, the first of its kind.

2030

The positive impacts of the Green New Deal in the agricultural sector include lowered greenhouse gas emissions, improved soil health in major regions of the county, and increased plant biodiversity nationwide. It is also around this time that the budget for border enforcement, detention centers, and prisons is redirected to social services, healthcare, education, family reunification, sustainable food programs, and enforcing civil rights. Within a few years, the very last detention center in El Paso, Texas, shuts its doors and closes for good. This same year, the last inmates in the country, housed in the Washington State Penitentiary, are released, marking the closure of all prison systems in the U.S.

In 2035, Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) is abolished (Figure 7.5). This same year, the beginning of the deconstruction of the U.S./ Mexico border wall begins. And by 2039, the last piece of the U.S. / Mexican border will be demolished, creating the new holiday, Sin Frontera (Figure 7.6). Immigration and farmworker justice are the same conversation. Current immigration laws are impertinent to farmworkers and perpetuate exploitation. The constant cycle of dispossessing peasant farmers from their lands and displacing them to a country that deems them “illegal” is a cycle that prevents any freedom for Latinx farmworkers. As David Bacon notes, criminalization creates vulnerability and a cheap labor supply.¹⁵ For farmworkers to have control over their foodways and livelihoods, there needs to be immigration reform. From abolishing ICE, and dismantling the U.S./Mexico border, the livelihoods and dignity of displaced indigenous farmworkers will be protected and will be in less danger as they migrate to and live/work in the U.S. With the rise of unions, the diminishing of temporary guest worker programs, and the extinction of ICE and detention centers, leaves corporate farms with labor shortages, causing these farmers no choice but to lease, and most notably, to sell land to BIPOC agroecological farmers. By 2038, small scale sustainable farms will become the dominant source of food, leaving industrialized, monocultural farms defunct.

"All the News We Hope to Print"

The New York Times Special Edition
Today, clouds part, more sunshine, recent guests gone. Tonight, strong infrared winds. Tomorrow, a new day. Weather map throughout.

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Vice President Ocasio-Cortez on Solidarity Economies
A Legacy of Community 2 Community's Fight for Autonomy
By S. VERLEN

The President has called for swift passage of the Subpoena for a New Economy (S.A.N.E.) bill. The omnibus economic package includes a federal maximum wage, mandatory "True Cost Accounting," a phased withdrawal from complex financial instruments, and other measures intended to improve life for ordinary Americans. (See highlights box on Page A33.) He also requested earlier calls for passage of the "Ban on Lobbying" bill currently making its way through Congress.

Treasury Secretary Paul Krugman stressed the importance of the bill. "Markets make great servants, terrible leaders, and absurd judges," said Krugman, quoting Paul Hawken, an advocate of corporate responsibility and author of "Blended Lives, from the Large to the Small in the World Come into Being and Why No One Saw It Coming."

"At this point, the market is our leader and our religion. No wonder the median standard of living has been declining so much for so long."

Krugman said that the new Treasury bill seeks to ensure the prosperity of all citizens, rather than simply supporting large corporations and the wealthy. "The market is supposed to serve us. Unfortunately, we have ended up serving the market. That's very bad."

Such as Roosevelt, after the Great Depression, put the brakes on C.E.O. wages and irresponsible banking practices, administration officials claim that today we need to rein in the industry that has caused such chaos and misery.

"The building blocks of post-World War 2 American middle class prosperity have all been swept away," said House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who initially opposed the bill.

Continued on Page A33

Maximum Wage Law Succeeds
Salary Caps Will Help Stabilize Economy
By J.K. WALTON
WASHINGTON — After years and

TREASURY ANNOUNCES "THEY'LL TAX THE RICH!"
By MARCUS S. BRIDGES

ICE IS ABOLISHED

Families to be Reunited Immediately
By JUDY WISNISKI

WASHINGTON — Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom were brought to an inconclusive close today with a quiet announcement by the Department of Defense that troops would be home within weeks.

"This is the best face we can put on the most unfortunate adventure in modern American history," Defense spokesman Kristi Stone said at a special joint session of Congress. "Today, we can finally enjoy peace — not the peace of the brass, perhaps, but at least peace."

As U.S. and coalition troops withdrew from Iraq and Afghanistan, the United Nations will move in to perform peacekeeping duties and aid in rebuilding. The U.N. will be responsible for keeping the two countries stable, coordinating the rebuilding of hospitals, schools, highways, and other infrastructure, and overseeing upcoming elections.

The Department of the Treasury confirmed that all U.S. funds owed by the U.S. were paid as of this morning, and that money previously earmarked for the war would be sent directly to the U.N.'s Iraq Oversight Body.

The president noted that the Iraq War had resulted in the burn-

U.S. Army helicopters begin moving troops and equipment from Saddam Hussein's former Baghdad palace.
Recruitment Trials for New Life As a ban is imposed on recruiting miners, ex-miners nationwide look for new work. The Times follows one on his job-hunt odyssey through Manhattan and beyond.
USA Patriot Act Repealed Eight years later, a bipartisan Congress quietly repeals the much-maligned USA Patriot Act, unanimously... of about.
Ex-Secretary Apologizes for W.M.D. Scare

Figure 7.5 New York Times article announcing ICE is Abolished.



Figure 7.6 U.S./Mexican border wall being torn down.

2040

The Land Justice movement successfully grounds a just food system and by 2042, more than half of previous Latinx immigrant farmworkers have access to land. In 2045, most farm owners are immigrants from Latin America, Native Americans, and Black communities, with over 95% of Latinx demographic having been granted citizenship.

REVOLUTION SCALED IN

While the speculative timeline described above is a general, large scale vision of the future, in this section I zoom in to the Skagit Valley and examine what these large scale changes would look like in the valley as seen in Figure 7.7, and then in an even smaller scale, into what used to be Sakuma Brothers Farm. With this speculative future, the geography of the Skagit Valley changes with less strict property lines and collective ownership of land, and a rise in Latinx farmers. With the increase in agroecological farming, habitats are improved as is the quality of water and soil. Danny Weeden, who used to be the CEO of corporate farm Sakuma Bros., eventually retired and the land was transitioned to Latinx indigenous farmer ownership. With this new ownership, C2C and Tierra y Libertad are able to implement their dreams of creating a Oaxan community. Together they incorporate their traditional ecological knowledge, as seen in Figure 7.8-10, and become a successful precedent for sustainable farming and food sovereignty across the nation. With new ownership, more sustainable and just ways of growing food are implemented and displaced ecologies are grounded in organic methods. This new way provides an example of how this embodied knowledge can positively change the food system. These methods foster a collective community, a stronger connection to the land by elements of indigenous ecology and agrobiodiversity. These are the ways that strengthen ecological and economic resilience in the face of today's climate, water, and energy crises, ones where the land and people are no longer oppressed, and offer a path forward for growing food for us all.¹⁴ What was once a geography of spatial inequity and inequality, now changes to a space of hope and healing.

The trajectory from a neoliberal food regime to a decolonized system is on its way.



Figure 7.7 Speculative map of positive changes in the Skagit Valley.

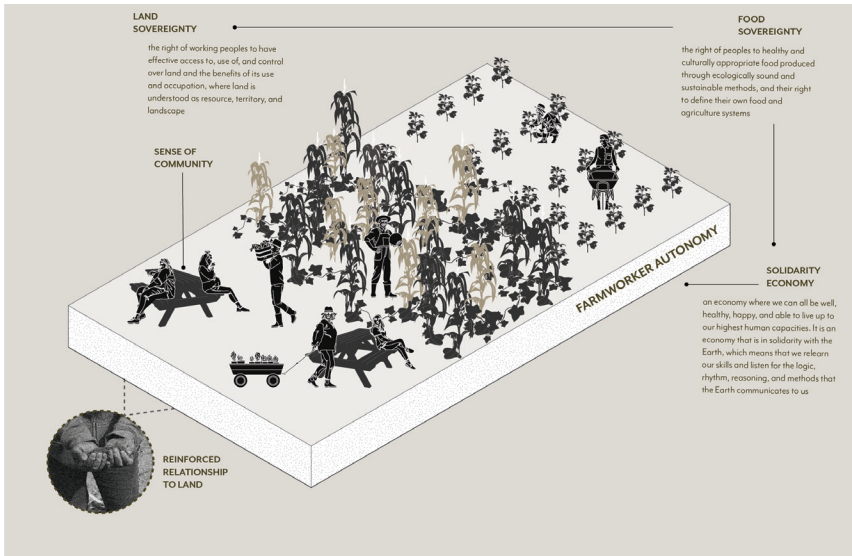


Figure 7.10 *Crecimiento*.²²

Lastly, this illustrates full farmworker autonomy and decolonized land stewardship with a reinforced relationship to land and a sense of community. Decolonizing land stewardship is now a commitment to a resurgence of local indigenous worldviews as well as memories of another way of living.²³ This autonomous and decolonized food system rejects capitalism and human domination.²⁴ The history of the H-2A program included the harsh realities of purposeful isolation and disconnection from communities. With Latinx indigenous farmers in charge, they now have a space for community gatherings to feel a sense of belonging and connection to one another and farmworkers where they grow food together and share knowledge and stories. In this future, the revolution is community.²⁵ In addition, having access and ownership to land supports food sovereignty, where farmers not only choose how to grow their food, but also rightfully enjoy the food they grow.

Lastly, there is a solidarity economy. This is an economy where we can all eat well, be healthy and happy, and be able to live up to our highest human capacities. It is an economy that is in solidarity with the Earth, which means that we relearn our skills and listen for the logic, rhythm, reasoning, and methods that the Earth communicates to us, as Rosalinda Guillen so effectively says, “Our liberation from these systemic vulnerabilities is contingent on our economic autonomy.”²⁶ The people working the land embody it and have a greater connection to it, thus should be the people ultimately making the decisions.

In addition, agroecological systems seek balance in functioning and are better able to resist pest and disease attack, thus there is no use of chemical pesticides. This, in turn, helps protect farmers from further exploitation as they are no longer in contact with toxins that threaten their health. With agroecological systems, there is an increase in water retention and cleaner groundwater. As many of the communities in agricultural areas are farmworker families, what goes into the groundwater affects the quality of everyday life for the whole community. As everyone has the right to clean water, in this desired future, measures are taken to make sure no one is drinking polluted water. The tradition of intergenerational knowledge is celebrated and continued. The new farmers aim to teach their children this wisdom. Overall it is autopoiesis, a self-telling through placemaking, that is what shapes these new farms. Farmers use the stories of their agricultural homelands to create a sense of belonging and places they call home in Western Washington. These traditional ways of farming are essential to protect biodiversity, for plants and cultures.

This chapter has presented a speculative future, one that imagines a collective liberation of oppressed peoples such as Latinx owned farms, indigneous land sovereignty, and the end to the prison industrial complex. It is a future that offers hope and possibility that is made possible by determination. This exploratory scenario is just one perspective of what a liberatory future could look like. While I did not present one single solution while re-imagining the future, I was able to tackle complex issues to seek out the possibilities of what it would mean to have full farmworker autonomy and a decolonized future. The transition from industrialized farming to sustainable, agroecological farming will take a major paradigm shift, from roots in the ground to federal policy. This transition will not be easy. However, inspired by the work already being done in the margins to fight for this desired future, there is room for optimism.

ENDNOTES

1. Holmes, "The Problem with Solutions."
2. Ibid.
3. Walia, *Undoing Border Imperialism*, 249.
4. Ibid, 275.
5. Ibid.
6. Fleming, "Designing a Green New Deal."
7. C2C, "Participatory Democracy."
8. Friedman, "What is the Green New Deal?"
9. 116th Congress, "H. Res. 109."
10. Hubbard, "Seed Patent Watch."
11. Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, "United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement."
12. Congresswoman Cori Bush is a registered nurse, community activist and organizer. She is currently the representative for Missouri's 1st congressional district.
13. Interview with David Bacon.
14. C2C, "Food Sovereignty."
15. Spanish word for the seed.
16. Colín, "Tequio (Community Work)."
17. Interview with Cathleen McCluskey.
18. Colley, "Organic Farmers Need Access to More Organic Seed."
19. Spanish word for the harvest.
20. Watson and Davis, *Lo-TEK: Design by Radical Indigenism*, 123.
21. Ibid.
22. Spanish word for growth.
23. Walia, *Undoing Border Imperialism*, 249.
24. Guillen, "Growing Justice in the Fields," 235.
25. C2C, "Blog."
26. Guillen, "Growing Justice in the Fields," 237.

8. HASTA EL FIN

Farmworker justice is a complex topic. Consequently, this thesis has only begun to scratch the surface of a behemoth of an issue that lies at the intersection of land, labor, migration, and ecology. To begin exploring this topic, I applied decolonizing and feminist methodologies and methods of historical analysis, community outreach, mapping, interviews, and contemporary archival research. Using these methods, I learned from the perspectives of different disciplines, sought to amplify the voices of Latinx farmworkers and activists, and leverage traditional ecological knowledge from Latinx farmers. I argue that the methods I used are key to preserving biodiversity and protecting agroecosystems. Thinking about the thesis topic in terms of Disruption, Response, Repair, Recovery, and Re-imagining the Future was helpful to understand the first- and second-hand knowledge of the lived experiences of Latinx farmworkers and organizers. This framework allowed me to investigate the evolution of farming, celebrate the revolution happening in the margins, and speculate on a decolonized future. Current conventional practices of agriculture, which are degrading to indigenous Latinx farmworkers, are a direct result of settler colonialism in all of its manifestations - its approach to land, to people, food, and the relationships among them. However, despite these dominant ways of farming, indigenous peoples still retain their foodways. While the resurgence of indigenous knowledge of food systems may be new to folks, these knowledge are not new to indigenous communities. They have been embodied for centuries, but have been replaced with methods that harm people and land. Visionaries like C2C, Familias Unidas por la Justicia, Tierra y Libertad, and Viva Farms are able to see the importance of indigenous knowledge and exemplify its potential in agriculture. These visionaries are actively fighting for change, to see past the current oppressive ways, and envision an alternative future for those historically subjugated.

Understanding the value of displaced ecologies that migrate with Latinx indigenous farmworkers is crucial for envisioning an alternative future for farming. As we find ourselves in unstable times when white farmers are retiring,

and their children are choosing not to take over their farms,¹ decisions need to be made about what to do with vacant farm land. Instead of increasing food imports from other countries, this anticipated change is an opportunity to shift control to current Latinx laborers who are already positively contributing to agriculture and can maintain a sustainable food system. This would require policy changes pertaining to land ownership, a shift in societal norms, and ways of scaling up small scale farms for an entire nation's food supply. While this will not be an overnight transition, there is another food system possible, one that emphasizes respectful ways of treating the land and the people who work and live by the land. The title of this chapter, *Hasta el Fin* (until the end), is inspired by a motto from Familias Unidas por la Justicia. This phrase is what keeps them fighting for justice. To win means fighting with dignity, and by fighting with dignity, there are no losses. This motto means that there is always another option, and that fighting with dignity, you fight to fix your situation until the end. If we stand with our dignity, we will find our way.²

Hasta el Fin.

ENDNOTES

1. Celeaya-Alston and Dalstrom, Interview with Dr. Laura-Anne Minkoff-Zern.
2. Guillen and Bacon, "Unbroken Connection to the Land."

REFLECTION

Community outreach was central to this work. From this endeavor came many lessons. It takes time to form relationships with communities. Relationship building is essential in community outreach efforts. In order to build trust with the community, there needs to be an established relationship. For obvious reasons, communities should trust someone before sharing their personal knowledge and stories with them. It is also important to build trust and relationships of reciprocity to prevent the further exploitation of the community **you** are working with. The overall goal of community outreach is to respect the community and their traditions. The time I had for this thesis did not support the kind of relationship I had initially dreamt of developing with the Latinx farmers at Viva Farms. While this, of course, felt like a loss, it was a lesson in disguise - that when working with communities, your expectations should, and most likely will be, set aside, as the goals of the community should be prioritized. In addition, through this process of community outreach I learned the importance of humility. I did not know everything going into this, and there were times when I did not get things right, but most importantly, I learned from my mistakes and grew from them. I plan on continuing this growth.

Moreover, while it may not fit into conventional landscape architecture in its current state, this project is relevant for this discipline. I believe that landscape architects can shift their attention from urban realms, and focus on protecting the cultural and plant diversities in rural environments. We can play a role in the just transition to a sustainable food system by using tools of communication and engagement as well as our skills of analysis that can interpret and communicate the state of agriculture to the general public. Inspired by the quote “the role of the artist is to make the revolution irresistible,”¹ it is my belief that landscape architects can be artists who inspire folks to push past the conventional and imagine what is possible. To be able to reimagine a better world, one that proposes anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist paradigms is an act of resistance. This is the role that I wish to play as a landscape architect. In addition, as soils and soil regeneration are essential to landscape architecture, our role in shifting

from industrial agriculture to sustainable agriculture potentially lies in soil care and regenerative land practices.

This journey has not been easy. Completing a thesis during a pandemic offered a whole new set of challenges. Despite the hardships we were presented with, I, as well as my thesis cohort, persevered. It was interesting (and daunting) to see how Covid-19 informed the content of my thesis in the way Latinx farmworkers were impacted. The implications of the pandemic shed light on the vulnerability of farmworkers; they were forced to continue working in dangerous conditions that put them at risk of contracting the virus. Yet, the pandemic also made people who have not thought about where their food comes from or who have not paid much attention to farmworkers, see how essential the farmworkers are to feeding our lives. While the nation was in a panic, farmworkers continued on, a testament to their resiliency through disaster and crisis.

In addition to the consequences of the pandemic, much of the content of this project meant I had to confront the pain and suffering of farmworkers. To be fully transparent, this process took a minor toll on my mental health. However, navigating through imposter syndrome, these harsh realities, and working in solitude was met with something that overpowers these obstacles: passion. From interest to passion, this work will live on. This is just the beginning of this research, as now I am left with more questions and worlds to explore. I am fascinated by the connections I have made and desire to make more.

Lastly, this thesis has pushed me to be strong in my political stance, and to learn new ways of using my voice. It has given me the space to reflect and think deeply about what I wish for the future, and what I think is fair. It has given me time to understand what I classify as unjust, and what my beliefs are up against. I believe that everyone has the right to water, land, and food, and most importantly, *todos tienen la derecho de vivir en paz.*²

ENDNOTES

1. Toni Cade Bambara, African-American author, documentary film-maker, social activist.
2. “Everyone has the right to live in peace”. Song title from Victor Jara, a Chilean poet, singer-songwriter, and communist political activist tortured and killed during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet.

GLOSSARY

- **Agroecology**- the application of ecological concepts and principles to the design and management of sustainable agro-ecosystems.
- **Archival Bodies** - people who embody stories and traditions of their ancestors.
- **Autotopography** - self-telling through place shaping.
- **Bordered Bodies** - people who experience the various forms of violence from borders and discriminatory immigration policies.
- **Campesina** - Spanish word for a woman farmworker.
- **Campesinx** - Gender neutral Spanish word for farmworkers.
- **Crecimiento**- Growth.
- **Displaced Ecologies** - embodied traditional knowledge that is brought with displaced peoples. Ecofeminism- analyzes the ways that gendered and environmental oppressions stem from similar conceptual and material roots, and reinforce one another.
- **Food Sovereignty**- the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems.
- **La Cosecha**- the harvest.
- **La Semilla**- the seed.
- **Pachamama** - Spanish word for Mother Earth.
- **Saberes** - Spanish word for “knowers”.
- **Solidarity Economies** - A solidarity economy is one where we can all be well—healthy, happy, and able to live up to our highest human capacities. It is an economy that is in solidarity with the Earth, which means that we relearn our skills and listen for the logic, rhythm, reasoning, and methods that the Earth communicates to us. It also means that despite our histories,

which colonization tried to erase, our legacy should include how to be in a just relationship—that is, in solidarity—with the place and peoples where we are from and with the place and peoples where we are now cohabiting.

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2. LEARNING + UNDERSTANDING

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.4 Collage of Civil Rights Organizers. Graphic by author.

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.14 Displaced Ecologies. Graphic by author.

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- .1 **Beginning of the farming season.** Graphic by author.
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- .4 **C2C's logo.** C2C. <http://www.foodjustice.org/>.
- .5 **Familias Unidas por la Justicia logo.** Familias Unidas por la Justicia. <http://familiasunidasjusticia.org/en/home/>.
- .6 **Tierra y Libertad logo.** Tierra y Libertad. <https://communityfood.coop/the-revolution-will-be-delicious/>.
- .7 **Modesto Hernandez and Ramon Torres.** Tierra y Libertad. <https://communityfood.coop/the-revolution-will-be-delicious/>.
- .8 **Comparing Business models.** Graphic by author.
- .9 **Viva Farms logo.** Viva Farms . <https://vivafarms.org/>.
- .10 **Map of the Skagit Valley.** Graphic by author.
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- .12 **Nelida Martinez tending to her farm.** Viva Farms <https://vivafarms.org/>
- .13 **Silva Family Farms.** Photo by author.
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- .7 **Speculative map of the Skagit Valley.** Graphic by author.
- .8 **La semilla.** Graphic by author.
- .9 **La cosecha.** Graphic by author.

.10 Crecimiento. Graphic by author.

