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_____   _____
Sarah Franzen   Date

Visualizing Possibilities: Rural Development Strategies Among African American
Farmers in the Southeastern US

By

Sarah Franzen
Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Institute of the Liberal Arts

_____
Anna Grimshaw
Advisor

_____
Peter Little
Committee Member

_____
Mark Sanders
Committee Member

Accepted:

_____
Lisa A. Tedesco, Ph.D.
Dean of the James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies

_____
Date

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By

Sarah Franzen
M.A., Emory University, 2011
M.A., University of Manchester, 2006
B.A., Colorado State University, 2002

Advisor: Anna Grimshaw, PhD

An abstract of
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James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
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Abstract

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The industrialization of agriculture within the US has led to increased rural poverty, environmental pollution, and unhealthy food. And this system is being exported around the world, developing a form of global agriculture that will ultimately lead to environmental and social degradation. While many solutions and alternatives have emerged in response, this dissertation explores how farmers and rural populations can confront and change the impact of an industrialized agricultural system. Using the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund (FSC/LAF) as a case study, this research explores the strategies and practices developed through grassroots organizing among black farmers in the southeastern US.

The FSC/LAF promotes collective organizing among black farmers in particular, and family farmers in general, in order to simultaneously confront the dominant agricultural system and build alternative organizational forms that engender more sustainable and socially just forms of agriculture. Specifically, they utilize the strategies of land retention, cooperative development, and policy change in order to support these efforts. Each of these strategies is aimed at addressing the structural forms that shape black farmers' livelihoods. But structural forms are not discrete entities; they are an assemblage of processes built through ongoing practices. This research explores the practices that arise from, and give shape to, the FSC/LAF's institutional strategies.

Drawing on data gathered through a multi-sited ethnography using *adaptive co-production* (a form of collaborative filmmaking), interviews, participant observation, and oral histories, *Visualizing Possibilities* traces how embodied practices produce and build spaces of resistance, a sense of cultural heritage and pride, and manifest development goals. This hybrid dissertation, which interlaces films and texts, argues that development is a transformative process comprised of transformative practices. These transformative practices consist of not only material and ideological shifts, but also embodied and aesthetic aspects that constitute *visceral development*—development that begins as a bodily conviction leading to collective and institutional strategies. This research uses filmmaking to engage these embodied practices that give rise to social change and rural development, and to provide an applied means of driving ongoing communication and discussion both within and outside academia.

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Figure 1: This mural hangs in the Rural Training and Research Center in Epes, Alabama, one of the prominent meeting places for the FSC/LAF. It is a pictorial representation of their vision and goals.

Introduction

The recent increases in food prices and subsequent food crises around the world have spurred a growing critique of the global agricultural system. Scholars and practitioners have highlighted key issues contributing to the crises such as the increasing industrialization of agriculture, international trade relations, increases in biofuels, and commodity crop speculation. These growing industrial and globalizing trends have not only increasingly affected people's access to food but they have also threatened the livelihoods of small farmers around the world. These issues have evoked a number of responses and efforts to change the structure of the current agricultural system through a wide range of efforts such as the use of agroecology, peasant movements, fair trade

practices, and political resistance against the key instruments of the dominant food system such as the World Trade Organization, retail chains, and biotech corporations.

These shifts in the agricultural system are affecting both developed and developing countries, albeit in different manners. In the US, government programs and subsidies favor large-scale commodity farms, and corporate take-overs along the food chain have created virtual monopolies and monopsonies of agricultural inputs, markets, and distribution. These trends have stifled the ability of small farmers to maintain viable and sustainable enterprises thereby creating a "get big or get out" conundrum.

There has been a drastic decrease in the number of farms in the US over the past few decades, as larger and more technologized farms take over smaller family farms, and this decrease continues. Between 2007 and 2012, the number of farms has decreased from 2.2 million to 2.1 million (USDA, 2012). However, during the same time, there has been a 33% increase in large-scale farms i.e. farms with sales over $500,000 (USDA, 2012). When evaluated by farm size, farms with 2,000 acres of more or land have increased, while smaller farms have decreased (USDA, 2012). Large-scale farming is replacing small, family farms and this is changing the rural areas, depopulating rural communities, and creating landscapes of single-commodity production dependent on industrialized systems of agriculture. Large-scale single operator-owner farms comprise only 3% of the total number of farms, and corporate owned farms comprise only 1%, but together, these two categories account for 66.4% of all farm sales (USDA, 2012) and dominant the rural landscape. Moreover, most of these farms grow crops for creating processed food, feeding livestock, producing biofuels, and for exports. Corn and soybean are the two largest crops grown in the US, accounting for 50% of all crop sales (USDA,

2014b). These crops are also broadly grown with a combination of petro-chemical based fertilizers and pesticides.

A number of alternative food movements have emerged in response, promoting organic food, local food, sustainable farming, and urban gardens. Currently, organic agriculture accounts for only 1% of US agriculture, but the US has a growing consumer demand for fresh and natural food. And the movement for local, fresh, and natural food depends on small farms, who make 58% of all direct farm sales to consumers, which are typically sold through farmers' markets and community supported agriculture programs (CSAs). While the consumer base is providing some support for small farmers, the number of people entering into farming is still declining. Between 2007 and 2012, the number of beginning farmers (operating for 10 years or less) has decreased by 20% (USDA, 2014a).

For African Americans, these pressures have been compounded by the continuation of discriminatory structures and processes. Most African American farmers have historically, and currently, resided in the US South, with a concentration spanning from Texas to South Carolina. The racist political history of these southern states has directly affected the ability of African American farmers to sustain viable livelihoods. African American farmers struggle for equal access to government programs, loans and financial support, and land retention (Green et al, 2011; Fite, 1984; Daniel, 2013). Even as African Americans have gained access to political equality under the law, discriminatory practices continue, especially in rural areas. Many rural areas are still de facto segregated, using economic distinctions to maintain old systems of separation. Racial discrimination within the rural US South has created institutional, economic, and

political oppression through the historic and current systems of slavery and sharecropping, systems of credit and debt, and unjust policies and laws that under-develop African American rural communities (Hinson and Robinson, 2008; Couto, 1991; Gilbert and Sharp, 2002; Marable, 1983). The effect of racial oppression can also be seen through national statistics. The counties most populated by African American farmers in the southeastern US face on-going poverty, termed persistent poverty (Wimberley et al, 2003; Beale, 1993). These indicators point to the lingering power of an oppressive system that shapes agriculture and rural life for African Americans.

In the 2012 census, of the country's 3.2 million farmers, African American farmers were only 1.4% and 90% of those lived in the twelve southern states. The average age of African American farmers is slightly older than the national average, 61.9 years compared to 58.3 years according to the 2012 census (USDA, 2014d). The majority are male, have been farming longer than ten years, and over half of all African American farmers indicate a primary occupation other than farming (which parallels the national statistics for 2012) (USDA, 2014d). African American farmers statistically have less access to the internet than the national average, which is significant when considering the amount of information, pertaining to government grants, loans, and programs that is delivered via the internet. Half of African American-operated farms are less than 50 acres, and 79% make less than $10,000 in sales (USDA, 2014d). African American farmers are declining faster than the national average, have smaller farms, earn less money, and utilize fewer government resources than the national average.

This dissertation focuses on a case study that sits in the nexus of these agricultural issues from the local and regional political structures to the national and international

agricultural systems. The Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund (FSC/LAF) was formed in 1967 by twenty-two cooperatives in the southern states that served predominantly black[1] farmers and rural populations. Building on the organizing efforts of the Civil Rights Movement, the FSC/LAF was created to better serve and protect local cooperatives in order to sustain their social and economic activities. Today, the FSC/LAF has individual and cooperative members across ten southeastern states. Along with supporting its member cooperatives, the FSC/LAF works to support black farmers and family farmers in general through a number of educational and training programs. On a national level, the FSC/LAF's administrative office lobbies for policies to support black farmers and family farmers. Internationally, the FSC/LAF participates with other cooperatives, peasant movements, and grassroots agricultural movements.

This case study offers a unique perspective of the problems of, and resistance to, the current agricultural system. By focusing on African American communities in the rural US South, this project will apply studies of development usually understood as elsewhere, to a US context. Minority and limited resource farmers in the US face similar constraints to development as those confronted by small-scale producers worldwide (Green and Kleiner, 2009). Yet, the broader political and economic contexts shape how these constraints manifest, and how farmers can develop solutions. In particular, this study explores the effects of a grass-roots institution, the FSC/LAF, and its strategies in addressing rural development, its ability to mediate between farmers and their political-economic context, and its effect on farmers' practices. Based on the outcomes of the FSC/LAF, this study aims to provide insights into development possibilities for the US

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[1] I use the term African American to reflect census-based and statistical categorization of people into racial

South, and offer broader contributions for global considerations of agricultural development.

The FSC/LAF's approach to rural development also differs from most alternative food movements. The FSC/LAF's focus on racial justice and black rural communities supersedes its concern with environmental or health issues that dominate many alternative food discourses, although these other factors do remain crucial concerns. This study adds to discussions on alternative food movements by considering how this shift in perspective aids or detracts from the FSC/LAF's ability to create change within the current agricultural system, and how that change might differ from change focused on environmental or health issues.

The FSC/LAF promotes community-based development but their specific practices differ from the now mainstream community-based and participatory practices. The FSC/LAF draws on the long tradition of African American community organizing and aims to mobilize communities to develop and implement their own projects (Bethell, 1982; Reynolds, 2002). It is this tradition of community-based organizing that gave strength and foundation to larger, more publicized movements, such as the civil rights movement (MacAdam, 1982, Hall 1997). The FSC/LAF's form of community-based development and focus on justice and equality for black farmers challenges common notions of participatory development. This research aims to broaden understandings around the practice of participatory development through this case study. This dissertation contributes to ongoing discussions on these topics and offers insights useful for both future scholars and activists concerned with race, food justice, land rights, and rural development.

Road to Epes

Film 1: Road to Epes https://vimeo.com/115998281/edfb68fa23

Driving west along highway 20, I travel across Georgia and Alabama nearly to the boarder of Mississippi. I take exit 11, driving on hidden county roads. There, nestled in Sumter County is a little town called Epes. You would hardly know it was there if you were not looking for it. A fire department, a post office, a few churches, and homes are within its border. But it is a marker, a place of reference for the rural residents that surround the area. Pulling off the highway, I had to trust the aerial images from maps, since there were no clear road signs on these long open county roads. The first intersection I came to offered five possible directions, two of which were dirt roads, one that went past the small post office. I guessed on the directions, driving past a series of

trailer homes interspersed with some pasture fields and some forests. The gravel road leading to the FSC/LAF's Rural Training and Research Center is marked with a sign, but the road appears to lead to nowhere for the first quarter of a mile. The scene then opens up, again to a few trailers, which I later found out house residents that have arrangements with the FSC/LAF to live on the land. One of the trailers is occupied by a man who works odd jobs for the FSC/LAF just as his father once did. His only vehicle is a 4-wheeler, which he uses not only to do work for the FSC/LAF but also to hunt, which is his main means of securing food. Past the trailers is a carved wooden sign, a large grass lawn and a series of brick buildings of different sizes behind which is a pond and some woods. In the distance is a red barn with some fields surrounding it. Further, just on the horizon, is a white brick house.

My first visit to the Rural Training and Research Center in Epes, Alabama in the spring of 2009 was to attend a cooperative development training. When I first arrived, the premises were empty and deserted. I knocked at the door to the building labeled "office." No one was in, so I walked around by the pond, hoping someone would emerge out of one of the buildings and help me figure out where to go. Eventually I met one of the Vista volunteers, a woman from New York who was spending 6 months working in Alabama. She showed me where the workshop would be held, and the dorms in which I would be staying in during the weekend. The dorms were small, nearly cell-like rooms lined with wood paneling and two sets of twin bunk-beds set with flimsy mattresses cased in plastic. Clean sheets and a towel were folded on each bed. I made the bed and went to the main conference room, which was again a wooden paneled room with loud window-based air conditioners, and an industrial kitchen on the other side. Even though the

facilities were very empty and appeared rather worn down, the structures held the promise of a once vibrant organizing community. Before the FBI raid in 1979,[2] this center served as the heart of the FSC/LAF, with many of the organizers living on the premises. This land was bought through much negotiation and against resistance from the surrounding white neighbors. Through strategic maneuvering the FSC/LAF, along with the Panola Land Buyers Association[3] was able to buy several tracts of land, one of which was used by the FSC/LAF as a center for meetings, trainings, workshops, media production, and as a demonstration farm for cattle and vegetables. Now there are only a few goats on the property, and during my research, they erected a hoop house (a plastic dome structure that functions like a greenhouse but sits on the ground) and began to grow vegetables again. There is also a garden plot that is managed by youth workers during the summer.

This was my first experience of the FSC/LAF. This organization that boasted the great promise of cooperatives, the redemption of black farmers, the economic side of the Civil Rights, and the hope for continuing a culture of southern rural life that still ties many African Americans across the country to this place that is sometimes considered a homeland, simultaneously a place of birth and blood (Griffin, 1995). But this place did not fit the imagery promised through the website, or my preliminary examinations into the organization. Instead, it seemed empty, rundown, and vacant. The FSC/LAF cultivates a magnetic presence through public presentations, and has gained support,

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[2] A group of southern white elite politicians solicited US representatives to make a federal case against the FSC/LAF for the misuse of federal funds. This was referred to as the Cotton Patch Conspiracy. The result of this was an audit on the FSC/LAF. However, unlike typical audits, the FSC/LAF was also investigated by on-the-ground FBI agents who swarmed the Rural Training Center and the homes several member farmers. See Bethell, 1982 for more information.
[3] This was a land-buying cooperative formed by recently evicted sharecroppers. I explain more in chapter 3.

recognition, and admiration from a wide range of supporters including prominent politicians and funders. Yet, many farmers, residents, and organizers on the ground struggle to understand the actual function of the FSC/LAF. It often seems to fall disappointingly short of its intended goals, leaving organizers, farmers, and rural residents questioning the efficacy of its development design.

One FSC/LAF supporter, and local organizers, spoke frankly with me about some of the criticism of the FSC/LAF. She explained that the FSC/LAF's role was more complicated, and embedded than cursory assessments could account for. She encouraged me to take a slanted look and over time I would understand why the FSC/LAF was an important, and perhaps even an essential, institution for black farmers and rural development. The effectiveness of the FSC/LAF, and the reason so many people keep working to support it with time, money, and resources, is not because of its obvious or apparent success at cultivating an idealized rural development for black farmers, but it is rather for its more invisible processes and for the way it creates possibilities and opportunities, carves out spaces for new kinds of existence, and cultivates new types of imagining. But during my first visit, I did not see these effects.

This project takes up this organizer's challenge, to take a "slanted look," and understand why and how the FSC/LAF still holds such a prominent place for black farmers. Its continuing existence for the past 48 years, despite tremendous setbacks and obstacles, is a testament to both its resilience and embeddedness within the fabric of southern rural life. In the face of growing critiques of development efforts around the world, and disillusionment in development approaches to address structural issues causing poverty and inequity, the FSC/LAF serves as an interesting case study. Its slow,

deliberate, and systemic approach to development counters the pressures of conventional development funders for individualized and quick successes. And this discrepancy has existed since its origins; the FSC/LAF even in its infancy rejected funding that was contrary to its mission of building a collective movement. Yet, even with its well thought out goals and visions, the question of impact remains.

The cooperative training workshop is annually held at the Rural Training and Research Center in Epes, Alabama. This place has served as a home for many FSC/LAF staff, as a centralized site for FSC/LAF activity, and it still serves as a hub for several workshops, gatherings, and meetings. Mr. Zippert, the director of the Center, calls this place the middle of nowhere and the center of everywhere. It is a short drive away from Jackson (Mississippi), New Orleans (Louisiana), Mobile and Birmingham (Alabama), Nashville (Tennessee), and even those in Georgia and Florida can make the drive in a day.

I was attending the cooperative training as a way to get to know the FSC/LAF better. They are largely known for their cooperatives, which they promote as an ideal organizational structure for building community, providing alternative economic institutions, and even serving as a political voice. I imagined I would meet eager farmers, trying to pool together their resources and work collectively to carve out a new existence. Instead, at the workshop I witnessed a random collection of participants. An older couple brought a guitar with them, sang songs of resistance, and wanted to turn their local newspaper into a cooperative organization. There was one white farmer, who did not seem very interested in cooperatives but needed extension help. A few older women lived

nearby and wanted to start a daycare business and a self-help cooperative. The black farmers were not present.

The organizers were two Africans; Osagie Idehen, from Nigeria, and Pamela Madzima, from Zimbabwe. Pam and Osa had gone to graduate school at Tuskegee University, and after school they had looked for agricultural jobs in the US. The FSC/LAF is one of the few agricultural organizations that hires foreign employees and helps to secure continued work visas for them. The FSC/LAF also wants to maintain ties to the 1890 land grant schools[4], such as Tuskegee, and often seeks graduates as employees. However, the FSC/LAF's pay is not competitively attractive. Most people employed by the FSC/LAF are ideologically pulled by the work. The Alabama field office is unique in its continual employment of Africans.

The cooperative training consisted of two days of workshops, lectures, and group activities designed to provide the participants with an overview of cooperatives in general, an understanding of the FSC/LAF's particular approach to cooperative development, its history, and tools for building and designing their own cooperative enterprises. After the two-day training, Osa took me on a tour of the demonstration farm and showed me the goats. He showed me the different plots that were being used to test the ratio of pine trees to goats, testing the most ideal and productive habitat.

At the end of the cooperative training, I felt that I understood the FSC/LAF less than before. I did not find the type of organization that I had read about, an organization

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[4] In 1890, the second Morril Act allowed for cash, instead of land, to be given to universities dedicated to agricultural extension that served the African American population. This was meant to counter the segregation of 1862 land grant universities (formed through the first Morril Act in which land was granted to schools that would be dedicated to agricultural research, development, and extension services.) All states with segregated school systems were required to have both a white and black university dedicated to agricultural development. These are referred to as 1862 and 1890 land grant schools, respectively. Although Tuskegee University has a slightly different history than other 1890 land grant universities, it currently receives federal funding through this stream of revenue.

that addressed the problems of sustainability and big business, while also overcoming racism and oppression. There did not exist a single activity or central site that contained and illustrated these efforts. Rather the creation of the FSC/LAF itself, and its effectiveness, happened through multiple and at times discrete interactions, activities, and efforts by numerous people, including FSC/LAF staff, supporters, farmers, and local residents. The FSC/LAF emerges through these efforts of the people who believe in its vision and through troubled, imperfect, and complicated processes try to move reality a little more towards this hopeful future.

Research Questions

My experience of ambiguity in locating the FSC/LAF is not unique. Many scholars studying a variety of social arrangements, such as cooperatives, non-profits, businesses, or states, determine that these institutions are not discretely defined entities, but rather they manifest through a series of actions, practices, relationships, and representations that happen in their name, or for their purposes. There are many spaces through which the FSC/LAF emerges as an organization, such as its political activity, its public image, and its international interactions. But this research was aimed particularly at how community-based development organizations, such as the FSC/LAF, come to have form and meaning among their target populations. I further narrowed this scope to focus only on the field offices of Alabama and Mississippi, and a few cooperatives and farmers involved with these state associations.

My goal was to understand what type of development the FSC/LAF practiced, but I found that the space between the FSC/LAF and its target population is not clearly

demarcated. Many of the FSC/LAF staff are also farmers and co-op members, and many of the farmers organize projects themselves. Therefore, on the one hand, the FSC/LAF is a network, connecting people and providing a legitimate space through which to organize. On the other hand, the FSC/LAF staff conduct educational projects, offer technical support, and give business and legal advice. They assist farmers in their individual efforts and train cooperatives in building their organizations. Therefore, the FSC/LAF is also an extension organization. The FSC/LAF does have clear strategies and practices for supporting development, but how things actually manifest among the rural population is complex. This became the focus of my research: How do the FSC/LAF's development strategies manifest as practices within the space between the FSC/LAF and the rural population?

The second goal was to better understand how practices manifest change, specifically change for the purposes of development. Much has been written on how practices uphold cultural norms and hegemonies, but the process of using practices to implement change has been less theorized. By taking a practice-based approach, this research sought to understand social change as an ongoing embodied phenomenon occurring in multiple spaces. But change itself is an inevitable and constant occurrence, whereas development is a form of change with a specific purpose in mind. The goal of the FSC/LAF's development strategies is to transform structures that create poverty and inequity, thus improving the lives and livelihoods of black farmers and the rural population. Therefore, this dissertation asks: If, and how, the practices manifested by the FSC/LAF's development strategies lead to their intended form of structural

transformation. If so, how are these *transformative practices* encouraged, and how do they affect change?

A third focus of this research is examining how transformative practices are pursued through material, ideological, and aesthetic realms. Development is often considered through material (or economic) aspects, such as resource distribution and wealth accumulation. The FSC/LAF's main purpose is to improve the material (or economic) condition of black farmers and rural populations, but it does not seek economic growth alone. The FSC/LAF also aims to transform the ideological systems that influence black farmers' lives and livelihoods. This includes promoting a collective and cooperative ideology, and cultivating a sense of pride and heritage among black farmers. Along with considering material and ideological aspects of transformative practices, this research also considers the role of aesthetics, or sensory engagement with the practices of farming and collective organizing. Although often overlooked, the form, symbolism, and sensory aspects of agriculture and development play a crucial role in influencing how people pursue both material and ideological change. This dissertation therefore asks: How do people weave together material, ideological, and aesthetic *practices* in the pursuit of development goals?

In order to pursue these questions, I engaged with the practices and activities of the FSC/LAF over a two-year period. The core of my participation was through the production of a collaborative video project. The pursuit of the video project also gave me access to a number of different spaces and people creating a rich ethnographic experience. In the rest of this chapter, I will provide a brief overview of the literature and

discussions from which this dissertation derives followed by the theoretical framework for my methodology and outline of my methods, and an outline of the dissertation.

Background

This dissertation draws from and contributes to a number of fields and disciplines guided by the following three questions discussed earlier:

1. How do the FSC/LAF's institutional strategies manifest as practices among the target population?

2. How do these practices assist in transforming political, economic, and social structures that shape rural livelihoods?

3. How do people weave together the material, ideological, and aesthetic components of these practices in pursuit of development goals?

Within each chapter, I lay out specific theories used to explore the practices associated with each of the FSC/LAF's strategies. But generally, this dissertation enters into conversations with development studies, African American studies, and visual anthropology. From development studies, this dissertation specifically engages with the recent trend of participatory and community-based forms of development. Specifically, this dissertation investigates how the FSC/LAF, considered as a case study, attempts to implement the ideals of participatory development to engage target populations within the development process and ultimately to transform the systems that produce poverty and inequity. Within African American studies, this dissertation explores the process of racial formation through the agricultural system and the construction of race and identity by, and for, black farmers. How and why does the FSC/LAF utilize race and racial

identity within its development efforts? Through the lens of visual anthropology, this dissertation utilizes collaborative filmmaking as a means to explore the practices of the FSC/LAF. How can filmic research enable an exploration of the combined material, ideological, and aesthetic components used to facilitate development practices? Within this section, I provide the background literature from which this project draws.

Community-based Development

The FSC/LAF frequently describes itself as a community-based organization, emphasizes the importance of intimacy between organizers and communities, and requires that communities retain control of their development projects. The FSC/LAF's conception of community development stems from the long history of African American collective practices and cooperative strategies along with the more recent civil rights organizing. This case study, therefore, offers an interesting perspective on the possible forms of community-based and participatory development projects.

Development studies have long critiqued "big development" projects pointing to the failure of hegemonic, top-down, expert oriented and technically driven project (Scott, 1998; Ferguson, 1985; Escobar, 1995; Edelman and Haugerud, 2005; Hobart, 1993; Grillo and Stirrat, 1997). Scholars have shifted focus to the role local communities play in the process of development, specifically looking at the effects of culture (Rao and Walton, 2004; Crewe and Harrison, 1998), the methods of participation (Scoones, 1994; Chambers, 1999), and indigenous knowledge (Sillitoe, Bicker, and Pottier, 2002). Development organizations have responded by incorporating ideas of community, participation, and local knowledge into projects as a way to empower the targets of

development initiatives and improve development efficiency and effectiveness. But these development agencies and large NGOs have structured participatory techniques to fit their already existing paradigms of development, thus systematizing a set of contextually specific practices into techniques that could be scaled, universally applied, and measured and evaluated. As a result, participatory techniques have neither to lived up to their emancipatory and empowering ideals, nor have they led to more effective or successful development projects. These efforts continue to frame development in dichotomous (local targets versus development agencies) and ideological (focus on "community") terms and in practice often only allow specific and narrow avenues for peoples' participation. Arguments against participatory development have pointed to its failure to change the development encounter or consider broader political regimes as well as local inequalities and power dynamics (Olivier de Sardan, 2005; Agrawal, 1995; Richards, 1985; Gardner and Lewis, 1996; Cooke and Kothari, 2001). As Frances Cleaver has noted, participation has become a managerial exercise based on procedures and techniques, distanced from its radical roots that critically assessed the nature of poverty (Cleaver, 1999).

The goals of participatory approaches are often expressed either as increased efficiency or as empowerment for the target population. On the efficiency side, mainstream development organizations, such as the World Bank, seek to use participation for creating better targeting techniques and building community infrastructure. But as Ghazala Mansuri and Vijayendra Rao (2004) show, these efforts have not necessarily led to more efficient or more sustainable development. They do note some outcomes from the projects they review, but do not find a causal link between the World Bank's increase

in participatory approaches and more efficient and sustainable development (Mansuri and Rao, 2011).

Projects designed to empower target populations have not fared much better. Despite the rhetoric of empowerment, participatory practices tend to maintain the distinction between those who need to be developed, and those who do the developing. Participation has come to signal an attempt to involve the poor, disenfranchised, and marginal populations into mainstream and modernizing programs. Participation, then, is frequently a uni-directional effort that does not substantially differ from top-down approaches. Furthermore, participatory practices often rely on outside facilitators and expert consultants. These practices reinforce the assumption that local populations are themselves not capable of their own development, but need the assistance of outside help even to have the possibility of participating in development (Eversole, 2012).

However, many of the critiques of participatory and community-based development overlook alternative forms of participation and community involvement. For example, Roncoli, Orlove, Kbugo, and Waiswa (2011) show the different local forms and perceptions of the concept of participation. Although they critique the western concept of participation as limited in its applicability, they highlight how multiple informal spaces, non-verbal interactions, and social norms shape participation for people involved within projects. Their insights indicate that participation and community involvement itself should not be simply dismissed. Although participatory development projects may fail to implement the level of involvement evoked in their design, they do in fact create new spaces of negotiation (Mosse, 2004).

The process of interaction between development practitioners and local communities is a complex situation in which the local population, despite power differences, are not victims of imposed ideologies and projects, but rather have cunningly reacted and responded to the growing development apparatus by positioning themselves in such ways as to best secure resources (Brosius, 1997; Li, 2007; Schroeder, 1999; Gow, 2008; Mosse, 2004). But these tactics also have local implications, bringing light to inequalities in terms of gender, class, and ethnicity and the way development projects can exasperate these. Participatory techniques offer new rhetoric, and thus new reactions and negotiations from participants.

For example, David Mosse notes that during his consultant work in India, the local Bhil villagers were able to anticipate the developers' points of view and adapted their own self-presentation in order to best secure resources (2004). Participatory approaches offer different means of negotiating power, but do not neccessarily transform or alleviate the power differential between development organizations and local populations. From the standpoint of the development organization, participation is a way to legitimize development projects among local populations, partly through enlisting the help of community organizers. It is also a means by which to legitimize development projects to donors who have become well versed in participatory rhetoric (Mosse, 2004). From the standpoint of local communities, participatory development is another avenue through which to negotiate access to resources, but it is not necessarily a form of empowerment or control over the development process.

Tania Li's ethnographic account of a series of development initiatives in Indonesia offers a similar perspective. Li rejects the idea that development efforts are

improving, and instead traces the continued patterns of power and approaches that impose shifting ideological frameworks upon the local population (Li, 2007). The local population, in turn, has learned to adapt and respond in order to secure resources to the best of their ability. Li's account notes that participatory approaches continue to neglect the role of power, specifically the power of the ruling regimes, the power implicit in the development organizations' position, and the structure of power created within technical and knowledge domains (Li, 2007; 275). The trope of participation often displaces the responsibility of development onto the local population without taking into account the power structures in which development organizations are themselves complicit.

Despite the seeming failure of participatory techniques to alter development, some still see participation as a key to transforming systems of oppression and impoverishment. Sarah White (1996) claims that transformative participation must emerge from the target population itself, but it can be supported and facilitated by outsiders who can provide resources, education, and assistance in negotiating or reshaping larger structural issues. Such transformation requires attention to the political nature of development, an assessment of the interests of all those involved in development projects, and the recognition that populations operate within an existing power dynamic and any change to the current construction will involve some conflict or tension (White, 1996). Samuel Hickey and Giles Mohan (2005) elaborate even further in their overview of participatory projects that have offered a form of transformative participation. These projects have all been situated as part of a larger political project, have connected participatory approaches to the underlying processes of development rather than being constrained to a form of representation, and have utilized participation

as a form of citizenship. Hickey and Mohan contend that successful development projects should have separate modes of accumulating political and economic power. This will prevent hegemonic control of the development project and create participatory avenues that truly can share power (Hickey and Mohan, 2004). Ultimately, to be transformative, participatory development must attend to its own political implications (Hickey and Mohan, 2004; 2005).

The idea of transformative development highlights the multiple systems within which a given project is embedded. As Robyn Eversole (2012) states in a recent discussion on the changing role of participation within development practice, "Lamenting either the unwillingness of communities to participate, or the unwillingness of top-down institutions to enable real participation, will not solve the basic contradiction of trying to create bottom-up development within a top-down frame. Nor, on the other hand, will self-help approaches that leave communities to create their own change, while ignoring their need to engage with, participate in, and access resources from larger systems." (Eversole, 2012; 32). This sentiment is recognition that the so-called top and bottom each in fact have a role within the development process.

The continued trope of top-down versus bottom-up development, however, may hinder a fuller exploration of the role of multiple systems. The idea of top-down and bottom-up approaches implies a hierarchical and dichotomous framework while also simplifying "top" regions of actions as progressively larger scales that fully encompass the bottom. The concept of assemblages (to be discussed later) helps to recast different development spaces as processes that interact in varied and non-uniform ways. Different development assemblages, such as governments, NGOs, financial institutions, and local

populations and community institutions may all offer possible positive or negative contributions to development efforts. The challenge of development is then recast, not as an effort to replace top-down approaches with bottom-up approaches, but rather as an effort to best understand the ideal role of different assemblages for specific projects and for reconstituting power relations within regions of action.

Using the conceptualization of assemblages is useful in considering how the FSC/LAF attempts to create transformative development through community-based efforts. The FSC/LAF simultaneously encourages farmers and rural residents to create independent, alternative institutions (such as cooperatives, credit unions, and farmers markets) and assists farmers and rural residents in gaining access to resources within the dominant system through government programs, financial institutions, or commercial markets. Its approach is hybrid and complex and requires that farmers themselves determine the best strategies for improving their livelihoods.

The FSC/LAF considers its role as a translator and coordinator for these processes. It translates the logic of government, market, educational, and financial programs for local farmers and residents and clarifies the means to access these resources. It also translates the needs and desires of local farmers and residents into policy change at the county, state, and federal level. This role of translation is what Eversole considers necessary for remaking participatory development (Eversole, 2012; 37). Part of the continuing dilemma with participatory development is the difference in ideological frameworks. These differences most acutely manifest in knowledge production and institutional frameworks. Translators help coordinate different players within development projects and ideally prevent one system from being subsumed under

the other (which is often done in terms of local knowledge being categorized only in terms of western based knowledge paradigms — see Agrawal, 1995).

The FSC/LAF's form of participatory development differs in many ways from the mainstream participatory practices. Originally, the FSC/LAF itself did not wield much power but rather served as a means to network, collaborate, and coordinate among several individual cooperatives. Over the past forty-eight years, the FSC/LAF has grown into an institution in its own right but continues to stress the important role of individual members and cooperatives in determining their own development visions and strategies. Along with supporting individual farmers and cooperatives, the FSC/LAF also works to transform the political system that shapes farmers livelihoods. But the FSC/LAF faces many similar issues regarding the role of participation and the struggle to cultivate collective action. This project explores how the FSC/LAF's form of participation seeks to overcome some of the dilemmas discussed above.

Racial Formation in the US Food System

In their mission statement the FSC/LAF states their goal to promote independent black farmers, and all family farmers in general. The statement reflects their general attitude. Their goal is to support black farmers but they are open to helping anyone facing the same dilemmas. This is the reason for the qualifier of family for farmers. But who are the black farmers? And how are independent black farmers to be supported and maintained? What does it mean for an organization to have a vision that includes the continuation of a racial category? Does this provide new ways of thinking about race? Or does this just reify old tarnished versions of essentialized notions of race that tie

characteristics to phenotype? In this section, I outline the ways that the category of race has been variously contested, explained, and repurposed by anti-racist theorists. I then lay out how the category of black farmers becomes constructed by looking at its purpose for the development goals of the FSC/LAF.

Race sits uncomfortably between reality and non-reality. The biological fiction of race originates within systems of oppression, and continued essentialist framings of race lend themselves to pathologizing and othering interpretations of racial difference. Yet, contemporary denials of race, in the form of color-blind politics, overlook and in fact maintain systemic and structural forms of injustice while still othering those who may deviate from the prescribed norms of dominant society. Racial theorists have approached this dilemma through different strategies of articulating the dialectical nature of race as a constructed, fluid, persistent, dynamic, influential, yet non-essentialist concept.

The effort to delink race from essentialist or biological qualities has led some theorists to call for the abandonment of race altogether and instead to pursue more authentic forms of collective alignment, such as culture, nationality, or regionalism. For example, Anthony Appiah (1992) considered race a metonym for culture. Race was a disabling label, but culture had a more fluid connotation and reflected a type of choice, accumulation, and hybridity through which people created their collective selves and personal identities. Walter Benn Michaels (1992), on the other hand, points out that culture can also be used as an essentialist category, tying certain groups, the boundary of which becomes solidified, to certain cultural products, attributes, and performances.

Paul Gilroy's *Against Race* (2000) provides a way to move beyond both the essentialized notions of race, and the cultural replacement of the category of race. But

moving beyond race poses epistemological problems. The very effort of working against racial formations and racism rely on the conception of race. Gilroy understands this dilemma, and yet insists it is important to convince those that have been subordinated that they will not lose the forms of solidarity and community, the political advances, identity, and culture that have been created by the experience of endured subordination along racial lines. Instead, these forms of communal interest should be fixed within their most authentic forms, as expressions of resistance. For Gilroy, the danger of building resistance through the racial category is that it opens the door to homogenizing national doctrines, militarism, or tyrannical strategies (2000).

But the racial category, and particularly the term "black," has in some cases been able to surpass its initial confines and serve as a more authentic expression of resistance. Stuart Hall (1997), in writing about race and the diaspora, notes that the racial category forms a means through which to create a collective identity, one that often transcends the original boundaries. Hall points to the fluidity of the term "black," especially in the UK, where diverse groups of "others" face similar treatment (Hall, 1997). The category of black speaks to the distinctively black experience but it is neither stable nor fixed.

The term black resonates beyond cultural variations and points to something distinct, but also ineffable. This idea was also pursued by the work of Randall Kenan (1999), who set out to understand the multiple meanings of being black in the US. Kenan's work clearly demonstrates the variation in the conception and practice of racial identities. Yet, there is a consistency among his stories that suggests that race is something other than culture, or identity. As he states, "And most vexing to come to terms with, for me at least, on an intellectual basis, is that emotional condition called

being black. To be sure, it was created by people who wanted to create an Other, black folk, for sinister purposes. But out of that damnable imposition sprung something I'm certain they never expected, and something which was grown into its own state of being: being black" (Kenan, 1999; 638). Kenan and Hall demonstrate that there is something quite different that has emerged under the label "black" than that which originated the racial category. This thing cannot be simply subsumed under other categories, such as culture or class.

The social constructionist perspective offers a means to discuss the impact of racial formations and address this mutable and fluid construction of the term, both in its oppressive and empowering manifestations. The term "floating signifier," used by Patricia Williams (1991) in her application of critical race theory to the legal apparatus, and later elaborated on by Stuart Hall (Jhally, 1996), gained currency as a way to term this real/unreal formation of race. This term positions the construction of race within the discursive realm. The body is the signifier, but its racial categorization is a socio-cultural and historical manifestation. It cannot be tied to any ontological reality, thus it is floating, always in the process of being reinterpreted and repositioned based on the social circumstances. Race is thus a social construction.

Omi and Winant's (1986) theory of racial formation adds an institutional approach to the social construction of race. They explore the way racial projects blend economic, political, and representational elements in order to construct the meaning of race within a particular social context. The institutional arrangement of race also indicates that attempts to eliminate race on a purely discursive level will ultimately fail.

While on the one hand the theory of race as a social construction has gained prominence, other critics have continued to focus on the role of the body in the production of race and have used phenomenological and materialist lenses to privilege embodied and bodily experiences as central to the conception of race. The embodied experience of being racialized becomes an experiential part of lived reality, and thus has an ontological bearing on identity. Frantz Fanon labeled this the historical-racial schema (Fanon, 2008; 91). He critiques Jean-Paul Sartre, who intellectually positions race outside of the ontology of consciousness. Fanon rebukes this position, claiming, "black consciousness is immanent in itself" (Fanon, 2008; 114). Erasing the racial category silences and obfuscates the black experience. But this is not just an ideological or mental experience. It emanates from the body. "Jean-Paul Sartre forgets that the black man suffers in his body quite differently from the white man" (Fanon, 2008; 117). Maintaining a purely discursive conception of race similarly erases the very physical, materialist, and embodied forms of racialized experience.

Arun Saldanha (2006) insists on the importance of bodies, phenotypes, and biologies in the construction of race. The problem with a social constructionist framework, according to Saldanha, is that it overlooks the material productivity of the body "Phenotype is constituted instead by genetic endowments, environmental conditions, exercise, hormones, diet, disease, ageing, etc. What language does to phenotype — phenotype itself — is charge it, circumscribe what it is capable of doing in particular spaces" (Saldanha, 2006; 12). As Saldanha points out, race begins with bodies, and the variations among bodies as material objects. The discursive realm "charges" these differences, adding valuations and imposing social orders based on material bodies.

The phenomenological approach has implications for dealing with racism as well. Linda Alcoff, in *Visualizing Identities* (2006), points to the perceptual training of racial identification that cannot simply be eliminated through intellectual reasoning. We react to visual markers because we are trained to react in certain ways. The specifics of the visual markers are nuanced, and vary depending on context. It is not innate, as Alcoff notes, citing studies done with children, for humans to classify other humans along phenotypical dimensions (Alcoff, 2006; 203). But once trained in this perceptual practice, it is quite difficult to undo.

These variations have implications for how race is conceived of within food and agricultural systems. Many scholars draw attention to the structural barriers that disadvantage people along racial, class, and gender lines (Gilbert et al. 2002; Fite, 1984; Couto, 1991;Green et al 2011; Minkoff-Zern, 2014). These break down into studies that reveal the racial project infused within modern, industrial agricultural production (Mintz, 1985; Luttinger, 2006; Barndt, 2008; Gilbert and Eli, 2002; Minkoff-Zern et al, 2011), and studies that demonstrate the racialization of food distribution and access to sufficient, health, and culturally appropriate food (Coveney and O'Dwyer, 2009; Gordon et al, 2011; Raja et al, 2008; Sbicca, 2012). Among most of these studies, race is evaluated through pre-existing demographic evaluations. The racial issue is not how race comes to be constructed, but how race is implicated through inequity and injustice.

Many studies of food and race have also documented and celebrated the forms of resistance and cultural traditions found in agricultural and culinary practices among communities of color and other often overlooked or disenfranchised groups (White, 2011; Nembard, 2014; McCutcheon, 2011; Williams-Forson, 2001; Carney, 2001; Hurt, 2003;

Bower, 2008; Engelhardt, 2001; Beoku-Betts, 2002; Inness, 2001). Race is viewed as, but not necessarily equated with, its cultural manifestations. It aligns closely with the social construction framing of race – an identity that is cultivated but not essentially tied to a group of people. Some of these studies though draw more on a materialist framing through examining the intimate connection between food and the body.

A growing number of scholars have been investigating the racialization of alternative food movements. This has largely revealed the way that race, and often whiteness in particular, frames the narratives, discourses, collective identities, and spaces of alternative food movements (Guthman, 2008; Allen, 2008). These often draw from the growing interest in how race manifests through place making. Typically, social-constructionists views are utilized to examine how race is represented, both within places and among discourses. But materialist and phenomenological approaches are also being used to explore how bodies gather, interact, and manifest race within interactive and experiential ways (Slocum 2008; 2011).

These different constructions of race are not mutually exclusive, but inform each other and interact within the manifestation of race. The body, the lived experiences, the discursive and social ordering of phenotypical or performative signifiers and institutional arrangements coalesce to produce what becomes known as race. These spaces where race manifests are fault lines — spaces where race is evoked, asserted, contested, experienced, or imposed. These fault lines are spaces in which the racial category describes the relational movement, either of conflict, or of gathering and collecting of people together.

To understand the role of race among FSC/LAF, it is important to note that they are not focusing on race at large, but on black farmers in particular. This changes their

project, and defines what they are doing. The two terms together refer to a particular history, and a particular movement and ideological position. The term black farmer refers to a set of social relations. It indicates a congealing of bodies into identifiable groupings, groupings that may be arbitrary in that other variations could have possibly emerged but, given the historic and social contexts, make sense teleologically.

Within the FSC/LAF, there are three distinct fault lines, or places where the category of black farmer is constructed. These spaces all involve social constructions, institutional formations, and material embodiments but each in different combinations. First, race is used to confront and transform discriminatory practices that black farmers have faced, not just on an interpersonal level through the violence and intimidation of other southern residents, but systematically through government programs and other institutions. Retaining the category serves to reveal the forms of systematic discrimination black farmers have faced.

Second, the term black farmer has been used to align those with similar political and ideological goals. Those working with black farmers have been largely committed to ending all forms of oppression and discrimination while promoting ideas such as food sovereignty and food justice for all. The category of black farmers collectively affirms political momentum within the food system towards racial justice in particular, an issue that is sometimes neglected both in conventional and alternative food movements. While this alignment most commonly involves those that also personally identify as black, other identities of people have also become involved within the movement, not only with the FSC/LAF in particular but also with other black farmer organizations. Several non-black identifying people that have worked with the FSC/LAF for many years become

associated with the term black farmer, through both external racial discrimination and internal coding. These slippages reveal the way the term works as a collecting force that expands beyond personal identity.

The third fault line through which race is manifested is through the creation of subjective identities and communal ties. This is not simply to say that black farmers have a unique culture. Such phrasing evokes ideas of homogenous groups with clear boundaries, or a specific set of rituals and practices. To some extent, there are cultural patterns that are distinct to black farmers, and some of these patterns vary across the South, while others are strikingly similar to cultural practices of white southern farmers. By focusing on the communal practices and subjective positions, I am focusing on what the term black farmer, as opposed to Mississippi farmer, evokes. There exists among those who position themselves as part of the black farmers a variant of ideological, aesthetic, embodied, and practiced ways of farming that shape views of agriculture, development, and community. These are not universal, but are cultivated elements and deemed important enough to maintain, even as other cultural elements are infused, reformed, and adopted from other backgrounds.

Ethnographic Filmmaking as Knowledge Production

The FSC/LAF has, over time, supported multiple development projects, provided educational programs, training workshops, and helped form rural cooperatives, all to improve black farmers' livelihoods. Through its efforts the FSC/LAF has evolved into a politico-economic institution, designed to protect black farmers' rights and advocate on their behalf, and into a socio-cultural institution that generates a particular form of

African American rural development drawn from the historical and cultural experiences of black farmers. These activities are formed through a series of practices, practices that have come to form social orders, roles, and connections for the farmers and rural residents involved with the FSC/LAF. In order to focus on these practices, this research took an ethnographic approach to understanding the FSC/LAF's form of development and in particular used ethnographic film as a means to fully engage with the tacit, material, sensory aspects of these practices, framing them as relational formations, inevitably tied to the social-historical contexts. Yet, it may not be apparent that film is well suited for this particular inquiry. The historical formation of ethnographic film has been quite contested, and led to several varied theoretical and epistemological approaches. This section will briefly trace these different approaches and clearly position my own use of ethnographic film, or more precisely, how ethnographic knowledge was produced through filmmaking.

The history of ethnographic film often begins with Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1922). Although not produced by an anthropologist, this film resonates with other early films by ethnographers, such as Edward Curtis' *In the Land of the Head Hunters* (1914) and Alfred Cort Haddon's Torres Strait footage (1898). This use of film was similar to the conceptual framing of salvage anthropology. Film was perceived as a new way to document cultures that were under threat by the ever-encroaching modern world. But in order to preserve these unadulterated exotic practices, filmmakers, such as Flaherty, were not concerned with capturing life "as it is," so to speak. *Nanook* was a constructed presentation designed to showcase a romanticized vision of Inuit life. Film

was a means of curating and exhibiting cultural practices so that they could be shared with a wider audience.

These early films did not differ much from other cinematic practices. However, as the art form of cinema developed, the ethnographic use of film began to redefine itself. In anthropology's effort to define itself as a science, film was positioned as a more advanced tool for capturing the cultural activities and behaviors without the subjective influence of the researcher. If culture was believed to be observable, in a positivist sense, then the camera could record long sequences of cultural actions that could be stored and viewed repeatedly for continual and shared analyses. The camera used in this way was a robust and precise form of documentation. Filmmakers such as Margaret Mead exemplify this way of using ethnographic film. In her film made with Gregory Bateson, *Bathing Babies In Three Cultures* (1954), four mothers from three different cultures are shown bathing their babies. The narrator points out the connection between micro-behaviors of mothers towards infants and larger cultural paradigms. The US example is given a historical context, demonstrating the change of attitudes over time. This approach to film has continued through to today and is used most prominently to study health, psychology, education, and developmental behavior.

Interestingly, another of Mead and Bateson's films, *Trance and Dance in Bali* (1951), takes a much more fluid and even artistic approach to documenting culture. Partly, this difference can perhaps be attributed to differing attitudes towards film between Mead and Bateson. In an interview with both of them (Brand, 1976), Bateson and Mead begin to discuss the practice of filming and the role of tripods. Bateson admonishes the use of tripods, saying that it creates a dead camera. He argues that the

camera should be fluid, responsive to social movements, and able to find the most relevant and interesting moments. Mead, on the other hand, continues to emphasize the importance of stable, long takes. For Mead, film is meant to record as unobtrusively as possible in order to produce data. This moment in their interview is a small glimpse into a much larger set of questions: how should film be used ethnographically, and what is its relationship to art and science?

Tim Asch's film, the *Ax Fight* (1975), offers another approach to using film to understand social and cultural formation. Again, the camera is a robust form of documentation, but it is not discrete behaviors that Asch is investigating, but rather inter-relational events. He then uses film itself as the medium of analysis, offering the viewer guidelines for viewing and understanding the significance of the event as it unfolds through reshowing the sequence in slow motion, and with guiding overlays. Asch's approach to filming was always collaborative, in that he worked with anthropologists in the field in order to make his work. Ultimately, he considered film as a key tool for teaching ethnography in the classroom. But as a tool for teaching, the film needed to carefully capture essential information and most often be accompanied by a study guide.

Asch expanded the use of film as a form of reflexive elicitation in his film *Jero on Jero: A Balinese Trance Séance* (1980). In this film, the first half follows Jero, a Balinese healer. The second half watches Jero watch herself along with Linda Connor, the collaborating anthropologist for the project. The reflexive elicitation within *Jero on Jero* is rather limited, but this process has continued to be important within filmic research. This turn, in line with the anthropological shift towards reflexivity, recast film as more than just a form of data collection, but as a means of data elicitation.

Like Mead, Asch used film as a form of documentation in order to capture and later analyze social behaviors, interactions and events. This use of film fit more comfortably with anthropology's concern with becoming firmly placed among established sciences, and away from interpretative or artistic practices. Following this sentiment, films that do play with the artful and sensory capabilities of the medium (for example Robert Gardner, Trinh T. Min-ha, and also Lucian Taylor who screened his work in an art gallery) have been largely criticized by anthropologists. Some visual anthropologists have attempted to create clear and rigorous guidelines as to what qualifies as an ethnographic film (or at the very least, a filmic ethnography) so as to maintain the scientific standards of the field. Some of the proposed guides have been that ethnographic film should reflexively convey research methods (Ruby, 2000) or that ethnographic film should show whole bodies, actions, and scenes without subjective selection or editing (Heider, 2006). Film has also been used as a tool to popularize anthropology as a way to make it relevant to society. Largely, this has been implemented through the creation of anthropological based television shows.

Other prominent visual anthropologists, most notably Jean Rouch, David MacDougall, and Anna Grimshaw, have demonstrated in both writing and film production that the use of film can offer much more than an advanced form of data collection, and that this conceptualization of the camera has limited the ethnographic potential of film and, by association, other creative mediums such as photography, drawing, and performance (see also Tim Ingold). Summarily, this alternative perspective has used filmmaking as a unique mode of ethnographic inquiry and as an alternative form of knowledge production. Ethnographic knowledge is found within the material,

relational, and sensory entanglements among filmmaker, participants, and audiences. Film's advantage is its ability to attend to experiential moments, not its ability to preserve behavior from an objective standpoint, a feat that is admittedly unattainable anyway. From this perspective, the crucial question concerning the ethnographic relevance of film no longer lies along the artistic/scientific spectrum. Instead, the goal of film is to engage with and learn about cultural truths as they occur through practices and activities. A much wider range of techniques, including fiction film and poetic approaches, hold possibilities for exploring cultural truths. The relevance is in the application, the use of techniques as explorations and even experimentation through which ethnographic knowledge is produced. The creation of filmic material is understood and analyzed as a practice occurring through an exchange between filmmaker and participants. It is through this perspective that my project developed.

This approach draws on the concept of reflexive science as a means to gain ethnographic knowledge. By reflexive science, I am not referring to the reflexive turn of anthropologists who confess to their own position within a project, or reflexive approaches that seek data elicitation (such as *Jero on Jero)*. Rather, I am referring to an epistemological approach that considers positionality not as an issue in need of containment and correction, but as the very impetus for research itself. Michael Burawoy offers a thorough description of reflexive science as an alternative to positivist science. While positivist science attempts to bracket and contain contextual affects, reflexive science makes a strength of contextual fluctuations. Positivist science tries to create knowledge that is reliable, replicable, and representative. Reflexive science creates knowledge through interventions and focuses on processes and the connections between

multiple points of action that give rise to what appears to be structures (Burawoy, 1991). This makes reflexive science particularly suitable for the theoretical approach based on assemblage theory, as discussed in the next section.

Some methods in the social sciences, such as standardized interviews and surveys, seem easily associated with Burawoy's description of positivist science. These approaches attempt to create generalizable data from multiple consistent data points by narrowing variation to one single variable (or at least attempting to do so). Burawoy points out that participant observation, particularly in the form of grounded theory, also relies on a positivist framework. What distinguishes participant observation from a reflexive standpoint are the means and assumptions towards knowledge production. From a reflexive standpoint, the researcher is not attempting to observe social life as it happens in her absence, but instead uses her intervention as a researcher as a point of gaining knowledge. The researcher is also not looking for consistent or representative concepts (What generally do farmers from this area do?), but rather seeks out processes by which concepts manifest (How does this farmer make things happen and what is shaping these actions?). Over time, a reflexive researcher seeks to understand social phenomena through connecting the multiple points of action, not through aggregating multiple data points. For example, Burawoy explores the concept of race produced in Zambia. To understand race, Burawoy looked for different spaces of social interaction that produced racial tensions or racial concepts, and those that contradicted it as well, while also perceiving his own position as part of these ongoing social productions (Burawoy, 1991).

A similar approach was used within my project. Filmic ethnography offers a different form of ethnographic production, analysis, and presentation that aligns itself

closely to Burawoy's reflexive science. The data is not aggregated into distinct categories and theoretical models, but demonstrated within the flows and movements of everyday life. It is living theory; theory in action as it guides everyday life. Even with the most punctuated editing techniques, film must ultimately be viewed over a set time duration. The viewer must engage with these moments of lived action when theory itself is not simply an analytical model, but a guiding force for movement and action.

This is similar to the idea of ethnographic cinema developed by Jean Rouch. For Rouch, any film project would inevitably be a cultural disruption (2003). Yet, the goal of the anthropologist/filmmaker was to understand this disruption as it occurred within the flow of action and culture. As a trained anthropologist, the ethnographer/filmmaker could remain attuned to this flow of action and adjust and focus the camera to the movement – acting like a bullfighter in front of a bull (2003; 94). By engaging in a project in this way, the researcher is able to penetrate into reality, rather than leaving it to unroll itself in front of the observer.

This type of engagement relies on an intersubjective dialogue for the production of knowledge. Knowledge is not simply produced through the categorical accumulation of data by the researcher. Nor is it simply observing endogenous sets of categorical frameworks. It is something altogether new, something that neither the researcher nor the subjects would have fully articulated nor necessarily understood before the project began. It is an engagement that leads to new knowledge through the process of the meeting of different perceptive frameworks. The researcher and the subjects communicate with each other in order to engage in the practice of research and, through this process, both are

transformed. The categories the researcher came with must be opened and expanded to account for the flows of activity that come to bear on the project.

This type of intersubjectivity draws largely on the ideas of Johannes Fabian. Fabian emphasized that ethnographic knowledge emerges within a shared time and space, in which a lack of understanding may exist, but communication is enacted in order for knowledge to be shared between researcher and subject (1983). Fabian's work stems from a concern for objectivity, which he considered in danger of being perverted through positivism or relativism (2001). From a positivist standpoint, objectivity is assumed to be obtainable through standardizing methodology. But this type of objectivity is only relative to the given established paradigm (Fabian, 2001). In other words, the positivist scientist contends that there is a real world, and this real world can be quantified and measured based on methods validated by the existing paradigms. Relativism, on the other hand, denies the possibility of transcultural objectivity. The real world, so to speak, is only a manifestation of different perceptions.

Fabian instead focused on intersubjective communication as the source of ethnographic knowledge (1983). Through communication, ethnographic knowledge is produced, or objectified, becoming a thing that could then be analyzed. There is a reality, with real social process, real cultural elements. Yet, our ability to observe and understand these is not found through straightforward observation, but rather through making the source of communication the object to then be studied. Knowing, for Fabian, is processual, not additive. Knowing as attained through acting in social settings, yet in the process this also transforms what is known (Fabian, 2001). The world which we have

access to shifts and bends during our process of investigation and this fact neither negates the existence of a real world nor allows a neutral stand point for understanding it.

The goal of this project was to cultivate this type of intersubjective communication. Film served as the medium through which participants and I sought to better understand their practices of development. Participants imprinted onto the camera their thoughts, performances and practices. My framing and editing in turn offered my interpretation of these events. The repeated nature of these practices offered a means to refine and amend our collective understandings.

Filmmaking is not just a different way to engage in the process of knowledge production, it produces a different type of knowledge. Film engages with the world through its material, sensory, and performative aspects. Filming is a time-based practice, attentive to the unfolding and ordering of events as they happen. This footage is then ordered into a structure of meaning, but meaning is never contained by the efforts of the filmmaker. As David MacDougall has stated, "wise filmmakers create structures in which being is allowed to live, not only in isolated glimpses but in moments of revelation throughout the whole work" (2006; 4). MacDougall is advocating a type of openness in filmmaking in which the meaning of the film expands beyond the analysis and purpose of the filmmaker or subjects. In comparing film to writing, MacDougall states "film is at once more and less strange than writing." (1998; 246). By this he means that what is included in film are not just details of the differences between cultures, but the commonalities of being human that are usually left out of written ethnographic description. While writing focuses on a few notable details, film offers a continuous co-presentation of the cultural phenomenon taking place. This co-presentation offers a

means to engage in nonlinguistic features, not through translation by writing, but through physical engagement between view and filmic material (1998; 266).

This is a different form of anthropological knowledge. MacDougall labels this type of knowledge relational (1998; 79). It is not an object itself, and it is not a reflection of experience or of reality, but the experience is itself part of the knowledge. Writing is effective in speaking about human cultures while film can reveal how humans live within, and transmit, culture (1998; 80-81). This point is especially important for addressing the ongoing "theory" debate around visual anthropology. Often, visual anthropology, and ethnographic film in particular, is asked to account for its ability to present and defend (with evidence) anthropological theories. Yet, what ethnographic film offers is theory as it lives, moves, is created, performed, and understood by people. Abdul JanMohamed (2005), in discussing literature, has used the term diegetic theory to distinguish between the type of theory living in novels, versus exegetic theory that is found in analytical writings, theses, and essays. According to JanMohamed, most of western philosophy (with the exception of phenomenology) is exegetic, or based on analytical modes. African American theory, however, has developed within narrative genres that foreground experience in order to encode theories. Similarly, ethnographic film offers a different form of theorizing and understanding of culture. The film itself is not raw data to be analyzed, but is already a construction of cultural interpretation. The filming itself is a form of editing and selection during which the filmmaker must be sharply attuned to the relevant flows of meaning. Editing, as MacDougall has stated (2006), is not the analysis but the careful refining and shaping of filmic knowledge, leaving it open enough to still present culture as it is lived.

Film is especially apt at exploring cultural phenomena that are themselves relational; concepts such as gender, race, or class, which emerge only through their social constructions (1998; 81). Film offers a phenomenological sense of these categories; a way to recognize the coalescing of attributes that give rise to their social manifestations without limiting them to simple cause and effect. Often our understandings of relational phenomena are based on perceptual training, not deductive analysis. Ethnographic filming is a means through which this relational form of knowledge can emerge through this type of understanding.

Trinh T Min-ha makes similar claims about the type of knowledge produced through filmmaking. Her films are not meant to be about certain subjects, nor are they meant to make objects out of her experiences. Rather, she sees her films as "speaking nearby," experiencing, and being co-present with people and phenomena. To glimpse at but never fully capture the meaning existing within the social world. "Reality runs away, reality denies reality. Filmmaking is after all a question of "framing" reality in its course." (2014; 43). Ethnographic filmmaking can be useful in this form of knowledge production, knowledge that is not analytically conclusive, but rather encoded within the process of lived experiences.

The filmmaking within this project attempted to similarly explore the process and practices involved in rural development efforts. The FSC/LAF supports a set of strategies designed to improve the livelihoods of farmers and rural residents, such as land retention, cooperative development, and policy change. Yet, these strategies on their own are designed to reconfigure institutional relations. This research was concerned with how these institutional strategies become practices in the lives of the farmers and rural

residents involved. Specifically, how do black farmers take up these goals on a daily basis, and how are they implemented in material, ideological, and aesthetic manners? Filmmaking offers a means to explore the process by which black farmers pursue rural development and embed it into their lives and identities.

Methodology

My approach to studying the FSC/LAF was shaped by my early experiences with the ambiguous nature of this network. As a network, the FSC/LAF did not necessarily implement projects itself, but offered support (financially, technically, legally, and personally), education, assistance, and motivation for a wide range of projects that were implemented by members often under the banner of the FSC/LAF. The training and workshops varied over time based on several factors, including the latest sustainable practices being researched by government and university outreach centers. The credit unions and cooperatives were established and maintained by the members themselves, not the FSC/LAF staff. Yet, the presence of the FSC/LAF had a significant effect on what was possible for black farmers in the rural south. Even farmers or rural residents who were not members of the FSC/LAF felt the impact of its presence. Many of the people I met, not just through the FSC/LAF, but throughout the rural South in general, spoke of the great success of the FSC/LAF. The FSC/LAF itself has summarized many of its accomplishments through measuring the successes of its membership in terms of land retained, cooperatives developed, the number of part time and full time farmers, and changed polices. At the same time, many farmers, members, and outside organizations were critical of the FSC/LAF. It has existed now for forty-eight years, yet rural poverty

continues and black farmers still struggle. My research began with the premise that the FSC/LAF did have an impact on black farmers, albeit a complicated and imperfect impact. My goal then was to understand how the FSC/LAF affected the rural south — not just by its own practices but by the practices that farmers and rural residents took on through the support or space provided by the FSC/LAF.

During my preliminary research, I vacillated between focusing on the experience of black farmers to focusing on the FSC/LAF as an organization. Over time, however, I discovered that the most interesting aspect of this network was the interactions between the farmers and FSC/LAFs. I wanted to better understand how these interactions led to transformative practices that facilitated change for rural communities. However, the type of change that was promoted within the FSC/LAF's network was varied, and at times even contradictory. On the one hand, many of the members and staff supported a radical approach to development advocating for the creation of alternative institutional forms that could support black farmers independent of the dominant agricultural system. In some ways this position drew from theorists such as Booker T. Washington (1895) who advocated for developing economic sustenance, largely through farming. Some organizers argued that if black farmers had pursued more of Washington's plan, and less of W.E.B. DuBois's (1903), they may all be wealthy landowners today. This position also had roots in Black Nationalist movements. On the other hand, many of the strategies drew from the market-capitalist ideologies of the dominant agricultural system. These strategies sought ways for black farmers to either follow the industrializing path of large farmers, or become specialized niche farmers and gain access to the current dominant

system. Part of this approach also involved political strategies designed to restructure government resources in support of small, limited-resource, minority farmers.

One way to theoretically align these seemingly opposing strategies is to consider how change to the dominant agricultural system may not necessarily take the form of broad structural shifts, but rather may result from the many changes to relationships. Instead of considering the current agricultural system as a unified and over-determining structure, it may serve better to focus on the multiple relationships, interactions, and expressions that give shape and manifest the system. Drawing ideas from actor-network theory and assemblage theories, we can consider structures not as stable entities, but processes formed through webs of relations between people, things, and natural elements (DeLanda, 2006; Latour, 2007; Law, 1999). The groupings that emerge from the web, such as class, community, or nation, are effects of the forms of connections and power between them (Law, 1999). This conceptualization may assist in connecting the macro to the micro, and conceptualizing how structure and agency interact (Latour, 2007).

When structures, groups, or communities are considered as assemblages, their properties are determined not by the aggregation of the properties of the components that make up the whole, but rather by the exercise of the capacities of the components (DeLanda, 2006). Assemblages enable or restrict certain capacities of each component through specific mechanisms, or processes. These mechanisms produce not only the image of a structure, but also a range of effects that in turn impact the component parts.

Just as structures are not static, stable, or discrete entities, the mechanisms that produce them are not either. These processes are open, with no precise beginning or ends; they are lines of becoming (Deleuze and Guttari, 1988; Ingold, 2011) Tim Ingold explains lines of becoming as the melody that emerges from the connection between an instrument and a player. The melody is not simply a static connection between two component parts, but results from their interaction (2011; 83). Lines of becoming exist within time, always emerging, changing, and producing as they move along. Connections are never static or stable. Within a social structure, such as the FSC/LAF, the lines of becoming emerge through the mechanisms that enable the capacities of the component parts: the people, environments, plants, animals, and ideologies. They are the practices that create stability or change. This makes a focus on the lines of becoming especially interesting for the purposes of development.
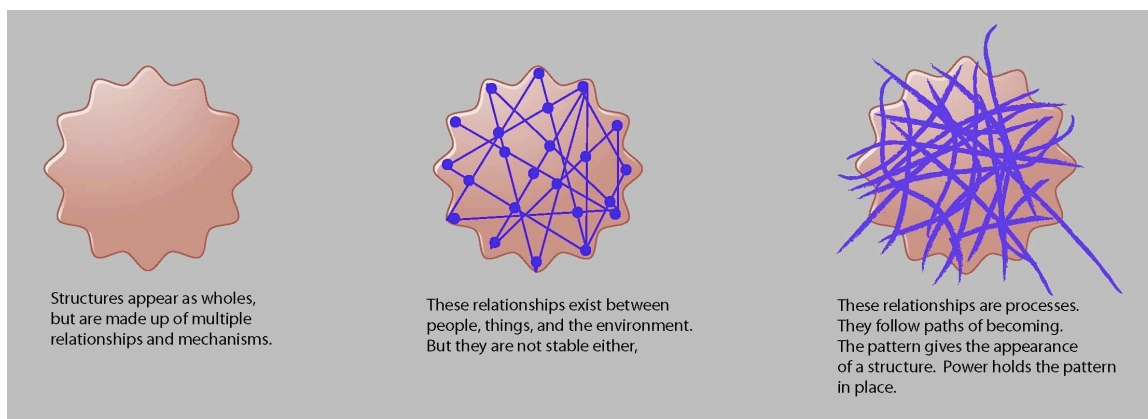
Figure 2: Assemblage Theory diagram

Using this framework, development can be considered as an attempt to change assemblages. If the assemblage of the current dominant agricultural system has resulted in persistent poverty among black farmers and rural populations, than reducing poverty

requires changing the assemblage. But what are changing are the mechanisms of the assemblage that involve the component parts. Development happens in situ and on the move. Development is not an additive process, but rather a shifting of patterns of relationships and practices to create different assemblages. Therefore, this research investigates the development process at an interaction level, considering not just how people relate to each other, but also how they relate to the material world, the conceptual world, and to other assemblages included the political, economic, and social environment they find themselves in. In looking at these relationships, I pay particular attention to the material, ideological, and aesthetic qualities.

The effort to shift these mechanisms happens on two fronts. The creation of a new assemblage, or new social mechanisms, involves undoing or repurposing components that are linked within other assemblages. Component parts are not raw materials, waiting to be utilized, but exist already within social situations. The creation of a new assemblage, or alternative system, requires both an effort at establishing the mechanisms of the new assemblage and an effort to dismantle, or at least reshape, existing assemblages. Possible transformations therefore involve both manipulating social mechanisms that stabilize assemblages that produce desired outcomes as well as destabilizing mechanisms that create undesirable or oppressive outcomes. Development involves both the creation of something new, and the destruction (or reconfiguration) of something old. It is a process of carving out space for the new to exist.

This framing helps to understand the FSC/LAF as a network and to understand their seemingly contradictory strategies. Their strategies do not overturn the dominant system, nor present a completely independent alternative. Rather they work to

deconstruct the mechanisms of the current agricultural system while rebuilding alternative mechanisms of agriculture and rural development. The FSC/LAF cannot create a new world independent of the current assemblages that shape it. Black farmers may want to reconstitute a new system of relationships, a new order of social living, but to do so they must contend with the forces that negate these efforts. Pushing for equal rights and equal access within the current, dominant system of agriculture and governance opens up new spaces of possibilities and new potentials to act. Doing so also changes the nature of the current dominant system, by expanding it to include previously excluded people and groups. Under this framework, development would involve the manipulation of mechanisms in order to reconstruct assemblages to produce alternative outcomes. But if it is so that any given situation involves multiple assemblages each containing multiple complex mechanisms, then the next questions are: How to identify which mechanisms are key to transforming a given social milieu? And what changes in mechanisms will lead to desired outcomes?

Through extensive participation with the activities of staff, farmers, and co-op members, I looked for key spaces of negotiation, repeated actions, and emphasized practices. This research was largely based on the production of a collaborative video project that started in the summer of 2010, but took place mostly between April 2011 and July 2013. Creating a collaborative video project was a way to dive into the processes associated with the FSC/LAF. Filming gave me access, a purpose, and a record of multiple interactions associated with the FSC/LAF. Even when not filming, I shadowed staff, co-cop members, and farmers through a wide range of activities. Initially I cast a wide net and met with many FSC/LAF members and associated farmers or rural

residents. Over time, I narrowed my focus to specific cooperatives, farmers and organizers in order to participate in repeated and ongoing activities. I will discuss the details of creating this collaborative video project in more details in the next chapter.

This research examines both discursive and non-discursive dimensions to social practices and relationships. The discursive frameworks emerge through different types of interactions between farmers, community members, FSC/LAF organizers, and myself and can be learned through dialogue and observation. The non-discursive dimensions are performative in nature, embedded in the form and style of action. This dimension can best be learned through participation. Therefore, I engage in social interactions through what I consider a participant camera, engaging in activities as a participant in the social interactions. In becoming part of the action, the camera documents the multiple gazes interacting.

My research was based out of two main sites: the Alabama field office in Epes, Alabama and the Mississippi field office in Jackson, Mississippi. From each of these sites I networked with several FSC/LAF staff, farmers, cooperatives, USDA agents, and researchers. I shadowed and participated in FSC/LAF events and workshops, filming many of them. I also participated in several other events, workshops, and presentations offered to farmers in the area but hosted by other organizations, especially those sponsored by the USDA. I spent time on individual farms, participated in farm work, and attended social events with farmers. I also worked closely with three cooperatives associated with the FSC/LAF both through the creation of videos with them, and participating in their meetings and events. From the FSC/LAF staff, farmers, and cooperative members, I gathered oral histories, conducted interviews, and had informal

conversations about their visions of development, goals, obstacles, and the role of the FSC/LAF in assisting development projects. The ethnographic material was supported by reports and articles produced by and for the FSC/LAF, as well as archival material such as letters, memos, and official writings of the FSC/LAF found at the Amistad Research Center.

Chapter Outline

The next two chapters offer more contextual information for the dissertation. Chapter two outlines the collaborative video project created as part of this research. Chapter three provides a brief background on the FSC/LAF and my field sites. The following three chapters, four, five, and six, are organized around the practices associated with the FSC/LAF's three key development strategies: land retention, cooperative development, and policy change.

Land

Chapter four looks at territorial negotiations between black farmers and opposing interests. The current dominant agricultural system coupled with the legal conception of private property create a set of forces that threaten black farmers' land holdings and residence in the black belt. The FSC strives to help black farmers legally and financially retain land ownership in the Blackbelt. Land provides the right to reside, right to occupy, and assemble. The process of collective organizing requires the space on which to gather and reside free from harassment. Land ownership is also connected to several key political rights. Being free from threat of eviction allows for continuous access to voting.

Land ownership also facilitates running for office and supporting those running. But most importantly, land ownership provides the first basic element for developing an independent economy. The FSC/LAF emphasizes a land-based economy as a way to separate from the dominant system.

Land ownership, thus provides a means to reconsider and reconstruct a new type of social organization through economic independence. While landownership is a key part of transforming the current agricultural relationships for black farmers, I also found that efforts at territorial transformations were more extensive than ownership alone. Alongside the effort to retain, maintain, or attain ownership over landholdings, several of the FSC/LAF members were also transforming a wider range of spatial practices, including the naming of place, memorializing place, occupying place, and practicing agriculture in places. Access to land and its material benefits are commonly known within the development literature. In this chapter, I connect this effort for land ownership with a wider range of transformative practices involving spatial rights at large.

Cooperatives

The fifth chapter looks at the efforts to change relationships of smallholding black farmers to the current agricultural economic system. Cooperatives are a way for farmers to negotiate their position with a set of economic relationships. Cooperatives can provide a means for collective bargaining, securing better input prices and facilitating market prices and commitments. Cooperatives also help farmers share and access knowledge, and as an entity can secure new forms of funding through grants and loans. This additional access to resources and increase in scale also provides a way for farmers to create mechanisms for improving their production and creating value added products.

Cooperatives are thus a way to transform individuals' ability to negotiate within the current system, while simultaneously providing the possibility to create something altogether new, and independent (at some scale) of the dominant system. The FSC/LAF advocates for cooperatives as the ideal economic model for smallholding black farmers, and even teaches this model to other rural populations in other countries.

The FSC/LAF promotes cooperatives through training and teaching farmers about cooperatives and supporting them as they work through the process of forming and becoming a cooperative. This was often a tedious and difficult process. Even once formed, cooperatives must be regularly maintained in order to continue to exist. The cooperative is a form of assemblage, created through social mechanisms enacted by the component parts. This chapter looks at the practices involved in establishing and maintaining cooperatives.

Political Identity

The FSC engages in a number of policy efforts in order to secure funding for socially disadvantaged farmers, for civil rights programs in the USDA, and to support its efforts at community building. These policy efforts change the political game for black farmers, and family farmers. They also define a population. What is being sustained, or developed, is a concept of a certain group of farmers. Often this population is defined through a combination of a racial category (black farmers) or a class category (family farmers). But what is being sought for, in these political efforts, is not simply the inclusion of multiple identities within the given system (although this is part of it), but the creation of room within the given system for alternative subjective positions and community practices to exist — room for an "us" in the realm of a "them". This means

that simply allowing black farmers to join the industrial agricultural business would not be satisfactory for the FSC/LAF. Such a move would definitely reform the current system, but would not transform current practices and thus would not provide the transformative form of development.

Based on this framework, this chapter examines the spaces of group formation. What are the processes that distinguish us from them and set limits? What are the processes that congeal us together and create a shared identity? How are groups formed and maintained? Yet, the boundaries are always porous, the group is always heterogeneous, and always in need of continual maintenance.

But the maintenance of the cultural group known as black farmers happens not only through efforts to limit and end the oppression, but also through embodied practices of being a black farmer. Many of the farmers, rural residents, and FSC/LAF organizers work to create stronger embodied practices, ideologies, and communal relations that strengthen the existence of this group, and hold on to the key cultural and identity elements. Chapter six explores how identity is enacted and how it lives within bodies and through relationships.

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Chapter 2. Creative Inquiry: Ethnographic Filmmaking as Adaptive Co-Production

Introduction

This chapter explores the use of collaborative ethnographic film within my research. My approach to filmmaking considers film as a unique mode of inquiry and alternative form of knowledge production. Drawing on the work of filmmakers such as Jean Rouch and David MacDougall, I use film as a participatory engagement in which existent knowledge is not documented, but altogether new knowledge is produced between filmmaker and subjects. And the type of knowledge that emerges expands beyond the boundaries of discursive realms to include the material, sensory, and aesthetic aspects of social life.

This way of using film draws on a framework of reflexive science and considers ethnography as an intersubjective process of shared time and place. Using a collaborative approach, participants and I engaged in the shared activity of filmmaking. From this vantage point, knowledge was produced at three key moments, through the filming, editing, and screening. These moments were not singular, but repeated throughout my research process. For me, filmmaking is a practice. And as a practice, the ethnographic importance of filmmaking was not based on capturing or extracting information from social realities, but arose from my own immersion in the flow of activity in creating social life, thereby offering insights into the world with which I was engaged.

The goal of this project is to examine the FSC/LAF's development practices in order to better understand the processes by which people sought to transform the

assemblages in which they existed through material, ideological, and aesthetic means. In order to study these transformative practices, my methodology needed to offer access to this dimension of social interaction. Film was a key methodological tool for participating in, observing and documenting these interactions, exploring both the verbal and nonverbal communications expressed. The use of film also created a platform on which individuals and groups could directly express their visions of development and subjective identities, as well as a medium to then collaboratively discuss and interpret the material that was filmed.

To explore this idea further, I want to turn to a film clip produced early in my research. At the beginning of my stay in Epes, Alabama, during the summer of 2010, Osagie Idehen (Osa), one of the field staff in the Rural Training and Research Center, invited me to film him while he went to feed and check on the FSC/LAF demonstration goats.

Film 2: Demonstration Goats https://vimeo.com/139802987/09f05c77b6

This early engagement with Osa brought together many of the key aspects of how film played a crucial role in this project. The presence of the camera was first an impetus for generating explanations and reflections on practices that may otherwise remain unarticulated. Because nonverbal elements were recorded, their relevance became heightened within my engagements with participants. Second, it prompted participants to demonstrate activities and material elements that played a role in their farm projects. Not only did the camera bring awareness to the nonverbal aspects of our engagement, but also participants took the opportunity to demonstrate and highlight material elements and practices. Third, the use of film served as a means to engage with the aesthetic realm of farming, rural life, and rural development. Osa indicated that the demonstration barn was created to comport with a certain rural aesthetics common among farmers in the area.

Aesthetics became one of the crucial foci of this project. The term itself elicits many connotations, and has become a contested, and even devalued, term in both art and anthropology. Generally aesthetics is associated with a Kantian definition of a disinterested judgment of beauty. This definition has led to critiques of aesthetics as an elitist, culturally specific, and objectifying concept. Yet the term itself has a longer and broader history, stemming from the Greek definition, *aesthesis,* meaning sensory experience (MacDougall, 1999: 5). This is the meaning I draw on in this project: aesthetics as a form of culturally patterned sensory experiences.

Among anthropologists, this wider definition has been used to explore a range of practices and productions, not simply artifacts that fall into the category of art, a category that itself becomes exclusive and problematic, especially when applied cross-culturally. Aesthetics offers a means to explore the role of non-verbal formal qualities, the

relationship between forms, and the value of these perceptual experiences as they convey and create cultural meaning and social order or change (Coote, 1992; Hardin, 1992; Morphy, 1992). More than just form and formal qualities, aesthetics involves sensory, embodied experiences which themselves offer a way of knowing and understanding cultural expressions and cultural ideals (Shotwell, 2011). This embodied and sensory space is not only a way to understand cultural manifestation, but serves as a space of imagination within a culture, and thus is a space of possible change and transformation (Mouffe, 2013).

Aesthetics is not simply an individual sensory experience, but spans across social formations, weaving together social meaning. David MacDougall terms this "social aesthetics" (MacDougall, 1999). This is more than the aesthetic preferences of a given community and more than performative dimensions of rituals or community events. Social aesthetics involves a much fuller understanding of the relationship between individuals and their societies and the complex sensory and aesthetic aspects that construct social environments (MacDougall, 1999). The social aesthetic of a community is not stable, but fluid and jointly authored by individuals as they take on, perform, and reinterpret the form of social life.

MacDougall explores this idea through film in a series of non-narrative observations of the Doon School, an all boys' boarding school in Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India. One of the challenges for MacDougall was how to film that which he saw as social aesthetics separate from the symbolic or ideological constructions of the school environment in his Doon School series of films. Any given element, such as school uniforms, simultaneously revealed part of the aesthetic environment and yet risked

becoming over essentialized in meaning. MacDougall concluded that aesthetics, as both backdrop and product of everyday life, must be approached obliquely. His resultant films reflect this approach, offering neither a complete interpretation nor narrative structure of the school (MacDougall, 1999).

As MacDougall demonstrated, film is a unique medium for exploring this sensory dimension that often cannot be discursively defined, or ideologically delineated. While many anthropologist have successfully created written monographs exploring cultural aesthetics (for example, Hardin, 1993), film is a different way to explore the same idea within a medium that lends itself to engaging directly, instead of descriptively, with the element under investigation. Film offers a different way to engage in the sensory and aesthetic elements. First, through the medium of film, participants can communicate material and sensory aspects without translating them into a discursive realm. The transmission between participant and researcher remains in the realm of the practiced, which is then further communicated within the academic product through the same medium. Second, the act of filming itself requires a shift in perspective from the researcher, and by relation the participant. When the aesthetic and sensory realms are to be recorded, the researcher must attend to their presence and relevance throughout the entire filming process. And similarly, many participants emphasized and focused on these aspects, as they unfolded in front of the camera. The process of filming offered a means to observe, participate, and reflect upon how organizers and farmers weave together elements in attempts to transform rural livelihoods.

In this chapter, I will outline the approach to collaborative film within my research. Although I utilized multiple methods during my research, the core of this

project revolved around the creation of films in collaboration with FSC/LAF staff and members. This type of project was generative of certain types of ethnographic knowledge that offer unique perspectives on development. I begin this chapter with a review of different approaches to collaboration in ethnographic filmmaking. I then discuss the contours of how this project was established and end with some examples of the shifting dialogues that were produced around the production of film.

Collaborative Filmmaking

Filmmaking is inherently collaborative. Whether film subjects ignore, engage, or perform for the camera, the presence of the camera initiates an uneven engagement between filmmaker and film subject in which power, agency, identity, and representation play key roles. But by naming my project as collaborative, I evoke various histories and approaches to filmmaking. The term does not reference one particular method or practice, but has been used in diverse ways to reference different epistemological, theoretical, and ethical techniques of filmmaking. Ethnographic filmmakers have a long history of explicitly cultivating a relationship with film subjects to create projects that have been called collaborative, participatory, shared, or community-driven. The distinction between these terms is perhaps important, since each indicates a different framing of the interaction between filmmaker/researcher and the film subjects involved. Collaborative and shared techniques indicate a joint effort, community-driven refers to projects that respond to community desires, and participatory projects indicate that the subjects are actively involved, sometimes as filmmakers themselves, within a facilitated project. However, perhaps more useful than discerning the difference between terms is to explore

the processes of filmmaking, the relationship between filmmakers/researchers and film subjects, and the intention or purpose of the film project. Below I outline different historic approaches to collaboration and participation and how my own research methods relate to these.

Not only is Robert Flaherty often cited as a pioneer of ethnographic filmmaking, his work also demonstrates a form of collaborative filmmaking. In making *Nanook of the North*, Flaherty wanted to engage audiences emotionally through offering them a glimpse into the subjective lives of the Inuit population, but lives as romantically imagined not as actively lived. In order to construct his narrative, Flaherty worked closely with his "actors" to create scenes that would offer compelling insights into Inuit family and culture. He screened the rushes back to the local community, and even involved Inuit participants in technical aspects of film production (Ruby, 2000). Flaherty ultimately controlled the final production, screening, and distribution of Nanook of the North, yet the film subjects were involved in the production process thus creating a reflexive and collaborative piece. This relationship, however, still harbored unequal power dynamics, and has been the source of ongoing debates over the relationship and the type of representation Flaherty produced of the Inuit people.

Flaherty's approach to collaboration demonstrated a process of co-production, through which both those in front of and behind the camera worked together to construct an idealized representation of cultural practices. Yet it also brought to the fore a number of issues. Flaherty worked with participants during the production of the film, but the impetus for the project, the audience, and the purpose were not collaboratively created. His approach also ignited questions of representation of indigenous people. To what

extent should representations be accurate? To what extent should local populations control them? These questions would continuously emerge as anthropology began to question the role of power and authority in constructing representations of different cultures, both written and filmic.

The process of collaboration was more explicitly practiced by Jean Rouch who utilized film in West Africa and in France as a tool for conducting what he envisioned as a shared anthropology. Rouch's concept of shared anthropology led to a complex type of collaboration involving a shared experience at the moment of encounter between observer and observed, shared footage in which subjects are able to view themselves, and shared knowledge in which neither the native perspective nor anthropological perspective dominates (Rouch, 2003). For Rouch, his role as a filmmaker involved a deeply relational engagement with film subjects during the moments of filming (Rouch, 2003a: 39). These shared moments then could also be jointly examined, through interpreting the films in conjunction with the film subjects. The result was a co-authored creation of knowledge that was collaboratively produced between researcher and subjects. Unlike Flaherty, Rouch's form of participation was both more purposeful and more politically oriented with the desired goal of sharing power and jointly creating new knowledge. But like Flaherty, Rouch's approach to film was not to capture life as it is, but to construct representations that reverberate with cultural truths. In his West African films, he utilized narrative forms and cinematic techniques to communicate the experiential moments. Unlike Flaherty, though, Rouch incorporated participants' own perceptions of representation into the production of films. The films' purposes were not just to expose

western audiences to exotic cultures, but were rather part of shared anthropology through which participants could express themselves.

My work draws on many of the techniques promoted by Rouch, such as the engaged act of filming and the use of participant feedback to construct films. On a theoretical level, my approach also considers performative interactions as crucial to a deeper understanding of cultural imagination and representation. Although many of my films evoke a performative aspect, they do not engage in narrative construction in the same way that Flaherty, and to some extent Rouch, did with their films.

David MacDougall, with Judith MacDougall, also cultivated a collaborative approach to filmmaking but through the use of an observational style. MacDougall considered the process of filmmaking as a shared experience in what he termed "participatory cinema" (MacDougall, 1975). By this MacDougall meant that the moments of filming could be a process by which film subjects used the camera to communicate and imprint their culture upon the camera. Such a process required a deep relationship between filmmaker and subject in which the filmmaker is primed to respond to and follow the lead of the film subjects. The filmmaker in this situation is attentive and responsive to the desires and expressions of those in front of the camera, adjusting and adapting to the way they guide and direct the action and visuals of the film. The result is an expression of the intimate relationship between filmmaker and filmed subjects. Over time, MacDougall expanded on his idea of participatory cinema in favor of what he referred to as intertextual cinema through which "ethnographic film may be in a better position to address conflicting views of reality, in a world in which observers and observed are less clearly separated and in which reciprocal observation and exchange

increasingly matter," (MacDougall, 1999; 138). In many ways, MacDougall drew on and extended Rouch's conceptions of filming as an engaged and collaborative process between subjects and filmmakers. Yet MacDougall's filmic style was distinctly different. MacDougall created films as an opening to an experiential encounter for audiences. His films drew less on narrative conventions but more on the aesthetic qualities of social life as it is culturally constructed. My own work closely emulates the observational style of MacDougall. Similarly, I cultivated a form of collaboration through which our engagement emerged through jointly producing experiential moments.

Collaboration is in many ways an epistemological decision. Yet, it is also motivated by ethical considerations by researchers and filmmakers. This aspect shaped the filmmaking of Sarah Elder, who worked closely with Inupiaq and Yup'ik Eskimo communities to create what she termed community-driven films. Elder and her colleague Leonard Kamerling provided the skills and resources for the actual technical aspects of the filming, however, each film was created based on the decisions and desires of the local community. The community closely directed both the filming process and the editing. For Elder, it was important to create films that could be useful not only to an academic community, but for the local community as well (Elder, 1995). Compared to Flaherty's variation of participation, Elder's community-driven approach attempts to shift the power and control completely from the researcher into the hands of the local community. Her films then aim to capture endogenous perspectives both for academic and archival purposes. Artistic and performative aspects are detractors to the goals of preserving and presenting authentic cultural formations. Local communities retain control of and create their own representational forms.

Each of the above examples demonstrates variations on a form of collaboration between filmmakers/researchers and local communities. Both the filmmakers and the local participants contribute to jointly create a product that is ideally mutually beneficial. The filmmaker provides the skills, resources, and often the impetus for creating a film project. Local communities provide the theme, direction, and cultural material to be filmed. Through an engaged relationship, the final product is dialogically made and manifests through the combination of voices and visions expressed. However, a growing number of ethnographic film projects are produced through a participatory approach, which I divide into two methods. First, researchers can participate in the construction of locally produced films. This type of participation can provide the researcher with insight into the media scape and media production among local communities. Second, and more commonly associated with the term participatory, researchers can facilitate film projects in which participants themselves create some or all of the films. Usually this approach is tied to an applied, activist, or political agenda.

For example, Terrence Turner, through his work with the Kayapo in Brazil, assisted the Kayapo in acquiring resources for their own, self-made videos while also consulting on the production of films about the Kayapo produced by UK television (Turner, 1991). These overlapping film projects highlighted the multiple modes of representation constructed by the Kayapo through their own film productions and their construction of their culture and identity for the UK film production crew. From his position of viewing the different uses and constructions of media images, Turner was able to better observe, record, and analyze how the Kayapo utilize visual media for the purpose of creating and representing a cultural identity and the social and political

consequences involved with the ability to create and control this representation (Turner, 1991; Turner, 1992).

Similarly, Carlos Flores participated in the production of videos by Maya-Q'eqchi' communities in Alta Verapz, Guatemala. Flores, however, directly engaged in the filming and editing of video projects. By embedding himself within the production of Q'eqchi' videos, Flores was able to learn how local communities utilized the visual medium to document and express their culture, concerns, and ideas. However, Flores' presence also changed the situation, so that the final product was not purely a product of indigenous media, but was the result of a collaborative effort. The local community was eager to draw on Flores' skills and knowledge as a film producer, and therefore he became implicated within the production, at times struggling to determine how much to intervene within the project (Flores, 2007). Both of these examples demonstrate a different type of participation in which the filmmaker/researcher becomes a participant in local productions. From this vantage point, the researcher is better able to observe and understand the cultural and political implications of media representations made by and of local communities. This type of participation places an emphasis less on the film as medium for expressing co-authored knowledge, but rather explores the social dynamics of film production. It is more closely akin to media studies, but opens up the production process to investigation, not just the final product. To some extent, any form of collaborative filmmaking must also attend to local framings of media production, even if the project is jointly produced. Local understandings will ultimately come to bear on the production of any collaborative effort.

Another method of participating with subjects is to provide cameras or camcorders to the subjects allowing them to become filmmakers themselves. An early example of this method is Sol Worth and John Adair's project with the Navajo that resulted in a series of short films made by the Navajo themselves. Worth and Adair provided cameras to several Navajo participants in order to better understand cultural differences in the use of visual media (Worth and Adair, 1972). This idea has become increasingly popular and a growing number of researchers have been providing cameras or camcorders to local participants, particularly youth, in order to observe and better understand how they document their own lives. Participatory video has grown as a tool used by academics and community developers alike and refers to projects that involve participants in the production of videos. This type of collaboration involves a researcher or facilitator who guides a group of participants through the process of video production, from planning and design to the final screenings. While the level of involvement may vary among participatory video projects, common to many projects is the goal of creating videos as a communication tool for the purposes of intervention.

For example the Fogo Island Communication Experiment, often referenced as the origin of participatory video, utilized film as a tool for communication and feedback between Fogo Island residents and government authorities. This project, created under the umbrella of the National Film Board of Canada in the Challenge for Change program, created a cycle of interviews and screenings as a form of intervention for Fogo Island residents to resist eviction and develop their own community-based solution to issues of poverty and employment (Corneil, 2012). Although Fogo Island residents did not create the films themselves, the films became a way for them to add their perspectives to critical

discussions. The reference to this project as an original example indicates that the underlying ethos of participatory video projects lies less with creating local filmmakers and rather emphasizes film production as a tool for local empowerment and a means by which communities can add their voices to critical discussions on issues that affect them.

Within participatory video projects the processes of producing and screening films are often considered as important as, if not more important than, the final product (White, 2003). Within the process of creating a video, community groups work together and discuss relevant issues, possible solutions, and forms of engagement. Through creating and screening videos, communities can develop self-awareness, discuss pertinent issues, and communicate their perspectives to other relevant audiences (Lunch and Lunch, 2013; Shaw and Robertson, 1997). The practice of participatory video has therefore been useful as a tool for intervention, facilitating participatory development practices, engaging local authorities, producing endogenous evaluations of projects or developing community awareness around issues of health, HIV/AIDS, or domestic violence (Mitchell, 2011; Nemes et al, 2007; Wickett, 2007). Additionally, through a focus on the process of self-made visual material, researchers can gain insights into significant aspects of participants' worlds and also participants' identity construction (Yates, 2010).

Unlike Rouch's concept of shared anthropology, or MacDougall's intertextual cinema, participatory projects by and large endeavor to understand local visual culture and endogenous perspectives. They are less concerned with the dialogical creation of knowledge between researcher and participant, and more concerned with shifting the role of informants from data points to data generators. By creating films, participants create

data products that can either be analyzed for research or used for advocacy purposes. Although the process of production is highlighted within the participatory video literature as being just as important as the final product, the process is not framed as an intersubjective practice or shared anthropology. The process of production involves the participants themselves learning to articulate and express their cultural representations, work collaboratively, and learn a new skill.

Participatory approaches frequently espouse an empowerment rhetoric and consider video as a way to give voice, often to those who are deemed voiceless. In many cases, participatory video has been used as a tool by which marginalized populations become active participants in their own documentation, representation, and advocacy. Yet like many other participatory efforts, it is often the researcher, or facilitator, who determines the larger frame of the project, controls the funding, initiates themes, and guides the final outcome and screenings (Packard, 2008; Joanou, 2009). Despite the intentions associated with participatory video, participatory video can itself become a hegemonic tool and overlook the reasons local populations may not want to participate in such a project (Milne, 2012, Wheeler, 2009). Whether the researcher, filmmaker, or participants are in control of the technical film equipment, each project will involve a distinctive power dynamic based on the actors involved.

Common to many of these examples, but also sometimes used as an independent strategy, is the collaboration with film subjects in the analysis and interpretation of the films through shared screenings. This technique shifts the role of film to a form of elicitation. Through viewing representations of their actions, film subjects can re-live the sentiments and identity experienced during the event itself, and thus communicate to the

researcher the significance and intimate meaning of the filmed moments (Nijland, 2006). Screening films for film subjects can also elicit deeper conversations concerning cultural frameworks, structures, and significant symbols, while also clarifying key cultural concepts (Crawford, 2006). This type of collaboration considers film subjects as participant ethnographers, providing relevant analysis for understanding cultural phenomena (Holmes and Marcus, 2008).

This was not a participatory video project, in that the goal was not to train participants and facilitate participant created videos. My decision for this was based on multiple reasons. First, the participants I worked with already had access to audiovisual technologies, and therefore were not in need of outside intervention in order to make their own videos. In fact, many participants simultaneously filmed and photographed events that I filmed. Second, my interest was not in analyzing local media as a product, but in understanding development practices in their material, performative, and representational forms. By positioning myself as a collaborator, I needed to learn and engage with participants' own ways of seeing and expressing their development practices. Of course, this is never a perfect conversion, yet the practice of putting my self, my body, and my camera in positions so as to form a desirable filmic representation shaped my understanding of local interpretations and practices of development. Third, by maintaining my own presence within the production of films I could present my own interpretation back to participants, checking it for validity and offering possible new insights. As stated previously, for me, collaborative research is not simply a means to better document endogenous knowledge, it is a practice that ideally generates new knowledge and interpretations, and new understandings for both the participants and the

researcher. My own perceptions, interpretations, and growing knowledge were as essential as local interpretations and perceptions, and the outcome of this project emerged through the interactions between our understandings. The fourth reason is much more practical. Most of the farmers and organizers that participated in this project were too busy to take on the task of filmmaking. But my contributions were appreciated as beneficial to their overall goals.

This is not an exhaustive sampling of collaborative examples, but it shows some of the variations that emerge in collaborative relationships. These are also key examples that have shaped my collaboration and guided me through the process of establishing working relationships with film participants. My project largely follows the model of establishing engaged relationships as the basis of collaboration, from which filming emerged as a co-production. The ongoing forms of negotiating this collaboration made my filmmaking an *adaptive co-production*. From a position of trust and mutual respect, I sought to find ways of documenting and representing participants as they saw themselves. The participants, in turn, used my skills and knowledge of filmmaking to guide, direct, and imprint upon the camera performances and expressions of their own cultural realities. The process of filming was an engaged, shared experience. However, I was also entering into an already existing media world, and this to some extent informed my work and my position. The FSC/LAF had several forms of media that they produced and distributed and in which I became a participant, both as a subject in their photographs and media, and as a contributor to their media productions and especially web-based media. Additionally, I utilized screenings as a way to understand the film subjects' interpretations and analysis of the ethnographic material that was recorded, thus using

films as a form of elicitation. Several diverse forms of collaborative filmmaking thus informed my overall interactions with participants.

Establishing a Collaborative Project

This project began through configuring my position as a researcher and filmmaker with the FSC/LAF. Partly, I began my relationship with the FSC/LAF as a means to gain access. My goal was to study their form of grassroots development and their approval was necessary for my ability to shadow their activities and to gain trust and access to the farmers involved with the FSC/LAF. As we discussed the project, FSC/LAF staff repeatedly warned against extractive forms of research and media production. My hybrid position, as both researcher and filmmaker, posed a possible threat of repeating what they saw as past injustices in which outsiders used the FSC/LAF and their farmers to gain data and images, but returned nothing to the communities involved or to the organization. People outside of the organization then controlled representations and information about the FSC/LAF. We agreed that I would share footage and make my research available to the FSC/LAF. But this agreement greatly changed my position. I became, what one organizer called me, an embedded filmmaker. I maintained my independence, and was not hired by nor directly instructed by the FSC/LAF. Yet, I conducted the project with the consultation and approval of the FSC/LAF's staff and members, and quite often through their material support.

The FSC/LAF began supporting my project by helping me move through its networks, introducing me to key people, and supporting my travels and stays in different locations. I returned useful footage to people who were interested, and promised to share

final film products as well. This support shaped the reaction of the people involved. Not only did my camera represent the potential of academic audiences, and perhaps a general audience, but also it represented the FSC/LAF itself, and particularly the administrative offices or other state associations, as key audiences. This made the project more relevant to many participants whose loyalty and willingness to support the FSC/LAF exceeded their trust of me or media production in general.

This position had its limits as well. As an embedded filmmaker, my perspective was skewed, as was the information given to me. Rather than push against this limitation, I saw it as an opportunity to gain a different type of knowledge. I sought more input from participants about what they wanted out of a film project. I encouraged highly performative interactions, allowing people to express and represent themselves in the most desirable way. Often participants directed the action and style of filmmaking; some spoke directly to the camera, others silently went about their work while I filmed. This created on-camera and off-camera interactions as two distinct spaces. At times, they merged, but largely this distinction helped elucidate participants' concepts of representation and relevant information. I also sought feedback on the footage and edits. Much of the feedback on edits had to do with elements that should be included and emphasized, and elements that seemed redundant or less important, from the participants' perspectives. At times, I would negotiate these points, especially when considering how non-rural and non-local audiences might be interested in details that are commonplace to participants. Rarely was any of my footage directly censored, largely because participants' restrictions on what I could film and share were discussed during the process of filming itself. Therefore, I often did not produce any footage that participants

would explicitly forbid me to use (although this did happen once from one organizer who was concerned about the implications of a comment, and once from an entire team of university researchers who allowed me to film but then refused to allow me to use any of the footage).

My sensitivity during filming was at times excessive and to my project's detriment. For example, when filming the Beginning Farmers Reality Tour (last example in chapter 6), I quickly cut off the camera at the behest of the Mr. Bullock, one of the speakers. I have since shown this film multiple times to participants in Mississippi, and every time I am chastised for having actually turned off the camera. Advocates for Mr. Bullock (he himself did not have time to watch the piece, but relinquished the duty of approving it to Mr. Burkett and his daughter) have also lamented that this possibly illicit dialogue is now lost, citing the fact that Mr. Bullock may not have really been all that concerned after the fact. This perspective was not simply told to me once, but repeatedly. Mr. Burkett even brought up much later, after screening the film, that I needed to be bolder in my filming.

The sample of people involved also shifted based on my position. I used two points of entry as my hubs: the Alabama state association in Epes, and the Mississippi state association in Jackson (discussed in more detail in chapter 3). From these centers, I networked out by shadowing FSC/LAF staff, attending FSC/LAF events, and working with member cooperatives and individual farmers who either were members or associated with the FSC/LAF. A few people did not want to be filmed and became anonymous informants, adding to my overall knowledge of the FSC/LAF. Mostly, because film was key to my project, I worked with people who wanted to be filmed. Not everyone was

immediately comfortable being on camera, and many participants spent time interviewing and observing me before participating. But the project largely revolved around the forms of performance and communication that happen through the process of creating a film project.

Filming Collaboratively

As mentioned in the above section, filmmakers and researchers have developed a wide range of projects under the labels of participatory, collaborative, or community-based filmmaking. For my purposes, I was interested in a collaborative approach through which both participants and I dialogically created the films, each in our own roles (myself as camera person and participants as the onscreen personalities), but jointly invested in the production and outcomes of the project. I term this process *adaptive co-production*. This process was adaptive in that throughout my research I filmed and shared footage, receiving feedback that in turn re-shaped my practice. I changed my approach and technique of filming based on the situation at hand, responding to the shifting circumstances and desires of participants. The films were co-produced in that both participants and I designed and constructed the filmed moments, each in our respective roles. The impetus for filming, the focus of the films, and at times the purpose, edits, and audience for the films were jointly negotiated between participants and me. This was a convoluted process in that "participants" included multiple levels of the FSC/LAF and individual farmers and rural residents. The administrative offices, state associations, member cooperatives, and individuals at times had diverse goals, and negotiations

involved attending to different needs. Yet, more often than not, many of these goals overlapped.

As a form of co-production, filming was a practice through which participants and I could engage in a process of communication and understanding. The film itself was a medium through which this communication could take place. Film creates a specific type of communicative event, one that is already imbued with distinct meta-communicative assumptions and framings (Briggs, 1986). Film then is not simply a neutral medium through which intersubjective communication can take place. The task, as a researcher, is both to learn the framings and assumptions used by participants as well as disclose my own predilections, in order to establish a space of understanding. Collaboration is a means through which to co-create film through developing shared understandings.

As Holmes and Marcus point out, subjects in the field are already engaging in cultural analysis prior to the presence of the researcher. They anticipate the researcher, and preemptively construct a role for the researcher (2008; 88). This also happens in terms of media production. My hybrid position, as filmmaker and university researcher, thus at times created conflicting, or alternating, assumptions around the nature of filmmaking and the use of film to communicate relevant information. These assumptions, analyses, and anticipations enabled a further and more nuanced interpretation of the information I received, as a researcher and filmmaker.

During the early stages of my research, the anticipation of my role led to the reproduction of tropes and representations that people associated with the research agenda. People constructed images and dialogues around their conceptions of what they assumed I would want to film. During the early stages, FSC/LAF organizers tried to find

what they considered authentic and "real" farmers and cooperatives for me to film. Individual farmers would attempt to steer the conversation towards topics they thought were most relevant, notably quite a few brought up the topic of climate change and the decline of bees, two common topics in agriculture during my research time.

Over time, though, the project became generative of new knowledge when we reached a point of experimenting in the field, jointly leaving our preconceived notions and exploring the potential of what we could learn through an engagement around the process of film production. In order to generate this knowledge, researchers (and participants to some extent), must be open to altering, and even transforming their perceptual base in order to understand the reality of social life that may exist outside their own categorical framings. For me, this is the key to intersubjective process. Intersubjectivity puts alternate discourses and conceptual frameworks into conversation with each other, therefore expanding, redefining, or transforming the categories used to evaluate the reality, truth, or evolving knowledge. It is a form of dialogical engagement.

The filmmaking in this project was an invitation to a shared space and time, a shared platform through which to communicate knowledge. Sometimes participants structured the space more than I did. For instances, I was invited to film several workshops, conferences, and presentations, in which the form and function of the interaction were predetermined. On the other hand, I sometimes asked for particular types of interactions. However, all engagements contained a form of collaboration in which participants and I jointly constructed the space of filming. Each film was co-produced by participants and myself through a continually adaptive process.

Ethnography Through Filmmaking

The ethnographic relevance of this film project is not just the filmed material itself, but also the interactions that emerged around the production of film. The use of filmmaking within this research project created a dynamic engagement with participants through three key spaces of dialogue[5]: the filming, the editing, and the screening of footage. These steps were not singular, but repetitive, thus forming a practice. Each of these spaces evoked different types of dialogue through which ethnographic knowledge was generated. Therefore, the variables of each space, such as who was present and for what purpose filming happened, are crucial to understanding the filmic production. Each of these spaces also influences each other. So the anticipation of a future audience and the imagined possible edits structured how participants engaged during the process of filming. Similar, when viewing films, either the memories of participants or assumptions of audiences shaped how they understood and interpreted what they saw. Within the whole process, my positionality, and the shifting relationships participants had with me, were key determinants of the manifesting films.

Jean Rouch identifies these three spaces of dialogue as different spectators of the film/ethnography. Rouch considered the cameraman his own first spectator. Fieldwork with a camera is different from taking notes from fieldwork. While filming, the researcher must constantly make decisions as to what and how to film. Unlike writing, filmmaking requires synthesizing relevant information as it happens in the field. Events occur temporally, without cessation and simultaneously. Choosing what, and how, to document this unfurling of events onto a singular and linear medium requires

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[5] Although I use the term 'dialogue' throughout this section, I aim to evoke a form of engagement that is not simply discursive, but sensory, material, and aesthetic as well.

anticipation, analysis, and constant attention. A filmmaker must respond to the flow of life with master reflexes and bodily improvisations (Rouch, 2003). David MacDougall similarly emphasizes that ethnographic filmmaking requires a sensitivity to the aesthetics of community life, which he likens to the complexly interlaced rhythms and meanings of a poem (2006; 96). This heightened form of observation and participation within the flow of life transforms the filmmaker propelling her into what Rouch calls a "cine-trance" (Rouch, 2003; 94). MacDougall interprets Rouch's cine-trance as a form of ethnographic dialogue in which "the ethnographer celebrates his or her own response to a cultural phenomenon" (1998; 113). This framing conceptualizes filming as a form of intrusion and participation within cultural formation so as to better understand it. The researcher's position and subjectivity is necessarily implicated within the process of knowledge production.

What is interesting about Rouch's explanation of ethnographic cinema is that while he fully advocates for the cameraperson to be an anthropologist (or researcher), and not a hired crew, his position changes when he begins to discuss the process of editing. While the first stage of editing according to Rouch happens during the process of filming itself, through the selection of images, the second stage of ordering and processing the film should be done by a third person, not someone who was present during the filming. He advocates for this because it is only a third person that can see the film as it really is. The cameraperson will imagine the scene as a whole. The editor, as a separate person, will only have the film itself to contend with and must make sense of the material that was actually recorded. This action allows another dialogue to help create the knowledge inherent in the film. The editor is not meant to conform the film to reality as experienced,

an aesthetic standard, nor follow a recipe, but is expected to engage with the film as it is. This is to some extent a dialogue with those that were present in the process of filming, through observing what is communicated within the footage. As many editors have experienced, editing engenders a deep intimacy and understanding of often subtle and nuanced aspects of both the cameraperson and people within the filmed material.

While I, like many ethnographic filmmakers, choose to edit my own work, I understand the principle that Rouch is putting forth. I consider editing as the second dialogical space in the production of film. It is a space that, although removed from the field, must contend with the material as is in order to determine the patterns and flows that are inherent within the given footage, instead of forcing the footage to conform to the categories (or aesthetic recipes) of disciplinary categories (or filmic conventions). The footage must be dealt with in its own terms. It has a rhythm and flow that resists the type of complete manipulation possible with the cutting, editing, and rearranging of quotations or field notes. Film clips cannot be aggregated or summarized, they must play out in real time while the referent stubbornly clings to the material, constantly evoking a sense of co-presence. The footage weighs heavy with information beyond the intention of the cameraperson, editor, or even analyst or researcher. It remains open, even as it is edited.

The final space of dialogue is the presentation of the film. Rouch considered the primary audience to be the participants of the film. Sharing the film back with participants creates what Rouch called a "shared anthropology" through which researcher and participants mutually comment on and learn from the process of research. Beyond the participants in the film, the next intended audience is as many people as possible. Rouch did not conceive of ethnographic films as limited to the academic realm, but as tools for

knowledge and communication within multiple circles. The process of screening films evokes another form of dialogue in conversation with the first two spaces: that of production and editing. The ethnographic film is multiple things at once; it is a material object, an archeological site, and a representational form of communication. Film as both a record of events and a language communicating its own independent ideas (Vaughn, 1992: 99). It simultaneously fixes in place a series of embedded relationships yet expands its boundaries through its ability to circulate. Viewers relate to the film through its representational articulations, that which it stands for, as well as its sensory presentation that affects the visceral experience of viewing (Marks, 2000; Barker, 2009). Ethnographic films in particular tend to elude audiences through this dialectical nature of being simultaneously a record, artifact, and communiqué. Their attachment to the referent often drives an interpretation of films as truthful recreations of an ethnographic experience. But the ethnographic knowledge deliverable from an ethnographic film relies upon its relationship between these three spaces of dialogue and engagement. Thus, even as the ethnographic film itself becomes a fixed object, the knowledge itself is always to some extent in flux, dependent on the configuration of the screening, viewing, and interpretation of it. Therefore, the variables at each of the moments, filming, editing, and screening, become crucial elements in understanding the ethnographic import of the filmmaking process as a whole.

My Project

To conclude this section, I want to explore some of the specific dialogues that emerged through this film project, and their effect on the film production. During the

process of filming, I drew on three different techniques that focused on different aspects of the engagements: observational, participant directed, and documentation. These techniques developed through my relationships in the field and were not discrete forms but overlapping frameworks that were used intermittently based on the situations.

Observational

Observation is commonly, and perhaps preemptively, associated with positive science, but this association is based on a number of assumptions, that are not inherent within the practice of observation. Three dominant assumptions seem to tie observation to positive science: that it is based predominantly on vision, that it operates from a place of neutrality, and that it creates distance between subject and object and is therefore related to the process of objectification. But even if these assumptions at times occur in the process of observation, they are not essential to the concept of observation, nor are they necessary conditions.

Observational practices can be, and frequently are, active and engaged forms of awareness involving sensory and bodily perceptions, subjective positioning, and a drawing nearer of the observer and observed. The form of observation is sensory, often involving touch, sound, sight, and kinesthetic mimicry. Instead of neutrality, the observer seeks to join the time and space of the observed, thus being able to access a joint moment for observation to exist. For example, forms of apprenticeship and performance learning (from dance and martial arts to speech and cultural gestures) involve drawing near the performer, sometimes feeling, watching, listening to the actions of the performer, stalled for a moment in the time-space of the performer, and mimicking the performer's actions,

thus drawing the observations into one's own self. The observer becomes a porous being seeking to absorb the lessons of action into their own body.

The process of observing a place, or event, also involves an embodied form of observation. The experience of entering into a new place, with new customs, new ways of being, new sights, smells, sounds, and actions evokes a heightened awareness. The traveler learns to move through a new place, physically and socially, through bringing the logic of the place into one's self. Over time, travelers will learn to navigate a new place, moving through the physical space and social space by picking up customs, obeying traffic rules, or even learning the best local restaurants. The process of observation is transformative. Through the process of observation, in this case, the observer brings the knowledge of the new place closer to his own self and subjectivity, embodying the knowledge into a set of learned practices that enable the traveler to participate within the new reality. This kind of observation is a form of embodied learning.

Bringing this type of observation to bear on the practice of filmmaking then refers to a form of observational cinema that is dynamic and engaged. It is a physical and mental exercise in which the observer enters into the time and space of participants, shares the moment with them not as objects, but as participants within a given life-world. The observer draws nearer to the observed physically, mimetically, emotionally, or ideologically, and opens self as a way to incorporate new knowledge. With cinema, this shared moment of exchange, of drawing nearer is facilitated by the creation of a filmic record. The process of filming observationally requires paying attention to the flux of action in order to follow elements of interaction.

Observational cinema provides an alternative to scientifically minded methods

that regard filming as elaborate note-taking in which behaviors and actions can be isolated and analyzed, or artistic approaches in which film could capture cultural details to demonstrate grand theories of human nature (Grimshaw and Ravetz, 2009). Instead, the observational approach aims to preserve the experience, in time and space, of the moment of filming and to allow these moments their own internal and cinematic logic that may show cultural relationships in play. This approach provides a means to focus on specific manifestations of social and cultural patterns at a given moment (MacDougall, 1998) and a privileging of the particular visual and sensory moments over abstract and general theories (Grimshaw and Ravetz, 2009). The act of filming in this manner requires an observational stance (Grimshaw and Ravetz, 2009) or way of looking (MacDougall, 2006) and an intimate relationship with the subjects of the film (Young, 1995).

To observe the situation as is, not abstracted or dissected, but whole and bound to a specific space and time puts the emphasis on experiences within given situations. Observational cinema, then, can be seen as a form of filmmaking that engages with experiences in an attempt to share the experience between filmmaker and subjects, and later with audience members. The practice of filming observationally is based on a skilled practice of being present in the moment and responding to relationships and situations happening in front of the camera (Grimshaw and Ravetz, 2009; Rouch, 2003; MacDougall, 1975). The resultant film remains open, allowing the viewer her own experience of the situation as it unfolds.

Observational cinema has the possibility of revealing culture as interactive and knowledge as a skilled practice. This is a type of knowing that is not propositional, but rather is implicit knowledge that is known in unspoken ways. This type of knowing

provides a platform for better understanding some of the assumptions and frameworks that shape and guide social interactions. Furthermore, it provides a way of understanding the relational nature of categories such as gender, class, and race (MacDougall, 1998). Such categories do not have ontological definitions but only make sense as they are enacted in social relations. Relational knowledge can only be understood within the sum of experiences, not within the parts, therefore film as a means of portraying complex networks of images can serve to reveal this type of knowledge (MacDougall, 1998).

Observational cinema is an embodied practice involving a physical, mental, and relational presence. The process of filming observationally requires a type of physicality, a physical presence, and engagement in the world of the film. I largely filmed outdoors and on farms, following and engaging in farm practices which required me to navigate over rough terrain, contend with plants, animals, farm machines, and elements all while manipulating a heavy camera with attached microphone and headphones, and sometimes a monopod as well. The weight and size of my camera shaped the experience, requiring a physical commitment on my part, distancing my physical body from others, and also signaling very loudly the fact that these moments were being filmed. But the physicality of filming extends beyond just navigating over fields, with animals and machines, while maneuvering a heavy object. The process of filming itself requires my body to hold the camera still and steady while dexterously adjusting light and sound controls and constantly framing the spaces of action, the moments in the flux of action that I deem important, or that participants point out as important. I am not simply viewing actions unfold, but am actively and physically engaged in responding to every moment, as a moment of cultural importance and a moment with a specific material quality consisting

of light and sound.

Observational cinema also requires sustained mental focus. It is a form of being in the present, a type of meditation resulting from hyper awareness of the present moment. There is a constant evaluation and ordering of the situation, through which decisions are made. Filming offers a process by which to imprint sensory moments of reality — but it is a temporal process and moments are over as soon as they are recognized. I am differently aware, when I am filming. Filming involves being constantly engaged with the moment. I am aware of my self, my body moving through space, the environment surrounding me, and all other people interacting in the moment. I am constantly adjusting for light and sound, which are in constant fluctuation. I am present and alert to the sights and sounds around me, choosing how best to capture each moment into its digital replica.

Observational cinema is also a relational process. My relationships with participants changed over time, which shaped the outcome of the film. The flow of movements, position of bodies, and my attention and framing were influenced through my connection with participants, and changed as my knowledge and comfort of situations grew and expanded. Over time, as my comfort increased, my ability to draw near increased as well, and vice versa. The goals and assumptions of both participants and myself shaped the manifestations of the filming process, and subsequently the resultant films. The material films, then, are in some ways an archive of a relational process. In other words, this is a way to participate in and pay attention to the aesthetic practices of culture. But if culture is a fluid construction — and knowing is intersubjective — then film does not simply capture the aesthetic sensibility, but is a way to participate in it.

Therefore the relationship changes over time, and as a result, my filmmaking changes as well. The following clip demonstrates these inter-relations within an observational piece.

Film 3: Picking Field Peas https://vimeo.com/156086767/01d04d2c7c

The clip shown here is from early in my research. I spent the summer of 2011 mostly residing on the Rural Training and Research Center premises in Epes, Alabama. One of the first farmers I was introduced to was Mr. James Childs. Mr. Childs rents twenty acres of land just outside of Gainesville, Alabama, which he works with his son, James Childs Jr. His son was not present on this particular day since he, like many young farmers, also works an off farm job. Mr. Childs has a reputation in the community as one of the best vegetable farmers in the area. He sold most of his produce from his farm gate, or off of his truck. He often bartered with friends and neighbors, adjusting prices to fit the needs and means of members in the community and exchanging produce for labor on his farm. His passion and commitment was to grow healthy food and to maintain black farmers in the area. These two components were essential for a healthy community. He

also had begun selling at several farmers' markets in Livingston, AL, Panola, AL, and Eutaw, AL.

One of my early filming engagements with Mr. Childs was during a morning of pea picking on his fields. Five other neighbors and family members had shown up to help pick field peas. Most of them were working in exchange for some produce; one was being paid. I alternated between filming and participating in picking the field peas in order to physically engage with the processes I was observing. The resultant material reflects this physicality, revealing the sounds, motions, and hot sun that penetrated the experience. At the time, I had met two of the pickers once before, Mr. Childs several times, but did not know the others. My presence, and my act of filming, was still a novelty in the area. The pickers mostly ignored my presence while I was filming; others spoke to me directly, disregarding the camera. Because of my own efforts to gain entry, at times I talk to the pickers, even while filming. I included these moments within this piece, moments I would normally edit out, but which reveal the state of our interactions. The very last clip is a moment when I quickly turned the camera on at the request of Mr. Williams, an older farmer and original member of the Panola Land Buying Association (discussed in chapter 3), who wanted to make a plea to some future unknown audience: we need more money in Alabama, we can do a lot with more money. Mr. Childs chimes in, and we need more young farmers.

When I look back at this footage I find it evocative of pre-existing imaginaries of southern farm work. It resonates with iconographies of laboring bodies, bent over, walking up and down rows of crops along a flat landscape, backs towards a blazing sun. The film shows details of farming practice, and communal relations around practice,

which do add to the questions of the dissertation, but overall the relationships are still awkward and the film remains a little ambiguous. These images are the product of my initial ways of seeing and lack of knowledge of the social scene. It took time and practice to cultivate the type of ethnographic filming that Rouch refers to as "cine-trance" (2003; 94).

As a form of observational cinema, this piece remains open to new interpretations. Each time I watch the footage, I find new insights available to me as my knowledge of the area grows. I encourage viewers to engage with the physical aspects of the film by attending to the experience, rather than the symbolic or semiotic components available through viewing. The minute details of picking and the social negotiations over dividing the peas offer viewers (including myself, as editing viewer) a chance to engage in the experiences at play. But these experiences are largely shaped by my own early positions and understandings of the situation. This observational stance reveals both the intricacies of a workday, as well as the relationship of the workers to me, and my own understanding of the situation. It is at once a document and an artifact of embedded relationships.

The observational framework underlay my practice of filming in general. Even as I utilized other techniques, I tried to maintain the heightened awareness of the observational stance, thus attempting to pay attention to the specific use of different communicative frameworks even as they modeled conventional forms, such as the formal interview. Throughout my research, I utilized different techniques within different situations. These techniques were chosen based on the interactions between myself and participants, and the nature of the event, interview, or activity that was being filmed. Observation itself guided my positioning through each of these different techniques.

Participant Directed

During filming many participants utilized the camera as a platform, an interactive stand-in for an imagined future audience. They addressed the camera directly presenting stories, information, and demonstrations to me, as a researcher, and the camera as a potential audience. This direct address was facilitated by the fact that I operated as both a researcher, and as an "embedded filmmaker." The direct address style of filming offered a different type of communication with participants, one more closely akin to the process of storytelling.

Stories were a tool for explaining and coming to terms with the external forces that shaped the situation African American farmers found themselves in, as well as to identify their own roles and possibilities of agency in response (Jackson, 2002). With a "captive" audience, storytelling had more potential power, either real or imagined. Stories can be a process of negotiating with the world that is, spaces of possible transformation either in effort to maintain or build existing relationships, or overturn and transgress existing relationships and boundaries (Jackson, 1998; 2002). Filming direct addresses is a way of prioritizing the storytelling over the story. The story becomes transfixed within the medium of film, indexing it with a certain time, place, and context.

Stories people tell are a way to mediate with the world. These narratives help people to organize and render meaningful their experiences (Hinchman and Hinchman, 1997); they reveal intentions behind actions and visions of the future (MacIntyre, 1984); and they are expressions of self-identity as well as expressions of relational and collective ties (Novitz, 1997). The patterns of stories also reveal the universe of discourses through

which participants define development, its processes, and its obstacles. The individual narratives become collective over time through their connections to each other. I continually came across repeated stories; sometimes the same story would be told differently by the same person, sometimes by different people, and sometimes different participants would serve as characters in each other's stories. These narratives collectively reveal the conceptions of farming and development emerging from among rural residents and farmers, and interacting with the FSC/LAF's own ideology. As Latour (2007) states, actors already have their own meta-language to explain and understand the social. Participant directed filming is a way to learn participants' own meta-language around farming, rural life, and development.

Similar to the shifts in my observational approach, the style of participant directed filming changed as my relationship with participants changed. Initially, participants reacted to my role as a researcher and performed according to their own assumptions of what this entailed. They often assumed the future audience to be people at a university, and either tried to create knowledge suitable for an academic audience, or questioned my interests as academically relevant. As my relationship and the nature of collaboration developed, so did the film products. Sometimes the anticipated audience was the local community, other farmers, or other members of the FSC/LAF. For example, the following clip was filmed for the purposes of sharing at a Women in Agriculture conference. This tour with Mrs. Joyce Ellington was designed to showcase her farm and in particular the new developments supported by USDA grants, such as the forthcoming hoop house and the goat fencing for her goat project. Osa initiated this film for the purposes of the conference, and gave some directions to Mrs. Ellington during the tour of

her farm. He, however, stayed off camera in order to preserve the integrity of Mrs. Ellington's tour.

Film 4: E&J Farm Tour https://vimeo.com/154453166/93174543cf

In this piece, Mrs. Ellington speaks directly to the camera, but she is aware that she is performing to a wider audience. She explains details and motivations for farming, framing her work and her landscape as part of her long-term goal. In fact, this farm is the manifestation of the dreams of both her and her husband. Her husband is a trucker, a common occupation among southern rural residents, since it tends to produce larger incomes than many of the other jobs available. Mrs. Ellington used to ride with her husband at times in order to keep him company but both she and her husband longed for a farm life. She once showed me pictures from shortly after their wedding; the couple had gone raccoon hunting and was proudly holding their catches for the camera. The rural lifestyle was the goal for the Ellingtons, and learning to make the farm productive meant that they could retire onto the land they had purchased.

Osa sat with me while I edited the piece and made sure the key aspects were highlighted, such as the goats and the place of the hoop house. I retained many of Mrs. Ellington's personable moments. Mrs. Ellington was present during the screening, and was quite bashful at first. But the other women at the conference responded positively to her attitude and explanations as she toured the farm, demonstrating how she managed the farm as a woman quite often on her own, when her husband was travelling for work. The stories and sentiments encouraged a range of conversations among the women. From the video, they began to discuss the roots of farming in their communities and the shift from sustenance farms to product-based farms. The film perhaps did not have the effect Osa had hoped, since very few of the women at the conference were inspired to pursue USDA grants for goat fencing or hoop houses. Nevertheless, they were very encouraged to engage in farming activities, even if minimally, in order to sustain what they considered to be a traditional way of life.

Interviews

I was initially hesitant to conduct interviews, skeptical of their imposed framework. Although this project is intent on highlighting and incorporating non-discursive aspects into the research agenda, I was not opposed to discourse. Conversations shaped all of my interactions. Informally, through our shared time together whether farming, dining, traveling, or just being present together, I was regularly engaged in conversations with farmers, rural residents, and organizers. We discussed the nature of development, farming, the South and all the topics of relevance to their work and my research. We spoke at length around my research, my use of the camera, and my intentions. The

interview is a very specific form of communication. It not only imposes a communicative framework, but also a set of categories that are introduced by the interviewer who invites the interviewee to insert their own experiences into the preformed categories. Open-ended and informal qualifications to the interview form seek to change this imposition, but the formality of the framework dominates in a way that these efforts often fail to negate.

However, this perspective quickly changed, for several reasons. First, I had not considered the fact that the community I was engaged with already understood and had opinions about the communicative framework of the interview. They could play with, manipulate, or use this form to express ideas in a way that was reserved for and often indicative of an "expert" in the field. As such, the interview could serve as a platform for expressing expertise, or legitimacy in the knowledge that was being communicated. This was heightened by the presence of the camera. Filming an interview expanded this form. When participants were interested in talking with me, as an individual researcher gathering information, their conversations were informal, often using coded language we may both understand, or referring to my history, or telling stories that I should not repeat as illustrations so that I fully understood the concept being portrayed. Informal conversations were a processes of imparting information on to me so that I could serve as a cipher, digesting and reworking this knowledge so that it would extend into a different world, that of academia. The filmed interview, on the other hand, was a platform, a space in which the choice and form of wording would remain as performed — would become part of the record. In some ways, although the form was imposed, it allowed space for specific performances of discourse to emerge. The interview opens a space for their

unique and precise answers to be documented in the unique and precise form in which they give it.

Not all participants wanted to engage in interviews, or felt that interviews provided an open space for expression. In fact, in some instances, organizers wanted interviews of certain farmers, but the form was so unfamiliar and uncomfortable that I encouraged informal conversations, often along with walking tours or activities, instead of an interview. However, many of the key organizers were not only familiar and comfortable with the form of the interview, they had performed interviews several times before.

A filmed interview further shifts the nature of the communication event by embedding the interview itself into a documentary convention, along with standard shots, angles, and styles associated with documentaries. I was cautious about imposing standard documentary forms upon the situation. However, these standard forms have also become meaningful conventions within the general media scape, especially in the US where documentary films are quite prevalent. During my research several participants began to ask for formal style interviews. For example, organizers from the Mississippi field office decided to create interviews to add to my on-the-ground footage. Three of the organizers in particular worked together to design, set-up, and conduct the interviews, while I ran the technical aspects of the camera. This purposeful use of interviews as a specific documentary form put them in the role of the expert, allowing their own experiences to serve as the explanation for the organization's development efforts. Although a seemingly imposed form, this form was actually participatory. The following clip offers a few short moments from these interviews.

Film 5: MAC Interviews https://vimeo.com/156102027/12a9b7f9c0

Within this piece, each of the women uses the interview platform to express her interests and involvement with MAC and the FSC/LAF in general. Although I asked questions to prompt their discussion, they chose which questions to respond to, and at times rejected the question topic altogether in order to explain some other aspect of importance. Each interview, therefore, reflected the individual's main concerns and ideas, despite the fact that I asked identical questions. I have within this edit cut and rearranged the interviews to some extent, but based on standard documentary practices they are still quite long and unadultured, and have no b-roll, or external shots, to illustrate the points being discussed. Interviews of this nature rarely play as straightforward interviews, but I find this longer form of editing a better way of learning more about the people involved, rather than the topic being discussed.

Documentation

During my time in the field I also assisted in documenting events, workshops, and presentations of importance to my research and to the FSC/LAF or individual members. Many of these events were learning opportunities, and my role was to help extend the educational potential through film. Because of my familiarity with the people, I was often positioned as a participant during these events, and negotiated my role between participant and documentarian. Yet these filming engagements differed from observational approaches, in which the actions were of primary focus, since my intention was to clearly capture the information being conveyed for the education of future audiences. They also differed from participant directed, in that the engagement was not directly with the camera, but existed independently of my presence. Although my presence filming these moments does affect the overall behavior of participants, the primary focus was on the educational moment itself; my filming was secondary. I relate this type of engagement to the filmed interviews, in that both forms required me to draw on techniques independent of the moment. My awareness shifted towards preservation of specific information, and garnering a clear image to accompany that information. Therefore, shifts in perspective or movement were limited to moments when the speaker paused or I was asking questions. These techniques are quite common in documentary filming, but less so in an observational approach, which by nature is more fluid and adaptive. This does not change the fact, however, that ultimately even these more formal modes of filming were relational engagements. My presence, and closeness, was a result of the relationship that I cultivated with participants.

The following clip is from one of my very early filming engagements with Mississippi Association of Cooperatives (MAC), the Mississippi branch of the FSC/LAF. MAC was hosting a field day at the Indian Springs Farmers' Association and had invited students, interns, and other food activists from Jackson, Mississippi, as well as some of the local farmers. This clip shows the tour of the fields surrounding Indian Springs Farmers' Association (one of the MAC member cooperatives).

Film 6: Indian Springs Field Day https://vimeo.com/156090159/3a0dc9610a

While filming this event, my focus was on documenting the information being presented. At times, I failed at this task, and relevant information was discussed while the camera was moving or I was adjusting the settings. This disrupts the flow of the piece and limits the knowledge that can be communicated within the film. Even though my role for this particular event was as a documentarian, my relationships with those involved shaped my ability to position myself quite closely to the speaker. My presence was

tolerated, despite the fact that it would have been a detractor for others involved. Those present adjusted and accommodated me because of their interest in my project at large and my ability to offer documentation of their activities.

For many of my filming engagements I continue to wonder how much of the knowledge gained using film is embedded in film itself, and what textual supports are needed for this knowledge to be understood. In their complete form, these different films provide a wealth of information, even aspects that I fail to account for in my field notes or analysis. Yet, the contextual information of field notes from the filming, editing, and screening of these pieces add to the depth of what these pieces can convey. In the end, though, I think that returning to the visual material itself is where the most relevant aspects of my research lie.

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Chapter 3. Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund

Introduction

"We do kitchen style development," commented Cornelius Blanding, the current executive director of the FSC/LAF. He was explaining the FSC/LAF's difficulty in conforming to dominant paradigms of development especially when seeking funding or working with governmental agencies and non-profits. Many times they are asked to lay out their strategic plan for building cooperatives, especially when asked to assist in international work, as they did after the earthquake in Haiti. But the FSC/LAF's consistent response is that they do not have a strategic plan, nor do they implement cooperatives. They listen, facilitate, educate, and assist in accessing resources. This is the heart of their "kitchen style" of development. The first step, for the FSC/LAF, is to build relationships with the communities they serve until they are invited into the kitchen. The kitchen symbolically represents the heart of a home, the place of family and intimate friends. Therefore, being invited into the kitchen is a reference to the process of developing more intimate relationships; it is moving from the status of guest to that of close friend or confidant. From this vantage point, the FSC/LAF can better understand how to be of assistance, and the communities involved can better utilize their assistance. This model, however, is frustrating to their funders and supporters. There is no specific timeline and no plan of immediate action. The first step is one of listening, observing, and relating to the people they serve.

The FSC/LAF is a grassroots organization that works regionally across the southeastern USA to facilitate rural development, land-based economic growth, and cooperative building for African American farmers in particular, and all family farmers generally. In an atmosphere that promotes industrialized agriculture the FSC/LAF promotes agriculture as a form of personal empowerment, civil rights, and communal sustainability. The FSC/LAF serves as an intermediary organization, bridging the communicative and ideological gaps between African American farmers and government organizations, funders, agricultural experts and university extension agencies in order to help farmers gain access to information and resources. As a facilitator, the FSC/LAF practices development based on intimacy and relationship building while using grassroots mobilizing techniques to encourage farmers to form groups through which they can design and implement their own development projects. In doing so, the FSC/LAF draws on cultural heritages and social identities in order to encourage community formation and collective action.

One of the distinguishing aspects of the FSC/LAF's approach to development is its focus on building relationships with local farmers and community members prior to implementing development projects. Field staff among the FSC/LAF spend a considerable amount of time building rapport with local populations, not just through field visits, but also through social engagements, sharing meals, attending church together, and overall by becoming part of the community. These relationships are considered the strength and the uniqueness of the FSC/LAF's approach to development, and are crucial for engaging in further action. From the basis of this relationship, the FSC/LAF can better understand what development strategies to recommend to local

populations, how to assist them in acquiring resources, gaining new knowledge, or building cooperatives. The relationship between development organizers and local populations serves as the basis on which to better understand how different people conceive of their situation and wish to improve it. It allows the FSC/LAF to provide more direct services to individual farmers and better understand how to motivate collective efforts in order to implement cooperative-based projects.

Organizers within the FSC/LAF stress the mutual necessity of political access and economic independence for gaining both freedom and livelihood security for black farmers and rural residents. They often refer to the FSC/LAF as the economic side of the civil rights struggles. For black farmers, gaining voting rights was more than just participation in political apparatus. At a local and county level, rural communities used their vote to elect black candidates to positions within the school systems, local justice system, and within county USDA offices. These local positions governed the distribution of resources at a local and county level, and part of gaining access to the political machinery was a means to changing the rules governing distribution and access to government resources and services.

But access to the political structure would be meaningless without a form of independent power. The political elite of the South responded to civil rights demands through mass evictions of tenants and sharecroppers. Black farmers who associated with any civil rights organization (SNCC, SCLC, CORE, NAACP) were denied USDA resources, such as crop allotments, grants, or loans. Material independence therefore became a source of political access, just as political access was used to redistribute material wealth. The FSC/LAF therefore simultaneously makes demands upon the

dominant political system and encourages the creation of an independent source of wealth. From the state, they demand both redistribution of resources and recognition for black farmers. These two demands, for redistribution and recognition, are necessary for what Nancy Frasier terms "parity of participation" (Frasier, 1998; 8). They are a means for diversely identified groups to gain an equal footing within a political apparatus. The FSC/LAF not only facilitates these demands, but also serves as a translator for rural communities by educating farmers and rural residents on the meaning of relevant policies, legal concerns, and methods for applying for resources. Simultaneously, cooperative development and land retention serve as the backbone for building independent wealth for black farmers and family farmers in general.
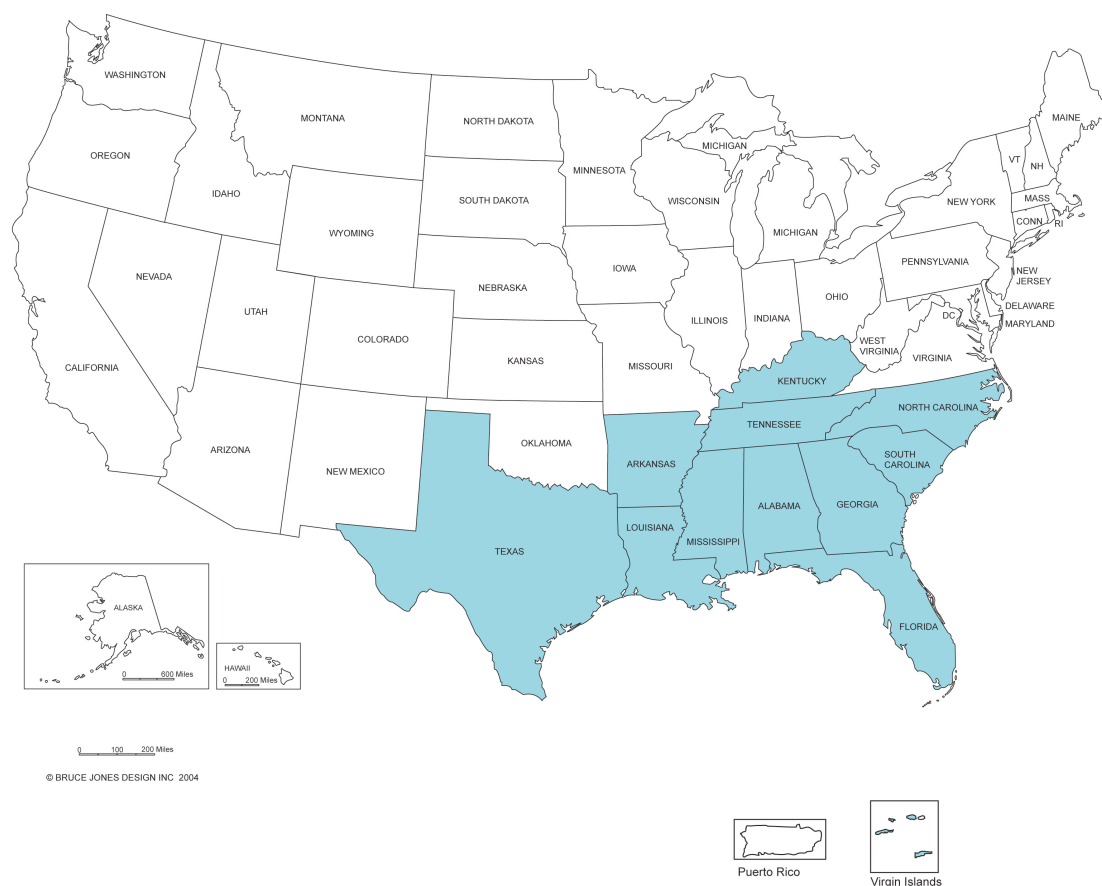
Figure 3: States with members in the FSC/LAF

Origins

Listen to Mr. John Zippert, one of the original organizers for the FSC/LAF, explain their economic and political vision for the Black Belt.

Film 7: Mr. Zippert https://vimeo.com/118545608/41ddb9099e

The FSC/LAF focuses its efforts in a region of the US known as the Black Belt (Figure 1 highlights the states that have members belonging to the FSC/LAF). This crescent shaped region spans from Virginia to the eastern parts of Texas. The term refers in part to the rich dark soils, found mostly in the plains of Alabama and Mississippi, which supported the cotton plantations that built the Southern economy. This cotton empire, formed during the first half of the 19th century, was based on the labor of enslaved Africans, whose numbers eventually surpassed that of European descendants in the region thus creating a black majority in this same region, which is the source of the second meaning of the name, Black Belt. The growing global demand for cotton in the mid 1800s, especially in Europe, spurred the growth of plantations, built on enslaved labor, which in turn facilitated the creation of an elite, white, land-holding oligarchy. This "plantation bloc" (Woods, 1998) maintained dominance in the South, even through multiple political and economic shifts. The Civil War, and subsequent end of slavery, did not eliminate the power dynamics between the planation bloc and African American laborers. Many newly freed African Americans lacked the resources to build independent

livelihoods, and Federal efforts to assist their transition to independence lacked follow through and commitment. Therefore, a large proportion of African Americans remained in the South, working as sharecroppers for plantation owners. This economic system created a new form of oppression and tied African Americans to the land through systems of debt, unfair wages, lack of knowledge about markets, racist legal systems, and social intimidation and violence.

Despite the tyranny of the dominant system in the South, many African Americans were able to build independent farming enterprises through buying land and forming independent communities. By 1910, African Americans owned over 15 million acres of land.[6] Yet the shifting political framework of agriculture, especially the decentralized Federal supports stemming from New Deal policies, bolstered the agricultural production of white farmers and landowners while systematically discriminating against black farmers and landowners (Daniel, 2013; Reynolds, 2001). African American landowners and farmers struggled to compete against their subsidized white counterparts, and received no safety nets to withstand weather, crop, and market fluctuations. By the 1950s, cotton prices were falling and agriculture was becoming mechanized. As a result, sharecroppers were becoming an unnecessary burden for white landowners and many African American farmers, both landowning and tenant farmers, left the rural South.

In the face of an oppressive system and hardships, African Americans in the rural South have sought means to build their own development initiatives, largely through collective efforts and grassroots enterprises (Woods, 1998; Marshall and Godwin, 1971;

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[6] Land ownership and land loss is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

Nembhard, 2004). By the 1950s, several farming, landowning, and purchasing cooperatives formed within the regions of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia (Marshall and Godwin, 1971). These cooperatives were designed to help black farmers and rural residents build resilient livelihoods in the face of shifting agricultural practices and continuing racial discrimination and violence. These collective efforts both supported and received support from a growing political activism in the South, facilitated not only by rural residents, but also by African Americans from northern cities and universities.

The FSC emerged from the momentum of these various forces. The collective organizing among African American farmers formed the backbone of their cooperative movement, and these farmers served as the initial key players in the formation and organizing of the FSC. The influx of Civil Rights organizers to the South during the 1960s, from organizations such as SNCC, SCLC, CORE, and NAACP, spread political awareness and education on collective organizing. They also brought with them ideas of cooperative organizing, sometimes establishing cooperatives, especially after boycotts, as a way to provide alternate supplies for people during their support of the boycott (Federation, 1992). The momentum of these groups helped to build new local organizers, and some of these organizers even remained in the South, committed to the cause of black farmers. By the 1960s, a number of these cooperatives were functioning and flourishing across the South (Federation, 1992).

The Federation of Southern Cooperatives (FSC) was established in 1967 as a way to unite and consolidate resources between farmers' cooperatives, marketing cooperatives, and credit unions across the South (Marshall and Godwin, 1971; Nembhard, 2006). The FSC was formed by twenty-two cooperatives from the Carolinas,

Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Louisiana. These cooperatives sought to strengthen their collective movement together and created a cooperative of cooperatives through which to organize and collaborate as well as build a movement. This push, to turn grassroots cooperatives into a movement, remained a consistent goal of the FSC, even at the loss of funders who wanted them to focus on developing individual cooperatives to their fullest market value. This effort was supported by LBJ's Office of Economic Opportunity programs, which provided resources for low-income community development efforts (Federation, 1992). The FSC has a unique organizational structure. It is a regionally chartered non-profit, chartered in DC, a category that is no longer legally allowed in the US. Charles Prejean was the first chairperson of the FSC, and later the first Executive Director (Federation, 1992). The newly formed organization established its headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. Over the next three years it grew quickly from 22 to 100 member cooperatives, serving 25,000 rural families.

Brief Timeline of Important FSC/LAF Events

1910 – Peak of land ownership for African Americans. Collectively they own 15 million acres. There has been steady decline ever since.

1946 – Congress creates the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) to offer credit designed to improve the income of small farm owners, often known as the "lender of last resort." This organization notoriously refuses loans to black farmers.

1964 – The Civil Rights Bill is passed to enforce the constitutional right to vote and to confer jurisdiction upon the district courts of the US to provide injunctive relief against discrimination in public accomodations.

1965 – The Voting Rights Act is passed in order to break state disenfranchisement.

1965 – A group of black tenant farmers near Panola, Alabama file suit against plantation owners for their legal share of the government price support payments on cotton. The tenants win.

1966 – Panola tenants are evicted, the plantation owner switches from cotton to pine trees. Landowner cites debt as means to refuse payment for the lawsuit.

1967 – 40 of the evicted families stay in Sumter County and form the Panola Land Buying Association (PLBA). The group seeks 2 tracts of land from a white land owner in exchange for helping him redeem his 3 tracts of indebted land. They are met with legal maneuvering that prevents this action. The case is moved from state to federal court.

1967 – Federation of Southern Cooperatives (FSC) is founded by 22 cooperatives. Its goal is to assist in the economic development of black farmers and the rural poor.

1967 – FSC board of directors appoints Charles Prejean as first Executive Director. He moves from Lafayette, Louisiana to Atlanta, Georgia to open the first regional office.

1970 – The FSC grows to 100 member cooperatives and 25,000 low-income families.

1970 – The Federal court rules in favor of the PLBA, who redeem the land. The original white land owner can no longer afford the 1 tract and offers all 3 to to PLBA. On September 1 the PLBA comes into possession of 1,164 acres of land in Sumter County. FSC assists in the purchase. PLBA agrees to give the FSC a portion of the land to build its rural training and demonstration farm in exchange for help with the payments.

1971 – Several programmatic and training staff of the FSC move to live in mobile homes on the newly purchased land. It becomes the FSC's Rural Training and Research Center (RTRC). They build offices, a conference building, industrial sized kitchen, and dormitories that can accomodate up to 80 people. The RTRC hosts numerous workshops and meetings.

1971 – The FSC staff expands to 62 from the original 5 at its founding.

1973 – "Only Six Million Acres" is published by the Black Economic Research Center under the leadership of Robert Browne.

1973 – Emergency Land Fund (ELF) is formally organized to address issues of black land loss. Robert Browne is the founder.

1979 – At the behest of a group of white elites in Sumter County, the Congressional General Accounting Office audits the FSC. They report that the organization had a clean record of handling public and private funds in November of 1979.

1979 – On New Year's Eve, 1979, FBI agents come to the FSC's office in Atlanta to subpoena Charles Prejean and take "any and all books, records, reports, papers, memoranda, applications, and proposals submitted during the years 1976-79."

1980-1981 – The FBI visit the homes of 200 cooperative members to question them about their involvement with the FSC. FSC funding dries up due to the investigation.

1981 – US Attorney announces that he could find no prosecutable offenses of the FSC.

1981 – USDA conducts seminal research on black land loss and heir property entitled "The Impact of Heir Property on Black Rural Land Tenure in the Southeastern Region of the United States."

1982 – US Commission on Civil Rights reports one of the primary reasons for black land loss is due to discrimination from the USDA and the FmHA not lending to black farmers.

1985 – ELF merges with FSC to become the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/ Land Assistance Fund (FSC/LAF).

1985 – Ralph Paige is appointed the new Executive Director. The headquarters moves to East Point, Georgia.

1990 – FSC/LAF leads efforts to pass the first Minority Farmers Rights Bill – section 2501 – to provide technical assistance to black farmers. It is still part of the current Farm Bill.

1992 – The FSC/LAF leads first black farmer "Caravan to Washington" to address the plight of black and minority farmers.

1997 – USDA holds listening forums to hear from minority farmers.

1998 – US District Court Judge Paul Friedman designates Pigford v. Glickmans as a "class."

1999 – Fairness hearing on Consent Decree for Pigford lawsuit.

2008 – Congress passes the Farm Bill which includes provisions for "late filers" in the Pigford lawsuit known as Pigford II.

2010 – President Barak Obama signs bill authorizing $1.25 billion dollars in appropriations for the Pigford II lawsuit after Congress approves the legislation.

2015 – Cornelius Blanding appointed the new Executive Director of the FSC/LAF.

Figure 4: Brief Timeline of FSC/LAF Events

Rural Training and Research Center

Listen to Mr. Wendell Paris, one of the original organizers for the FSC/LAF, discuss the living on the Rural Training and Research Center.

*Film 8:*Mr. Paris https://vimeo.com/116002630/7ddd671dc1

Early on, the FSC searched for a place to establish a center on which they could hold meetings, provide trainings, set up demonstrations and house organizers. In 1965, a group of black tenant farmers from large plantations near Panola, in Sumter County, filed a lawsuit against the plantation owners for their legal share of government price support payments on cotton (Federation, 1992). The tenants won the lawsuit but most were subsequently evicted by vindictive owners who switched their production form cotton to pine trees (Federation, 1992). During the same time, many tenant farmers who tried to register to vote, or were associated with any sort of political activity, were also being evicted particularly in counties that had an African American majority population. Many of the black tenant farmers left the rural areas, and the South altogether; others migrated to Birmingham or Tuskegee. But some stayed, and a group of 40 families in Sumter County decided to form the Panola Land Buyers Association (PLBA) (Federation, 1992). The PLBA wanted to purchase land in order to build secure resident housing for African Americans and sought assistance from the FSC. The PLBA and FSC worked together to

buy three tracts of land in western Alabama, one of which became the Rural Training and Research Center and a demonstration farm for the FSC (Reynolds, 2002). This land, however, was not bought without a fight from white developers in Sumter County (Bethel, 1982). Through delay tactics and resistance, the PLBA and FSC were prevented from buying the land for three years, until the Federal Court finally facilitated the purchase (Federation, 1992). In the end, the FSC required intervention from the Federal Courts on the grounds of civil rights violations (Bethel, 1982). This was just the beginning of a white resistance to the establishment of a black farmer training center in Alabama.

In September of 1971 many of the FSC staff moved from various locations to live in mobile homes on the new land with the goal of building a Rural Training and Research Center. On the land the FSC built a dormitory that could house 80 people, a cafeteria-classroom building, an administrative office building, and a print shop (Federation, 1992). The staff also began demonstration projects with pigs, cattle, vegetables, and greenhouses (Federation, 1992). The growing activity made many of the whites in Sumter County nervous that the FSC was doing more than training farmers on this land. And, perhaps there was some truth to this. Economic development is difficult to tease apart from political involvement and social empowerment. The active resistance to the FSC grew, and white local elites petitioned national allies and eventually brought enough suspicion upon the FSC's use of federal funds to warrant a grand jury investigation in 1979. What was technically an audit was handled with aggression and intimidation. Despite the fact that the General Accounting Office initially found that the organization had a clean record, the audit continued under the auspices of the FBI. FSC organizers

were asked for all their records, with no specific accusations. FBI agents questioned members, asking them how the FSC had wronged them, or if they knew that the FSC was abusing government funds. FBI agents swarmed the Rural Training and Research Center and the homes of member farmers, at one point even measuring the gravel in the demonstration greenhouses. Carrying shovels and rulers, FBI agents made sure that the gravel was 12 inches deep, as specified in the FSC's federal funding request (Bethel, 1982; 25). This tedious and intimidating use of force was not only uncalled for, it was unprecedented in any audit case.

The long drawn out and imposing investigation brought suspicion upon the FSC and caused some funders to withdraw support, thereby slowing the growth of the organization. After a long and challenging battle the FSC was eventually able to clear its name and regain the support of private foundations as well as working relationships with federal and state agencies (Diop and Fraser, 2008). The FSC worked to rebuild the Rural Training and Research Center and continued to carry on its efforts of organizing and training African American farmers. Today, only a few staff members live in rooms in the dorms on the property, but it still serves as a site for workshops, meetings, and trainings. Additionally, the staff at Epes set up agricultural practices as demonstrations for farmers. These also serve as material assets for farmer members, such as the goat pass-on project. The demonstration farms are used as research plots as well through partnerships with Tuskegee University.

During the Carter administration, the FSC staff had functioned as Federal program administrators — almost supplanting their role as cooperative organizers, developers, and technical assistance providers. Reagan's presidency cut most of the

Federal programs aimed to address poverty and community development thus changing the function of the FSC staff who reorganized to focus again on the basic mission of cooperative development (Federation, 1992). The FSC also began to network more with other existing development organization, and in 1985 agreed to a programmatic merger with the Emergency Land Fund, which eventually led to a full merger of the two groups into an organization call the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund (FSC/LAF) (Federation, 1992). During the 1980s the FSC also encouraged each of its member states to create their own state association and establish a state field office. Field offices were established in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and South Carolina. The Alabama field office and state association were housed on the Rural Training and Research Center. Today, many of the staff there work under both the State Association and the Rural Training and Research Center.

Emergency Land Fund
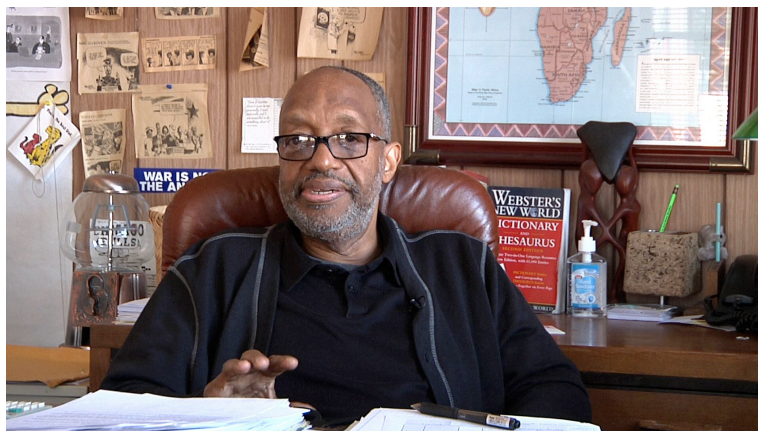
Listen to Mr. Jerry Pennick, one of the original organizers for the Emergency Land Fund, explain their efforts for land retention.

Film 9: Mr. Pennick https://vimeo.com/115999797/e10a7fd2cd

An economist, Robert S. Browne, who had been active in pushing for African American economic development and equality (Betsey, 2008), founded the Emergency Land Fund (ELF). Browne, who was born in Chicago and worked in several international locations, founded ELF in 1971 and brought Joe Brooks (a graduate student from University of California, Berkeley) to be the first executive director and later president of ELF (Brooks, 2008). The idea for ELF grew out of research conducted by Browne on the rapid land loss among African American landowners published in a report entitled "Only Six Million Acres," in reference to the rapid decline in African American landownership from the 15 million owned in 1910. Browne believed that retaining this land could be leveraged by African American communities, not only in the South where the land was located, but also throughout the diasporic community, who through extended family networks, maintained claims to land ownership in the South. This economic asset was also a source of political freedom, which could be utilized to promote equity and agency for African Americans.

Browne's research found that one of the major sources of African American land loss was through forced auction sales, either as partition sales of heir property, or tax sales from delinquent taxes. Heir property is property held in common by all descendants of an original owner. If a shareholder wishes to receive compensation for their portion of the land, they can request a partition sale from a judge. The judge can then force the land to be sold through an auction on the court steps, thus monetizing the land as a means to divide it among the shareholders. This strategy was regularly manipulated by land speculators and developers, as will be explained in more detail in chapter 4.

Once it fully developed into a staffed institution, ELF tried to stop many of these sales, and at other times tried to help farmers buy the land. Often though, having very few resources, ELF organizers would attend auctions and bluff bid, just in order to drive up the prices (Pennick, 2013). The presence of African Americans at these auctions itself changed the dynamic and control of land speculators (Brooks, 1979). Many of the land developers were in secret partnerships with judges and lawyers creating a monopoly of the judicial system. Therefore, the presence and legal council of ELF significantly shifted the momentum of forced heir property auctions.

The Emergency Land Fund was formed as a project within Browne's larger framework analyzing the plight of African Americans and key strategies for black economic development. Browne saw that African Americans were not equal citizens of the US, and considered them as a people without a nation, who thus needed to develop their own economic plan in order to develop in the same manner as other nations that pursued development (Browne, 1970). Both Browne and Brooks were part of a Black Nationalist agenda that called for a Black Separatist Movement (Browne, 1967). Browne intended this movement not as a radical movement, but as a moderate claim. He understood the violence involved in the creation of actual separate nations, citing Pakistan and India as key examples. However, his push for Black Nationalism was intended as a moderate movement based on the creation of an independent politics that could create a space of sovereignty, independence, and self-respect and dignity (Browne,1967). His vision was a world in which African Americans are not seen as inferior to the standards of white America, neither in looks nor in culture nor actions. To achieve this, African Americans needed to build a place of their own. The idea for such a

movement was based on a belief that geography and power are inexorably tied but not fixed. The current political structures that govern the relationship between geography and power can be changed through the combined efforts of claiming landownership, building independent economic enterprises, and pursuing just policies. His idea of the separatist movement was less about an autonomous nation, and more built on the belief that the geo-political power structures must be shifted through gaining control of spaces, in this case through land ownership, economic independence, and changing policies and electing black political representatives. Thus, new arrangements of power are possible. The separatist movement was a means to create new possibilities for African American identification and ideological foundations, instead of remaining under the discriminatory ideologies of white supremacy.

This context sheds light on the theoretical underpinnings of the project of the ELF. As an economist, Browne considered the land still owned by African Americans as a crucial economic asset that needed to be utilized as part of the development plan, even if not physically resided upon. Yet, within his articulations of the goal for African American development, spatial aspects came into play as part of the construction of "a people," a nationless nation, as political power, and as a space of autonomy and identity formation. Therefore, the ELF's goals were not strictly about assets. Land could not be replaced with another asset. It was land in particular, and space more generally, that needed to be retained by the African American populations.

Toward the Present

Since 1985, the FSC/LAF has worked on six primary programmatic priority areas: cooperative and credit union development for poor people; land loss and retention problems of black and white family farmers; advocacy for public policy changes and government resources for limited resource family farmers and rural community development programs; maintenance and support for the training and education programs of the FSC/LAF Rural Training Center at Epes, Alabama; increased housing opportunities and the use of renewable energy sources by low-income rural people; general survival, stability and resilience of the FSC/LAF, to better serve its constituent members (Federation, 1992). This dissertation focuses largely on the first three of these programmatic areas. They represent the majority of the FSC/LAF's institutional activities. My research examines how these institutional strategies manifest as everyday practices among the rural populations the FSC/LAF serves.

During the late 1980s and 1990s, the FSC/LAF advocated for several policy changes, helping to create new programs in benefiting smallholding and minority farmers. In 1987 they pushed for a category of "socially disadvantaged applicants" in the 1987 Agricultural Credit Act that provisions the FmHA Farm Ownership loans. This legislation has resulted in a minimum of $12.5 million per year made available to black and minority farmers since 1989 (Federation, 1992). In 1992 the FSC/LAF organized a Caravan to Washington DC to encourage legislation that incorporated their "minority farmers rights bill". In 1997 the FSC helped facilitate USDA listening sessions that led to the creation of a USDA Civil Rights Action Team.

During the 1990s, the FSC/LAF helped facilitate several policy changes that directly benefited black farmers. They advocated for the 1990 Food, Agriculture,

Conservation and Trade (FACT) Act to contain Section 2501 which provided up to $10 million for Technical Assistance Program for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers. This program served 1890 land grant universities, tribal colleges, and community-based organizations including the FSC (Federation, History). In fact this program provided the salaries for many of the FSC field staff. The USDA Section 2501 helped fund a Small Farmer Outreach Program within the FSC/LAF. Through this program, FSC/LAF staff helped to save 4,054 acres of land, helped farmers purchase 1633.1 acres, and increase the number of participating farmers from 125 to 192 between 1995 and 2000. The program has served 3,874 participants through over 200 meetings and workshop. It has also assisted farmers in receiving $13,708,070 in loans (Federation, 2002). This program has helped increase alternative crops for farmers, increase farmers gross income, and decrease farmers' dependency on off-farm income. Many farmers were also assisted through livestock projects in connection with Heifer Project International (Federation, 2002). The FSC/LAF has also helped secure housing for rural families, helped to create credit unions now serving over 14,000 members, and increase farm cooperatives across the Black Belt.

Organizational Structure
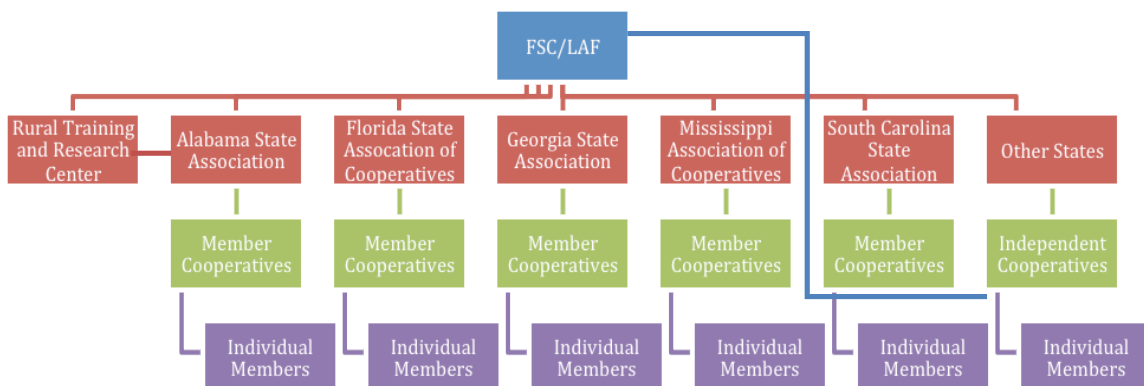
Figure 5: Organizational Chart of the FSC/LAF

Organizationally, the FSC/LAF is a network of cooperatives but accepts both individuals and cooperatives as its members. Several states have their own state associations, which in turn organize the cooperatives in those states. Yet cooperatives can directly become members of the FSC/LAF, and individuals can become members of a specific State Association without belonging to a cooperative, or of the FSC/LAF without belonging to a State Association or cooperative. Currently, there are over 70 active cooperative member groups, themselves with a membership of more than 20,000 families working together across ten southern states, with a concentration in Mississippi,

Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina (Federation, History). The FSC/LAF primarily focuses on the issues of black farmers, but has white, Hispanic, Native American, and Asian members. They do not exclude anyone from participating in their organization, and their staff are open to serving any family farmer in need. Their members and clientele are all family farmers or rural residents, and most of the farmers are small-scale farmers. A few of their members have several hundred acres of land, but none would be considered a large-scale industrialized farmer by US standards.

The FSC/LAF is the over-arching federated network with administrative headquarters located in East Point, GA. They are officially a regionally chartered cooperative, which is unique since state laws govern most cooperatives. In order to better serve individual farmers and cooperatives, they encourage individual states to form state associations and have established field offices in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and South Carolina. These serve as local extensions of the FSC/LAF, and an organizing point for the members of that state. State associations are able to organize and charter themselves separately from the FSC/LAF itself, which gives them power as independent organizations and also allows them more freedom to address policies and problems that are state specific. The state associations, however, also cross borders, work together, receive funds from the FSC/LAF, and work with farmers from states outside their own.

The cooperatives themselves are designed around a number of connecting features. Sometimes they organize around a geographical region or county. The FSC encourages farmers to create multiple geographically specific cooperatives as units that can reach farmers within a certain region. Then, representatives can attend centralized workshops and trainings and report back. Many of these localized cooperatives are

organized as self-help groups. Other cooperatives organize around an issue, a product, or an activity. Farming cooperatives may serve as a buying club, a marketing club, or work to own joint machinery. Some aim to be processing facilities for vegetables, others storage facilities for hay, others make quilts or crafts. Several credit unions are part of the FSC/LAF as well. Many groups of farmers form organizations through informal networks tied through building a customer base within the community, or through organizing an event or market, or organizing through their churches. Several of these organizations remain unchartered, but others formalize into official cooperatives to support their farmers' markets or aggregate sales. Cooperatives are able to apply for grants and programs not available to individual farmers, and thus forming an official cooperative has advantages for organizations.

There are three main interfaces through which FSC/LAF staff engages with farmers and rural residents: individual interactions, co-op development, and public sessions. First, field staff help individuals through technical assistance and education. They help farmers develop business plans to better their farms, they share information about grants and resources, teach agricultural techniques, and they ensure that grants and programs are implemented fairly for their community members. Besides agricultural efforts, the FSC also helps with housing projects and estate planning. Second, the FSC/LAF works with cooperatives of many types, including farmer co-operatives, farmers' cooperatives, credit unions, and housing cooperatives. The FSC/LAF promotes and supports cooperatives as an ideal organizational form for rural residents and farmers to work together to overcome poverty and discrimination in the area. However, they do not impose this model, or establish the cooperatives themselves, but instead provide

trainings, information, and assistance. Third, the FSC/LAF staff provides public workshops and trainings. These range from evening lectures and information sessions to weekend long workshops. The topics of these sessions relate to current and ongoing issues such as the consequences of heir property, new agricultural techniques, or relevant legislation.

Field Sites

The FSC/LAF served as my entrance and network into the field. My research questions aimed to explore how the FSC/LAF's development initiatives became practices among the population and communities they aimed to serve. To understand this, I needed access to the intimate spaces within which this "kitchen style" development took place. As discussed in chapter 2, my entrance into this space was through developing a collaborative video project that served as the core of my research. But along with the production of videos, I generally integrated myself into the activities supported through the Alabama state association and Rural Training and Research Center, in Epes, Alabama, and through the Mississippi Association of Cooperatives, headquartered in Jackson, Mississippi. I began networking with the FSC/LAF during the summer of 2008, began some preliminary research during the summer of 2009, initiated my film project during the summer of 2010, and continued my research between July of 2011 to July of 2013. In total, I conducted 72 formal and informal interviews, 52 of which were filmed, and several of which included tours of the landscape, farm work, or other activities. Of these 34 were conducted with participants in Alabama, 37 in Mississippi, one in Georgia. In total, 22 were conducted with FSC/LAF staff or organizers. I also attended 45 events,

21 in Alabama, 20 in Mississippi, 4 in Georgia, and of these I filmed 36. Of my informants four were white of which I filmed three, three were African, and the rest were African American, but several other white participants attended FSC/LAF events. In total I had 21 female informants. Few wives (four) of farmers were present during my interviews but did not want to be interviewed or involved in the film project. Often, though, they added to their husbands' interviews or explained additional stories to me on the side. I allowed participants to self-ascribe the term farmer, whether or not they farmed row crops, for profit, or simply had a plot in their back yard. In total, 48 considered themselves farmers but seven were either growing only in their backyards or not growing anything at all. Of these, 40 owned land but several of the youth (eight) did not directly own land, but farmed with parents and were likely to inherit the land in the future. Most of the participants were above the age of 60 (33 in total); five were under 20.

Along with interacting with individual farmers, rural residents, and FSC/LAF staff and organizers, I also spent time with member cooperatives. I met several of the member cooperatives during state association meetings, the annual FSC/LAF meetings, and small farmers' conferences. I visited a total of nine cooperatives, three in Alabama, five in Mississippi, and one in Georgia. I spent time filming and working with one cooperative in Alabama and two in Mississippi. These cooperatives had a desire to be an active part of the film project and therefore invited me to film with their members and their events.

I conducted this research through building relationships and networking through the FSC/LAF. My aim was not to find a representative sample, but to observe, participate in, and film a variety of activities, events, and individuals involved in the practices of

development. I began in Epes, Alabama, because of its central place in the FSC/LAF's history. It has served as a key site for demonstrations, trainings, and workshops and hosts a number of meetings and activities. At one point, key field staff resided on the property. Currently, a few staff still reside in the dorm rooms, which also are used to room and board farmers, rural residents, and researchers. From Epes, I was introduced to the staff in Mississippi and continued my research with the staff there. Jackson, Mississippi serves as the main office for the Mississippi Association of Cooperatives, but many of the staff reside nearer the counties they serve. The offices were mostly a space for meetings and organizing. My main focus was these two states, Alabama and Mississippi. They hold many similarities, historically, geographically, and ecologically. They are also the most active of the state associations. An annual small farmers' conference is hosted by the FSC/LAF in Albany, Georgia, which I also attended several times, and visited the nearby cooperative, the Flint River Farmers Cooperative. I also made several visits to the administrative headquarters in East Point, Georgia. Cornelius Blanding, previously the assistant executive director and the current executive director, served as my main contact point from the administrative staff and regularly evaluated my research progress and granted me FSC/LAF support and approval from an administrative level. I also interviewed Jerry Pennick in the East Point offices. Jerry Pennick was the director of the Land Assistance Fund side of the FSC/LAF, and formerly worked with the ELF. The interview was internally motivated by the FSC/LAF, since Mr. Pennick was soon to retire and the organization was interested in archiving some his stories and histories. It also served as a historic backdrop to my own research.

Alabama

I first became involved with the FSC/LAF through participating in workshops at the Rural Training and Research Center in Epes, Alabama. My main contacts there were two employees, Osagie Idehen, from Nigeria, and Pamela Madzima, from Zimbabwe, who continued to guide me throughout my work. Both Pam and Osa are from Africa, Zimbabwe and Nigeria respectively, came to study in the USA, and stayed on to work at the FSC/LAF. Through their extensive work at the FSC/LAF, 10 years and 8 years respectively, they have developed extensive insider knowledge around the issues of rural development in the US south as well as the particular social and cultural context of western Alabama in particular.
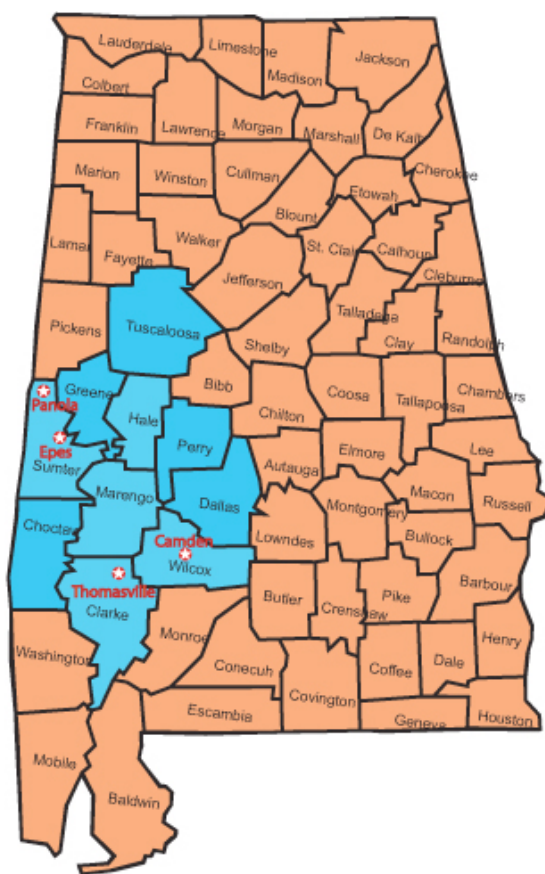
Figure 6: Counties I worked in during my research with key towns.

Their insider/outsider status gave them insights into issues of development that were useful in guiding my own entrance into the community. Also they were able to draw on their experiences from their home communities and draw parallels as well as distinctions between issues of development and social and cultural responses to development in both the US and in Africa. As guides into the field, they were able to maintain a certain analytical distance and discuss these issues with me in language and form similar to academic analyses. Their positions, as former graduate students at Tuskegee University, scholars in the fields of agriculture and rural development, as well as practitioners, enabled them to discuss my research in several different meta-communicative formats, including the form of academic analysis, as well as enthusiastic practitioner. Because they themselves had to learn how to work with and communicate with the local population, they understood these skills and insights explicitly and were able to expressly communicate them to me.

The Alabama field office variably consisted of 9-11 employees with interns and Vista volunteers working for a shorter time period. Pam and Osa were field specialists, and spent most of their time working directly with farmers. Osa, along with one other forestry specialist, and later two forestry specialists, resided on the RTRC premises. One of the forestry specialists was an African American woman from Alabama who wished to remain outside of the study. Nonetheless, she offered numerous insights and conversations that shaped my understanding of the dynamics involved among the Epes staff and the FSC/LAF at large. Later in my research the RTRC hired another forestry specialist, Dr. Susan Bambo, who is a graduate from Florida A&M and originally from Cameroon. Pam previous had resided on the premises but had recently moved to the

nearby town of Livingston. Both Pam and Osa work under Mr. Zippert, the director of the RTRC and head of the Alabama field office. Mr. Zippert is a Jewish man from New York, but he has lived in the area now since his 20s. He is not considered an outsider anymore. He came down south to participate in civil rights activities and stayed on as an organizer, and rural development practitioner. He has been involved in cooperative development since the beginning of the FSC/LAF. He married a woman from New Orleans, the sister of the first executive director of the FSC/LAF Charles Prejean, and now resides in Green County and produces a local newspaper. During the height of the Rural Training Center in Epes, the Zipperts lived with their family in a trailer on the property, along with many of the other organizers.

Two other African American women worked for the RTRC and Alabama State Association, one as a general manager and the other as an accountant. Three other field staff, an African American woman from a farm just south of Epes, Sherita Hale, and an African American man from Meridian, Mississippi, Jerry Burton, and a man from the Epes area, Aaron Hodge, also served as outreach specialists and provided individual and cooperative support to farmers in the counties surrounding Epes. During my research time several Vista volunteers and interns came to work for the FSC/LAF. Students, three from the South and two from northern cities, came during the summer to learn from the FSC/LAF. Local residents were employed through various means. The RTRC utilized various grant and internship programs to find funding to hire people when they could. They also hired a local woman to do general cleaning, and a man who resided on the property to do general handy work. They hired local cooks, musicians, and coordinators during events, and overall attempted to serve the community through employing the best

that they could. During the summer, they hired high school children to work on one of their demonstration plots. The students were taught to plant, grow, harvest, and sell the produce and were allowed to keep the proceeds. They were also taught banking skills, speaking, and research skills.

During my research, I resided on the premises in Epes from a week to a month at a time. During my stays I shadowed the field staff on their visits to farmers. Mostly I worked with Osa and Pam, but also followed Sherita and Jerry on several farmer visits. I also attended events, not only those hosted on the premises but also those sponsored by the Epes staff and located in nearby towns. Many workshops were hosted at numerous sites around western-central Alabama. The purpose was to provide access to a wider population of farmers and rural residents, many who have limited travel ability due to both time and resources. We also attended events hosted by nearby universities (Tuskegee and Alabama A&M) and USDA organizations. Along with the fieldwork and the workshops, the staff spent a large amount of time in the offices working on writing grants and reports. I also was provided a desk space in the common room. In the evenings the Epes staff, mostly Osa, Pam, and later Dr. Bambo, were responsible for the upkeep of the demonstration plots. This largely consisted of attending to the goats and less frequently the vegetable plots, and the plot under the newly erected hoop house.[7]

The Epes staff also supported Alabama cooperatives. I met several of the cooperatives at the Alabama State Association annual meetings, and visited a few of the cooperatives with Epes staff. But most of the cooperatives were either not very active, or

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[7] A hoop house is a plastic dome that works like a green house, but sits directly on the ground. Hoop houses were being sponsored by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), a division of the USDA, for small farmers. The RTRC set up a hoop house to demonstrate to local farmers the benefits of applying for the hoop house grants and using them to extend their vegetable growing season.

not interested in participating in my research project or film project. A newly formed cooperative, the Southeastern Goat Cooperative of Alabama (SOGOCO), consisted of many farmers I had already met during my early research. They were eager to have me participate in and film their activities. This cooperative consisted of a geographically diverse group of goat farmers with the goals of buying in bulk, sharing technical knowledge and training, building individual and collective herds, and eventually processing, branding, and selling goat meat as a collective.[8]

Mississippi
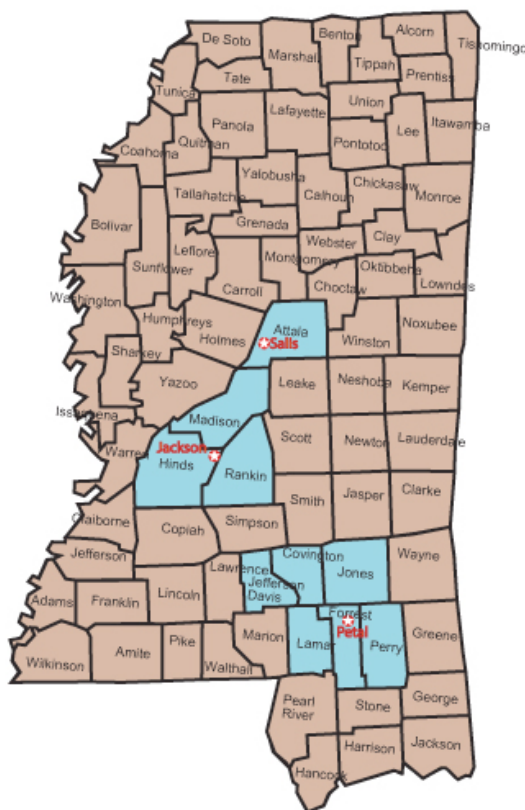
Figure 7: Counties I worked in during my research with key towns.

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[8] I discuss the history of each of the cooperatives in my research in more detail in chapter 5.

The Mississippi individual members and cooperatives are organized into the Mississippi Association of Cooperatives (MAC), which runs to some extent independent of the FSC/LAF structure. Although they network and coordinate with the rest of the FSC/LAF, including the Epes field staff, they design their state level programs independently. Expanding my research to Mississippi was coordinated by the contacts I made in Alabama, and the support of the administrative office of the FSC/LAF. During the summer of 2011, the Epes staff connected me to MAC staff who met me and introduced me to some of their farmers and cooperatives. Despite receiving approval from the administrative staff, these connections were precarious, not only because of my outside status but also because Mr. Ben Burkett, the state coordinator, tends to be difficult to reach, and often fails to return calls to people he does not know, largely because of his relative popularity and hence numerous solicitations. But the facilitation of the Epes staff helped make this connection possible.

During my first visit I met many of the MAC staff and traveled to several farms and cooperatives with Otis Wright, one of the outreach specialist. Otis, like many of the other outreach specialist, graduated with an agricultural degree from Alcorn State University. He became one of my regular confidants and introduced me to several farmers and cooperatives, some of whom I filmed. As a native to Mississippi, and the son of a farmer, Otis understood the cultural and social nuances of rural Mississippi. He was especially informative in explaining the more subtle racial formations that pervaded Mississippi. In fact, it was while driving with Otis that I first realized the potential threat I myself posed as a white woman. We were randomly pulled over while driving in a small

town just north of Jackson. This was not an unusual event, Otis explained. While my time in Alabama was spent in predominantly African American areas, and very small towns and rural areas in Mississippi, I consistently moved between larger towns, such as Jackson, mixed areas, white dominant areas, to rural areas and African American dominant areas.

The MAC office had 16 staff members, 7 of whom were field staff or outreach specialists, and several more consultants and part time employees. Almost all staff were African American, one was Indian, and one consultant was white. The number of field staff has changed slightly since my fieldwork due to shifts in the US Farm Bill, which provides many of the funds for outreach specialists. But, MAC is committed to keeping its staff employed, or helping them find comparable jobs in agriculture with either government or university institutions. The field staff were each responsible to certain counties of Mississippi and worked regularly with farmers and cooperatives within these counties. They helped farmers coordinate and organize, often leading to the developing of a cooperative. They also networked with existing cooperatives, serving as a link between individual cooperatives and the MAC network. Many of the outreach staff lived within or near the counties they served and visited the Jackson offices only for meetings. MAC staff also included Mr. Burkett, the state coordinator, an executive director, director of finance, cooperative specialist, director of mediation, information technology specialist, small business specialist, a bookkeeper, and secretary. Melbah Smith and Wendell Paris, both original African American members of the FSC/LAF and longtime supporters of MAC, also participated in many events and contributed to my research.

During my research, I spent less time shadowing outreach staff as they visited individual farmers and more time attending events and networking through cooperatives. In part, the MAC outreach staff were slightly younger than Pam and Osa, and slightly less experienced working in the field. They were therefore less confident in their outreach work and the addition of an outsider had the possibility of complicating their relationships with rural residents. However, personality differences also played a part. Many of the individual visits that I shadowed were not filmed, in order to respect the comfort and wishes of the participants. However, the MAC staff were very eager to have me film a number of events and workshops they sponsored. I was also asked regularly to attend conferences with the staff, even when I was not to film, and attend cooperative meetings.

I met several cooperatives involved with MAC, and attended the meetings or visited the facilities of five. Only two became significant within my research. The first, Indian Springs Farmers Association, is one of the longest running cooperatives of the FSC/LAF, and the oldest cooperative member of MAC. Mr. Burkett, the state coordinator of Mississippi, is also a key coordinator and second-generation member of Indian Springs. His daughter, Darnella Winston-Burkett, is also a member of Indian Springs as well as a MAC outreach specialist and cooperative coordinator. Indian Springs is one of the more productive cooperatives within the FSC/LAF, and has a long history of working with black farmers. They support vegetable farmers and have built a vegetable processing and storage facility for farmers in the surrounding ten counties. Therefore, even before I met anyone from MAC or Indian Springs, the administrative staff emphasized the importance of working with this particular cooperative. I visited their facilities on my

first visit to Mississippi, and after that regularly visited and participated in events and activities.

Most of the other cooperatives I met were farmers cooperatives, involved in some way in supporting farm enterprises through aggregate selling or buying of inputs, sharing equipment, or serving as educational and technical support. The Attala County Self Help Cooperative was formed in order to support cattle farmers in the area, many of whom had inherited land but had lost their herds. They gained momentum early in their formation through receiving a Heifer International grant for starting a heifer pass-on project, which became a key organizing impetus for the cooperative. I had met the president of the Attala cooperative, his wife, and the MAC coordinator (who is also a member) at other MAC events. They invited me to attend their Founders' Day activities the fall of 2012, which included an auction to raise funds for the cooperative. After I met the members they requested that I come and film with them. As a complement to the other two cooperatives I was working with, the very new SOGOCO and the established Indian Springs, Attala served as an example of a cooperative at an interesting point in its growth. The pass-on project had centralized its focus for the past six years, and now it needed to maintain enough collective capacity to continue once the project was finished. Also, their interest in the filming process created a productive relationship between the members and myself.

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Chapter 4: Contested Landscapes: The Construction of Spatial Rights

Introduction

"This is the site of our ancestral land, that is why we hold the market here," Mrs. Daisy Quinney revealed to me. "It is hallowed ground." I had come to film the opening of the St. John Farmers' Market in Panola, Alabama founded by Mrs. Quinney and a group of Panola residents. A county store once stood at the site of the market, serving the basic needs for the community of sharecroppers. At one time, her uncle owned the land. Multiple pressures had forced Mrs. Quinney's uncle to sell the land, and the local county store was long gone. Mrs. Quinney had spent much of her adult life away from rural Alabama but returned to take care of her parents and was inspired to devote herself to building up the community she had known as a child. As part of that goal, she worked to establish a farmers' market in order to support the remaining farmers in the area. She chose the site of the old county store as the ideal place for the market and convinced the current owner of the land to lease the space to the market on Saturdays.

I had come to film the events of the opening and afterwards Mrs. Quinney conducted a twenty-minute interview with me on camera, answering questions about the market, economics, and the role of farmers in the area. However, not until I had put my camera away did she reveal the deeper meaning of the place. She mentioned several times that this was ancestral land, gesturing not just to the site of the market, but the area surrounding it. "I'll give you the full story later," she promised.

Mrs. Quinney's claim that this land was ancestral challenges conventional frameworks of land rights and entitlement. She did not own the land, had not lived there continuously, and her ancestors had resided in the area for only a short historical period. The community of people she knew as a child were sharecroppers, temporarily occupying the landscape until many were evicted, some for trying to vote and others for trying to get their fair share of government subsidies.[9] The rural Alabama landscape has a long history of dispossession, from Native American displacement, European colonization, and African enslavement to contemporary racial violence and discrimination. Nevertheless, from this history Mrs. Quinney saw the roots of her own identity, and the source of what she considered community. The landscape served as fertile ground for her visions of the future. She was not just making claims over land, she was actively producing a place, a place she considered home.

Farah Jasmine Griffin writes that the South often has two forms of representation in African American narratives. On the one hand, the South can be seen as a site of terror and exploitation, a site of racial horror and shame. On the other hand, when the role of ancestors is stressed, "the South becomes a place where black blood earns a black birthright to the land, a locus of history, culture, and possible redemption." (Griffin, 1995: 5). These two perceptions co-existed, intertwined, and

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[9] Evictions such as these were common during the 1960s and 70s. The combination of increased mechanized agriculture and the rising political activism among rural African American populations motivated many white land owners to evict sharecroppers off their land, and ideally out of their county in order to maintain white control of local politics. Additionally, some black farmers had begun to legally redress the fact that they had been denied their share of crop allotment payments as tenants, making them a liability to white landowners. In Panola, the land was owned by one family that also owned most of Sumter County. But one side of the road, in Mrs. Quinney's community, was owned by one brother (Barnes Rogers) and the other by a brother and sister (John and Suzy Rogers). One brother decided to evict all the tenants on the land, while the other two siblings let their tenants stay and pay rent, instead of sharecrop. Mrs. Quinney remembers a bus coming to transport all the residents to Birmingham during their mass eviction. None of their homes still stand.

over-lapped during my fieldwork. Many people spoke of the racial injustice and discrimination that has been a reality in the South and a motivation for encouraging the younger generation to find opportunities elsewhere. However, many also referred to the region as ancestral and encouraged the younger generation to know and understand the rural South as part of their cultural heritage. There was a clear effort to reclaim the memory of the past from one of victimhood to one of cultural pride, a memory that became embedded in the landscape.

Like Mrs. Quinney, many people I worked with during my fieldwork were creating places of meaning that supported efforts for political and economic development. Narratives embedded in the landscape were important for the production of place regardless of ownership and access, but interacted with efforts to retain and reclaim ownership and occupation. While many of the rural youth had strong desires to move out of the countryside and explore new things, several youth felt the importance of continuing their family tradition of farming and maintaining family land. These desires were sometimes in conflict creating mixed efforts as youth simultaneously sought means to leave, through college or work, while also working with parents or grandparents to maintain family farms.

Mrs. Quinney's uncle lost the piece of land upon which the farmers' market now sat not from choice, but from a combination of systemic factors that disadvantaged smallholding African American rural landowners. The same skewed system led to the eviction of large numbers of sharecroppers in what Mrs. Quinney refers to as the exodus. This chapter explores the various mechanisms through which black landowners make claims upon places, including governing structures. Claims to

ancestral lands are one of the mechanisms involved in the production of places. In many ways, different mechanisms represent different ontological approaches to land, framing it variably from a material asset to a meaningful place. By considering property itself as a social construct, the shifting of social mechanisms does more than simply shift people's relationship or perception to place; it changes the very ontology of what property itself might be. The competing claims over land and land rights are more than disagreements over governing laws, they are fundamentally different formulations of what land, as a place or as an asset, is. Therefore, I use the term ontology to refer to the differing paradigmatic approaches and examine the mechanisms through which these different ontologies are produced. Using an assemblage framework, this chapter looks at these alternative ontological approaches as multiple practices that simultaneously create place.

This reconceptualization of land, as an assemblage of multiple processes including the practices of meaning making, also offers an expanded framework for considering land rights. Rights are typically embedded within the governing structures of property, which may be private, communal, or state owned. In situations of dispossession, rights become one of the dominant mechanisms for recourse. However, as the growing concern for "land sovereignty" has demonstrated, property rights are not sufficient for addressing forms of oppression and dispossession around land. An assemblage framework of place-making offers a means for considering rights as part of multiple practices informed by the claims and practices of competing groups. Drawing on my ethnographic film work, this chapter will explore the role of land in the production of place. Land rights are clearly essential to rural and agricultural

communities. This chapter will expand upon this to consider the role of place and spatial rights.

This chapter engages three current discussions around land. First, this chapter contributes to the ongoing concern on land grabbing. The issue of land grabbing typically focuses on the investment and purchasing of land in third world countries by outside investment firms, agribusinesses, or states from spaces where land rights and land ownership may not be not clearly demarcated, often leading to dispossession and even displacement of local communities. Many of the discussions on land grabbing consider the imposition of the ontological framework of property, and specifically private property, over land that is already inhabited and used by people who may have other ontological understandings and other frameworks for making claims. Land grabbing is seen as an imposition of the dominant framework of property rights over other forms of spatial concerns. For African Americans in the US South, this process is reversed. African Americans were forcibly placed upon land that was already owned as a form of property (a term that extended to their own personhood) and were for some time denied any rights to make claims upon this property. And even when African American farmers were able to attain landed property, active land developers and white farmers used a rigged and racist legal system to dispossess them, therefore corrupting the system in order to grab land, rather than imposing a system as is more common in third world contexts. The current efforts I examine here simultaneously attempt to gain access through property ownership and resist this framework through efforts to make other forms of spatial claims.

This chapter also draws on the rich discussions and analyses of how places are constructed, and the effective and affective impact of spatial construction. This chapter adds to these discussions by considering place making as a potential for change, and thus a potential for development. I consider the possible agency among people to use place-making practices to reform and reframe their spaces as a means of instigating and cultivating other development projects.

Additionally, this chapter contributes to the literature on land through its use of visual methodologies in order to explore the process of place making. Many scholars agree that everyday activities, specifically path-making and moving through space, are key to the construction of space. This chapter uses filmmaking as a form of sensory, materialist, and participatory engagement in these processes in order to understand them on a phenomenological level, and offer an alternative form of scholarship through which to perceive and understand the process of place making.

In contributing to these discussions, this chapter examines how the FSC/LAF's institutional approaches to land rights are complemented by individual practices that make claims over land, both within and outside of existing frameworks of property. These different strategies and tactics mostly work together but are also at times pursued separately. Along with Mrs. Quinney, I use two other examples of Alabama farmers who work with the Epes field staff, Mr. Greyson and Mr. Fairley. Both Mr. Greyson and Mr. Fairley are farming on heir property, a form of inherited land that is equally owned by all descendants of the original owner (to be explained in more detail below). Mr. Greyson is an established multi-sector farmer and Mr. Fairley is a beginning farmer, having spent most of his life away from the family farm.

I chose to limit my examples to farmers who work with the same branch of the FSC/LAF to explore the interactions between individual practices and one set of institutional practices. The FSC/LAF at large has a number of programs for land retention, but different state organizations and cooperatives also have their own strategies. For instance, in Mississippi, several cooperatives raise funds to help farmers pay off land taxes in order to prevent sales, or help find other shareholders to prevent partition sales of heir property (an issue that will be explained below). The Epes staff focus on educating farmers about estate law, property taxes, creating wills, and forming business plans. Each of the three individual examples show how spatial practices, other than simply preserving property ownership, serve as a means for making different types of claims over land.

Land as an Asset

Land grabs have gained popular attention and have become a key point of debate among scholars, activists, and policy makers. Although the term emerged in reference to a particular form of large-scale land investment, it has expanded to call attention to a wide range of land dispossession, even the dispossession of African American farmers in the US South (Brent and Kerssen, 2014). In many ways, the pattern of dispossession for small farmers throughout the world is quite similar. The utility of the land grabs, as an analytical lens, is found in the specific practices that support the conceptual framing of land as an economic asset.

The current land grabs, sometimes called large-scale land investments, are a continuation of a long process of land acquisition, dominance, and land and labor

exploitation. Yet, what are new in the current set of practices are the specific mechanisms and rationalizations that support the processes of land tenure and land investment. The current debates around land grabs typically refer to a process involving three main players. Investment companies, agribusinesses, or states serve as investors providing capital to purchase land in other countries, typically third world countries. Most of the literature on land grabs has focused on the acquisition of land in sub-Saharan Africa, but as the debates have expanded, so has the focus on other areas of investment. The state of the host country serves as the intermediary to the investment process and, in many of the cases that are discussed, must also create tenure arrangements upon land that previously did not have clear property rights. As such, typically the land falls under state control by default, as local groups and communities do not have legal means to make claims over property without previous tenure agreements. The state may create communal or tribal based tenure arrangements, may create private property out of land, or may retain land as a state property. The host state also typically provides enforcement mechanisms and, in the ideal scenario, infrastructure and public goods in order to make the land investment profitable, although this is not common in practice. The proponents of these land investments argue that the state benefits within this process through the process of financializing a previously untapped asset. Critics, however, argue within this set of arrangements, the process of securing property rights is designed for the benefit of the investor, and not the state's own people or overall welfare, thus potentially threatening its own sovereignty and stability. The third set of actors is the local people themselves. In the win-win paradigms promoted by investment companies themselves, the local

residents of the land provide much needed labor. The critiques of land grabs demonstrate that local communities are often dispossessed of land that they previously benefited from, and at times are even displaced.

States, investment firms, and agribusinesses have a long history of acquiring land and farmland in particular. The 2008 food crisis, followed by the 2008 market crash, created a desire both for increased food production and safer investment plans. Together these incentives created over a ten-fold spike in large-scale land investments, especially by wealthy Middle Eastern countries, India, and China (though China has mainly been involved in land deals/grabs to extract minerals) (Deninger et al, 2011; Anseeuw et al, 2012; Cotula 2012; Fairbairn, 2014). This practice of large-scale land investment is based on the rationale that increased food production is a global need and will only increase as the population grows. It is also based on the assumption that industrial agricultural is the best form of food production. There are many critiques of these assumptions, and researchers and advocates, from the FAO to Via Campesina, have been demonstrating that it is not the amount of food that is currently causing hunger, but the political and economic systems that control access and distribution of food (see also Altieri, 1989; 2009; Holt-Gimenez and Patel, 2012; Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck, 2011; McMichael, 1994; 2005; Sen, 1980; 1981; 1989). Growing discussions and concerns over land grabs have brought to public attention the political and economic significance of land both in terms of its role as an asset, and more broadly as a form of sovereignty. The reference to land sovereignty, as a counter position to land grabs, aligns with the growing food sovereignty movement and challenges the ontological notions of land as solely a form of property (Borras and Franco, 2012b).

One of the responses to the growing criticism of land grabs has been the creation of codes of conduct and regulations for large-scale land investments (Coluta, 2012). However, these processes have also received their share of criticism. As Phillip McMichael points out, regulating land grabs continues the same ontological framework of land. Under a neo-productivist vision, land grabs, and agribusiness are necessary components of a food intensification plan, within the limitations of "sustainable intensification" (McMichael, 2014; 51). In this paradigm, land is considered an economic asset and environmental concerns, social welfare, and local rights are considered externalities to be managed within the ongoing efforts of food production. According to McMichael, land sovereignty offers an alternative ontology through questioning industrial agriculture, supporting smallholders, and considering nature as intrinsic to the farming process (2014; 47). Land sovereignty frames farming as a converter of energy, rather than a consumer of energy (McMichael, 2014; 51). Land, under this paradigm, is a socioecological wealth necessary for the reproduction of social life and formed through social relations. Borras and Franco expand on the concept of land sovereignty to include local use and occupation of land, protection of common land, a connection to food sovereignty, and extension of land reforms (Borras and Franco, 2012a; 1). While land reform is a common technique for redistributing resources, Borras and Franco point out that this strategy alone considers land as an economic factor that needs to be distributed more fairly. By expanding calls for land reform to consider the concept of land sovereignty, land can be considered as more than a monetary asset and includes people's conceptions of territory, residence, and historical places (Borras and Franco, 2012a; 5).

To challenge the ontological categorization of land as property, and therefore an economic asset, also requires a thorough understanding of how land becomes property in the first place. Philosopher Barry Smith (2001) offers an ontological outline of how landed property originates[10]. His work focuses on the origins of the concept of landed property itself, rather than the customs, governing structures, and relationships surrounding negotiations over landed property. According to Smith, a study of landed property must attend to three aspects of its construction: "(1) a geographic dimension, having to do with the peculiarities of the ways in which real estate is related to the land itself (boundaries, mixing of labor, etc.); (2) an ontological dimension, having to do with what real estate is; and (3) a cognitive dimension, having to do with the interrelations between such geospatial phenomena and our culturally entrenched beliefs and conventions." (2001; 3). Real estate emerges from these three dimensions. It refers to an actual geographical space, but then this space must be bounded by a concept of property itself, and this bounding must be collectively recognized. Property, therefore, is built upon collective intentionality. It is what Smith, drawing on John Searle (1995), refers to as an institutional fact, not a brute fact. A brute fact exists independent of human convention, but an institutional fact requires collective intentionality. The concept of real estate does not exist outside of its social construction. The social construction of landed property ultimately is a means to negotiate, regulate, and divvy up power among and between people.

As Smith outlines, turning land into property requires multiple social mechanisms. Tania Li frames these processes, especially in relation to current land grabs,

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[10] EP Thompson provides a historical account of this process in his *Customs in Common,* which outlines the English enclosures.

as inscription devices that render land investable. Li considers land an assemblage. As an assemblage, land consists of materialities, relations, technologies, and discourses that have been pulled together and made to align (2014; 589). Li asks three questions in considering how these assemblages produce conceptions of land, both as private investable land and as local land. First, she asks what land *is,* according to the players involved. Second, what is the materiality of land? Third, what are the inscription devises? By inscription devices, Li is not only interested in those that make investment possible (the survey, the map, the grid), but also those used by local residents and farmers (the axe, the spade, ancestral graves, mango trees) (2014; 589). The process by which land becomes investible (and therefore a property asset) requires specific types of assemblage components.

Similar to Smith, Li points out that one of the defining factors of land is that it stays in place. Therefore, efforts to create property rely on exclusion, and exclusion always includes both enforcement as well as a persuasive element as a means to maintain its legitimacy (2014; 591). But turning land into property requires more than exclusion; it requires specific types of inscription devices. Moreover, these inscription devices inevitably reform social relations.

Robust inscription devices have accompanied the rapid increase in large-scale land investments. Surveys, maps, grids, and statistical data have all been used from colonial land acquisitions to current land investments. More recently, the classification of land as underutilized, or of farmland as having a yield gap, has offered new ways of constructing land as an investable asset. Both of these classifications are based on the premise that 1) more food production is necessary to feed the growing population 2) more

food production will lessen hunger in third world countries, particularly sub-Saharan Africa 3) industrial agriculture is the most preferably and efficient form of agricultural production and 4) industrial agriculture is transferable to any piece of land. All four assumptions have been largely debated and contested. Yet, under these assumptions, land can be measured based on its production of identifiable commodity crops. Deeming land as underutilized, or measuring the yield gap, involves not only statistical graphs and tables outlining potential production based on ideal technological inputs. As Li points out, one of the key inscription devices, that deem certain lands in need of investment, are pictures. Li considers images surrounding discussions of agricultural production from the large machinery sweeping over vast fields of food to the laboring woman, often with a hoe and a child on her back, bent over in the hot sun. The two images (and many more like them) are used along side statistical data to create the category of land as underutilized.

Along with the creation of these categories, land also needs to become a commodity through legal inscription in order to hold investment. Often, the land targeted by the increased land grabs has been land in which rights were insecure, not titled, or not formally recognized (Li, 2014; 598). Partly, the ambiguity allows the deals to proceed. At times, communal consent is gained through customary chiefs, who may or may not have people's consent. But customary arrangements of ownership and rights may not align with legal concepts of property rights and ownership[11]. The state can also maintain ownership and displace local residents. However, typically the land purchaser aims not to

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[11] For instance, private property has strict use and hereditary restrictions, whereas customary arrangements may be more flexible or inclusive in these matters. See Shipton, 2009.

displace local residents, but to enclave them, thus not only lessening the possibility of resistance but also creating a labor supply (Li, 2014; 599).

Whereas Li considers the inscription processes that render land investible, this chapter considers an inverse process. African Americans were forcibly placed upon land that was already socially, politically, and economically constructed as property. Within this context, African Americans sought independence and social advancement through efforts to gain property rights, in the form of ownership, over land. Although land was already a form of property, a similar set of "land grabs" has continuously been used to dispossess African Americans of land that they either owned or farmed. Combining a racist legal system with similar arguments about productivity and efficiency of land use, many large scale farmers, land developers, timber companies, and agri-businesses have been able to "buy" extensive tracts of African American land, changing the livelihoods of many farmers from a form of land-based self-sufficiency to wage-dependent employment.

However, this chapter looks at another set of practices that happen simultaneously. While strategies of land retention and ownership are useful, practices that render land meaningful as place also form a type of resistance against not only dispossession and displacement, but against the framework that considers land solely as an asset. Land upon which African Americans found themselves became meaningful not simply as an asset, but as place through a set of practices, or inscription devices. Just as the effort to make land investable draws on a diverse range of inscription devices, so too does the effort to make land into place. This chapter explores some of the inscription devices used to render land meaningful within this context.

Space and Place

Scholarship that considers place and place making seeks to understand the role of movement, actions, senses, and memories in the way humans understand and interact with land. For instance, attention has been given to the way a place is sensed through the body and how this sensory experience is a way people both create place and know place (Basso, 1996; Casey, 1996; Feld, 2005). How people move through space also becomes part of the construction of place (de Certeau, 1984). Walking, moving, creating paths, and interacting with an environment structures a place and provides an experiential perception. Along with the embodied experiences, places are made through stories, memories, and names. Places become processes of meaning making (Hirsch, 1995). Some of these stories sit within certain places and therefore need to be learned from that place (Basso, 1996; Gow, 1995). Some narratives are exported and become a means for constructing collective ideologies such as nationalism, ethnicity, or sovereignty (Said, 2002; Anderson, 1983). Conversely, spatial practices can also reinforce and create narratives or ideologies such as the concept of the nation (Gupta and Ferguson, 2002). Places are also positioned within time and therefore can be considered as events (Casey, 1996). Places can be gathering events, moments that bring people together (assemblies, meetings, church) or moments that prescribe certain activities (planting crops, walking on sidewalks).

The processes of place making are often unstable and contested and the relations between places shift through political and economic reorganizations (Gupta, 1992). Scholars have pushed against ideas of cultural territories, defined boundaries,

and homogenous locations to make room for shifting, hybrid, and competing claims to the cultural significance of place (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992). Places may consist of multiple constructions simultaneously, that are at times at odds with one another (Rodman, 2003; Selwyn, 1995).

Many of these studies use the terms space and place as binary components of a location. While different scholars attribute a different set of qualities to each term, the dualist pair serves quite frequently to contrast abstraction versus specificity, fixed versus fluid, control versus resistance. The problem with the place and space dichotomy is that it indicates two separate and distinct components of a given location. This dualism also subtly implies a distinction between categories of people: those that impose spatial order and those that are subjected to spatial control, or those that have an insider subjective experience and those that are outsiders. However, these categories are much more fluid and overlapping (Hirsch, 1995). Processes of abstraction, of land ownership, of walking through space, and naming space to be parallel processes, overlapping and simultaneously constructing what is known about a location.

Kim Dovy offers an assemblage theory framework for the construction of places. Although she specifically focuses on urban place construction, her insights are useful for rural areas as well. Dovy emphasizes the processual aspect of assemblage theory through which places can be seen as constantly becoming. Assemblage also alters the conceptualization of scales of place. Change does not just emanate from the top, influencing the smaller scales beneath. Rather, in assemblage theory, there are constant processes of connection and influence in which the micro-processes create and manifest

that which is seen as larger scale. For example, in the US South, desegregation was a top down process that aimed to rearrange spatial practices from schools to residential neighborhoods. However, social practices among different areas variably created diverse outcomes in response. In many of the Alabama counties that I studied, segregation remained in place, reinforced through a multitude of social and economic practices on a micro-level. In southern Mississippi around the Indian Springs cooperative, on the other hand, white farmers were more willing to sell land to black farmers leading to a more integrated residential pattern, which in turn also affected integration in schools.

These processes also form boundaries, or territorialization in DeLanda's (2006) words. These are boundaries of different scales from places of specific activities (parks versus offices) to neighborhoods, regions, and even states. In Mrs. Quinney's case, the community of Panola is slowly losing its official geographical boundaries. During my research, some of the farmers in the area were newly considered outside of the area of Panola, and had to change their city designation on their official address. This was discussed among many residents who were less disturbed by the inconvenience than by the symbolism of losing their sense of place. Tours, such as Mrs. Quinney's recreate and maintain the boundary of what is known, at least locally, as Panola. These processes, of creating place and boundaries, are built upon practices, a constant activity that manifests place, and these practices are part of the research process itself.

Henri Lefebvre's triadic dialectical description of spatial production is a useful heuristic device for interrogating these processes. Lefebvre describes his conceptual triad as consisting of spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces (1991: 33). Spatial practice involves the daily realities of space, often in

Lefebvre's case considered within an urban setting as the ways of moving to and from work, leisure, and home. On farms, spatial practices consist of both the sensory engagement with the environment and the routes through the land involved in activities such as planting and tending to animals. Representations of space attempt to conceptualize space and create order. This is the realm of urban planners, architects, and scientists. It is also the space of land deeds and laws that govern land ownership. Representational spaces consist of symbols, codes, embedded meanings, and histories. For Lefebvre, representational space is alive and speaks (1991: 42). Representational spaces consist of the narratives, memories, and emotions embedded within the experience of being in space, and that are used to describe locations. These three aspects are related to three ways of understanding space: the perceived, the conceived, and the lived (1991: 39). These are not three distinct and mutually exclusive categories but three processes that are part of the fluid and dynamic production of space and the multiple influences in its production. They reveal the role of material (spatial practices), discursive (representation of spaces), and poetic (representational spaces) forms of spatial production. Spatial production moves from one to the other, each offering a negation and alternative to the other. The relationship between these triadic dialectical forces is not a stable balance, but a constant fluctuation. It is this interaction that opens the space of becoming, the space of generation and creativity. Space and place are not static entities, but processes, constantly being formed, and their formation occurs through the interaction of these different parts. Therefore, while legal strategies to maintain black owned land are a crucial part of the FSC/LAF's development goals, the individual practices that build spatial practices and

representational spaces also form the reality of the place. It is the interaction of these parts that build a more robust form of resistance or, more specifically, claims for spatial rights.

Film and Spatial Production

If space is produced based on people's practices, concepts, and memories, then what space becomes to one person or group may be vastly different from the space produced by another person or group. As a researcher, I lack clear and easy access to knowing how someone else produces space. Discourses about land, land rights, and the meaning of places reveal only part of the processes. How these discourses are communicated adds another possible barrier to understanding. The challenge for outsiders is to attempt to understand the "cultural forms with which landscape is experienced and the shared symbolic vehicles that give shape to geographical experience and facilitate its communication" (Basso, 1996: 56).

In order to understand spatial production, it is important to create shared meaning and shared engagement through which intersubjective communication can occur. A space where my ideas, categories, and sensory experiences can exist alongside another's categories and experiences. In such a moment, the production of space is newly formed, not what it would be to either of us alone. This construction allows for communication. It is a moment of co-creation along with an effort at communication in hopes of creating shared knowledge and meaning. Along these lines, video serves as a vehicle through which to actively produce space (during film production) as well as create a representation of that spatial experience, which further

becomes a tool in communicating meaning. Ultimately, video can also be a form of representational space, tapping into the poetic and creative space of meaning, the third part of Lefebvre's triadic dialects. Video opens up the investigation of spatial production beyond the discursive realm. Video poses a sensory inquiry into spatial production.

The films in this chapter reflect people's relationship to the land. Throughout my research, land was a significant element for the farmers, rural residents, and organizers involved with the FSC/LAF. Among both farmers and FSC/LAF organizers, land was commonly a point of conversation and discussion, the focus of workshops, and a key feature of filming. FSC/LAF staff and organizers who were not farmers focused on the value of land as a means of production and asset for the rural community. They were concerned with the rapid loss of black-owned land and were seeking ways to use legal frameworks to prevent this phenomenon, both educating farmers and advocating for policy changes. Farmers and rural residents held more personal connections to the land. The largest shift in perception among those I spoke to occurred through differences in age.

For farmers and rural residents aged fifty and over, the land was a form of inheritance, a necessary component in the practice of farming, and a sense of nostalgia. Farmers who had lived near the places they farmed, whether they owned the land or not, had embedded memories in the landscape. Several of these farmers and rural residents, both men and women, took me on driving tours to explain the significance not just of their own farm, but the wider landscape. Married couples sometimes lived and farmed on the wife's and sometimes the husband's inherited land. Several farmers

in this same age range had moved elsewhere for work, and had recently returned to farm. These farmers were less nostalgic for the specific place than the set of practices and cultural norms associated with the region in general. Both men and women returned to take up farming, but I met more men than women. Several of the wives were also interested in the rural lifestyle, but a few were indifferent, and had moved to the rural landscape based only on their husband's desires. This was rare among the participants. It was more common for the couples to share their interest and desire for farming and the rural lifestyle.

Farmers and rural residents between twenty and fifty had slightly different relationships to the land. Within this age range, individuals were less connected with the Civil Rights struggles and with the deeper connection between land ownership as a form of independence. Many of the younger farmers worked on land that their parents owned, but that they would someday inherit. Yet, what was strong among those who were committed to staying in rural areas, and continuing to farm, was a sense of tradition and relevance in the occupation itself. Farming was part of a cultural identity and a form of community formation. A few farmers in this age range also gave me driving tours, but rather than nostalgic stories, their tours consisted of informing me of the current residents and farmers within a rural area and the state of the current farming enterprises. Although I met more men committed to continuing the family farm, the women I met had equal aspirations.

Youth under twenty were much more varied. Perhaps this was because they were not yet of an age to leave the rural areas if they so desired. Although I only directly interviewed very few youth (five in total, and in the presence of their parent or

guardian), I did interact with several cohorts of the Sankofa Youth, a summer program that hired high school students to work on the demonstration farm at the Rural Training and Research Center in Epes. Some of the youth were rather indifferent to rural life in general and desired to find a way out. Others were committed to farming. Only a few directly spoke of the land, and those that did farmed with parents on land that was inherited, and thus farmed by many generations. This formed a familial story for the youth, who narrated themselves as a continuation in a family tradition. The examples explored in this chapter are all farmers over the age of sixty. They represent the majority of farmers currently in the area, and they are most active in creating a sense of place that will be passed on to younger generations.

Many of the farmers, of various ages and both those that owned and those that rented introduced me to their farms through walking tours. Farmers would lead me across their landscapes and introduce me to their farm, often narrating simultaneously about their experiences, perceptions, and memories of the places. Through these tours, I gained sensory experience of the farm, while physically following farmers' routes through their farms, learning the key aspects of their landscapes and farming operations. Many of these tours were coupled with agricultural information about the crops, the soil, the machinery, or farming techniques.

The other common way landscapes were presented to me was through driving tours. The rural communities are connected across vast regions, a fact that structures the way communities form and interact. Driving is a less intimate way to observe the landscape, but allows more territory to be covered, and is more convenient for participants with mobility issues. Through filming from within a car, the camera

embodies the experiences and limitations that such a perspective allows. Both of these methods provide a way to understand place, and to sense place, as it is understood and sensed by participants.

Video provides a unique form of both gathering and presenting knowledge about landscapes. By following the lead of participants, this method focuses on the way people perceive and present the landscape. This form of perceiving the landscape involved a tangible and sensory engagement with the surroundings. Walking alongside participants with my camera, I capture the walking motion, the eye level view, and the close-up details presented to me. The narration of these walking tours blends with other natural sounds, such as birds and insects. This style of filmmaking captures a simulacrum of the actual experience of walking the landscape, providing insight into the way landscapes are formed through human experience.

Sarah Pink lays out key ways the method of walking with video serves as a research method for exploring people's relationships with their environments. First, video can become a way to enable embodied communication about people's perceptions of their environments and facilitate an empathetic understanding and representation of these perceptions (Pink, 2007). The embodied inquiry of video provides a means to create an ethnography through the senses, an ethnography of the senses, and knowledge through locomotion. Through inviting me to tour farms and landscapes and participate in farm activities, participants were providing a means through which I could learn about their space through my own senses. This full sensory engagement is a way to understand meaning, not through analytical terms, but through embodied forms (Stoller, 2011). The contours of the ground, the heat, the sun,

wind, sounds, and the feel of plants, animals, and soil were all ways in which I was taught about spaces.

Although this level of sensory can happen without a camera, it was often the fact that I was a researcher with a camera that prompted participants to engage me with work, farm practices, and landscape tours. It was the way that the camera posed a different set of questions that more easily facilitated a sensory engagement. Additionally, the camera provides a means to engage in another's sensory experience. Through techniques of observation practices, the camera served as a tool to focus on and empathetically engage in the way participants were experiencing their space, thus creating an ethnography of the senses.

Participants also shared their experience of space by guiding me along their paths through it. Locomotion is a way to learn about and communicate knowledge of a space. Walking in particular is a way to sense the ground beneath one's feet, to sense space as a three dimensional entity (Pink, 2007; Ingold, 2004). While both Pink and Ingold give primacy to walking (in Ingold's case, almost a slight evolutionary primacy), locomotion more generally provides a sensory experience of moving through space. Although forms of locomotion such as driving remove the body from direct contact with the ground, this change is a change in type of sensory engagement, not in level of sensory engagement. Along with these sensory engagements, touring the land also consisted of narrations, memories, and names that were embedded within the places.

Pink suggests that video also is a form of place-making itself. It becomes an event; a process of gathering together embodied experiences, things, and people (Pink,

2007). It creates a space of appearance, through which identities and experiences can be shared (Arendt, 2013[1958])). While some of the farm tours and activities that I participated in were already planned, frequently my presence with a camera prompted such activities. Because of the collaborative nature of my research, participants would utilize my presence and camera to document moments, elements, landscapes, and processes of meaning. The event of filming created a reason to bring other people into the event, drawing in grandchildren, youth, friends, and organizers to share in the experiences. This created an additional audience to the presentation of space. Future audiences were also assumed. Participants presented their space with the anticipation of multiple future audiences. All participants were told that the films would be shared with their local cooperatives, the FSC/LAF at large, and my university community. Participants variably addressed these different assumed audiences whose anticipated future presence shaped the experience of moving through and presenting space. The presence of the camera also heightened and shifted the production of space. Not only were we sharing an experience of a place, but also by documenting it, both participants and I were adding a layer of meaning to the experience, giving it a different level of importance with a different intensity of observation and performance.

These forms of place making practices interact with other existing productions of space, such as forms of abstraction, deeds, maps, and governing structures. The film itself becomes an abstract representational form once the moment is recorded and turned into a film or video, to be screened or watched apart from the experience. But film is versatile in its ability to interact with different representations and logics of space. For example, David MacDougall's film, Familiar Places, offers viewers

multiple forms of perceiving and conceiving the land. This film follows Angus Namponen and his family as the walk the landscape of northern Queensland, Australia, telling the stories of their ancestors and teaching their children how place is constructed, and understood. This outing, however, is politically motivated by the Australian government's need to map and categorize land. The government's perception of land consists of clear boundaries. Land needs to be clearly partitioned in order for rights to be associated with aboriginal groups. Without participating in this type of spatial representation, aboriginal people risk losing rights over their land altogether. In order to help translate the land, from ways of knowing for Angus and his family, to the government form of maps and boundaries, anthropologist Peter Sutton follows the family and utilizes cartographic instruments to locate places and natural phenomenon onto a Cartesian gridded map. The film offers viewers a chance to see the contrasting and overlapping perceptions and productions of space.

Similarly, Jean Rouch's Les Maîtres Fous, brings viewers between different productions of spaces, using film to highlight the differences between everyday space and trance space. The film begins with the Hauka movement members in the busy and bustling city of Accra. The shot style and quick editing match Rouch's perception of spatial production within ordinary work life. From there, the group meets and enters into the forest in order to perform a trance ceremony. The camera responds, creating an alternative experience for the viewer to possibly glimpse at the space/time created by trance. The film then returns with the participants to the city.

These examples show the multiple ways that film engages with the production of space. My presence, not just as a researcher, but as a researcher with a heavy and large

camera becomes a material addition to the production of space through traveling, moving, and narrating across the landscapes. By recording it, I am also making a representation of that space, which can be shared with other audiences, looked at later, and re-evaluated. In addition, our efforts evoke stories that reveal other forms of productions of space, stories that are not witnessed but are retold, evoking memories over certain spaces. These oral histories, and the creative treatment of them both by myself, and the storyteller, create a poetics about the meaning of space. This cannot be contained simply within the information gained from the stories, but this construction evokes a deeper connection, one that ignited Mrs. Quinney's claim to ancestral land.

Black-Owned Land: A Brief Background

Since emancipation, African Americans have sought land ownership as a resource base for their own community development (Pennick et. al., 2009; Gilbert and Sharp, 2001). Despite the multiple obstacles, African Americans purchased a significant amount of land and by 1910 owned 15 million acres and made up 14% of all farmers (Marable, 1979; Gilbert et. al. 2002). Most of this land was concentrated in the US South, a pattern that continues today (Gilbert and Sharp, 2001; USDA, 2002; USDA 2007). Throughout the rest of the twentieth century, there has been a major decline in African American owned land and African American farmers. By 1997 fewer than 20,000, or 1% of all farmers, were African American and they owned only about two million acres (Gilbert and Sharp, 2001). While there has been a decline in the number of farms and farmers throughout the nation, African Americans have had a higher percentage of decline. During the twentieth century there has been a 98%

decline in the number of African American farms, while the number of European American farms have decreased by 65.8% in the same time period (Wood and Gilbert, 2000).[12] The size of farms and commodities produced could be significant factors in these statistics, but the racial discrimination in local communities, markets, banks, and government institutions have also played a role. This rapid dispossession is part of the larger picture of racial discrimination and underdevelopment among African American farmers and rural residents in the southeastern USA.

There are several reasons for the extreme land-loss among African Americans. The out-migration of African Americans from rural areas is one of the largest reasons for land loss. Other factors influencing this out-migration included agricultural problems and agricultural mechanization (especially for cotton), increased industrial jobs in the North, and discriminatory practices of the South (Marable, 1979; Pennick et. al., 2009). African American landowners were also victims of violence, legal and unlawful exploitation, manipulation, and trickery by land speculators, lawyers, and hate groups (McGee and Boone, 1979; Falk, 2004; Gilbert et al, 2002; McIver, 2003; Thomas et al, 2004). African Americans faced discrimination in federal farm programs as well, which often prevented their ability to access timely loans, receive adequate resources or information, or withstand natural disasters (Pennick et. al., 2009; Reynolds, 2002; Gilbert and Eli, 2000).

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[12] Information on the number of farmers and amount of farmland is derived from Census of Agriculture data. While this is the most comprehensive data set on this information, it also has its flaws. The Census of Agriculture counts all farmers, but not all farm landowners. Also, the Census defines a farm as an operation that must make at least $1,000 in annual sales. These two criteria overlook land that may be owned but not farmed, or land that is farmed but does not make or report an annual profit (Gilbert et. al., 2001; Wood and Gilbert, 2000).

Studies of African American land loss have highlighted three key factors that have facilitated the rapid land loss among African American landowners: foreclosures, delinquent or delayed tax payments, and heir property, which is property owned in common by all descendants of the original owner. African American farmers and landowners face difficulty in accessing credit, government programs, and markets, making them more vulnerable to fluctuations in agricultural production due to changing weather, global markets. Therefore, when faced with financial difficulty, many African American landowners face foreclosure and eviction without the ability to find safety nets or loans in order to maintain ownership. This has been especially true in terms of taxes. Paying regular land taxes can be a financial burden on African American farmers who are already facing financial hardships.

Land tax often remain unpaid on African American land for several reasons, either lack of funds, or sometimes because the landowner is unaware of the taxes owed, is not present on the land, or did not receive notices of taxes due, or was tricked into paying tax payments to someone posing as an official tax representative. Many African American farmers have lacked knowledge of the process and system of tax payments, making them susceptible to fraudulent efforts by land speculators. Those living on heir property especially may be unaware, or may not receive the proper information about land taxes. Delinquent tax payments lead to land auctions through which large farmers, developers, and land speculators are able to acquire land at a low rate (Dyer and Bailey, 2008).

Heir property ownership has been cited as one of the most prominent continuing causes of African American land loss (Pennick et. al., 2009; Thomas et al,

2004; ELF, 1984). When land is passed from generation to generation without a clear will or title to indicate each subsequent owner, the default owner of the land becomes all living successors to the original owner. The land itself is not divided among the heirs, but instead each owns a share of the whole acreage. Heir property can become a barrier to the development of land since, without a clear title, those that maintain the land cannot use the land as collateral for loans, cannot apply for housing programs, farm improvement programs, or conventional mortgages and they cannot harvest timber grown on the land or lease the land for agricultural purposes without a consensus from all interest-holders (Dyer and Bailey, 2008). While the state laws governing land inheritance affect both white and black farmers, black farmers have been especially susceptible to the downsides of these laws. Lack of trust in legal processes, a desire to create family land, and lack of awareness of the law has influenced a significant number of African American landowners to forgo writing a will or estate plan that would clearly delineate an heir to their property. It is more common among white farmers to both write wills and to sell land to heirs before the original owner dies as a way to avoid estate taxes.

The rules governing heir property have also been used as a loophole through which land speculators and developers can further dispossess African American landowners by forcing partition sales. Since heir property is owned in shares, it cannot be easily divided into separate deeds. If a co-owner of heir property wants to sell their share, and the land is not reasonably dividable, the shareholder can request a court-ordered sale of the entire property which would monetize the land, thus making it possible to divide among the shareholders. Families can choose to survey and divide

the acreage among the shareholders, but the appraisal must be agreed to and paid for by all the shareholders. A common tactic, among land speculators or developers, is to find a distant family member, typically one that no longer lives near the land, and purchase that share. As a shareholder, the developer has the right to request a partition sale of the land. Typically, these sales undervalue the land, and yet the full price is still too high for the family member residing on the land to purchase the plot. Therefore, the land speculator or developer is able to purchase the desired land at a price frequently below market value (Thomas et al, 2004; Zabawa, 1991). Furthermore, this process was often facilitated by pacts between land developers, judges, and lawyers, all of who would ensure that the legal system was used to dispossess small holding farmers. This trend of land loss has led to the formation of organizations focusing on preserving and maintaining African American owned land, such as the Emergency Land Fund, later the Land Assistance Fund as part of the FSC/LAF. Although typically this process was used to dispossess African Americans, white farmers also faced similar issues and FSC/LAF has helped save land for both white and black farmers over the years.

FSC/LAF Strategies for Land Rights

The Emergency Land Fund (ELF), and later FSC/LAF, has used and still uses several tactics to prevent the dispossession of black-owned land. The early tactics of the ELF were a two-fold approach; first, they created a fund in order to provide loans, and a few grants, to farmers who owed property taxes, or had other financial needs, to prevent foreclosure. However, once the land was put up for auction, due to either

delinquent taxes or a forced partition sale, ELF representatives would attend the auction, sometimes to buy the land but also to drive up the prices in order to help the family receive a fair price for the land. These auctions were often created through a series of insider deals among the judge, lawyer, and interested purchasing party that ensured an auction would be approved and happen quickly, which kept the ultimate land price low (in terms of comparable land prices). The ELF, therefore, aimed to disrupt this process by becoming a contender at these land auctions. As Jerry Pennick, who has been the director of the ELF and LAF for the past 30 years, commented, sometimes they lacked the money to really buy the land, but they would bid anyway just to drive the prices up (Pennick, 2013). The presence of black organizers at the land auction also disrupted the dominance of a white power structure.

Currently, the FSC/LAF largely focuses on educating farmers and landowners in order to prevent land auctions and make land holdings profitable. This includes lectures, presentations, and one-on-one assistance throughout the south. These educational programs focus on estate planning, converting heir property to a single owner, the specifics of property taxes, and means to make land productive so that owners have the money to pay taxes.

Several organizers and cooperatives in Mississippi try to prevent land auctions by paying delinquent taxes for farmers. In Mississippi, land can be put up for auction due to delinquent taxes on the first Monday of April or the last Monday of August. Mississippi codes mandate that these possible sales be advertised in a newspaper for two weeks prior to the auction (although the codes also specify that failure to do so would not nullify an auction sale). Organizers among the Mississippi cooperatives will

scour the newspaper to find black landowners in their counties whose land may be at risk for auction. They first try to contact the land owners, but often, the land that is to be sold is heir property and none of the heirs in particular has claimed the responsibility of managing and paying the taxes. Heirs may be resistant to paying the full amount of delinquent taxes on their own if no other family member is willing to help. In the best-case scenario, the landowner or an heir will pay off the property taxes before the auction date and prevent a possible sale. If a current heir or landowner cannot, or will not, pay off the taxes, different cooperatives or organizers will pay off the taxes in order to help the family keep the land or even buy the land in the auction. Land sold through a tax auction is not fully owned by the buyer for two (and in some states three) years, during which time the original owner can pay off missing taxes, reimburse the buyer, and reclaim the land. The cooperatives can serve as a holding space for landowners at risk of losing land.

Estate Planning workshop in Eutaw, AL

Film 10: Estate Planning https://vimeo.com/154476293/c16ac986a9

The examples explored in this chapter are all associated with the Alabama state association located in Epes. Field staff from Epes have worked with each individual to support them in their projects. The state offices, unlike the individual cooperatives, have less capacity to attend auctions or raise money to pay delinquent taxes. Rather, their funding supports more formal programs of preventing black land loss. These include estate-planning workshops, conducted in multiple small towns or municipal centers for the convenience of a geographically dispersed rural population, often with limited time and money for travel. Below is a brief clip from one of these workshops. The workshops offer general information, but the FSC/LAF also hires lawyers (and sometimes they volunteer) to meet with individuals. Field staff will meet with individuals as well, in order to help them gather appropriate paperwork to create wills, pay property taxes, or respond to impending partition sales. The clip below shows a presentation by a former FSC/LAF lawyer. After the presentation, many individual farmers approached her and the other FSC/LAF staff present in order to better understand the next steps for legally protecting their land, most of it inherited land or heir property.

Examples

Three filmed examples in particular provide insights into the role of spatial practices and representational spaces as they influence representations of space, or the rules and regulations that govern land rights. The first film involves a driving tour with Mrs. Quinney. Mrs. Quinney lives just outside of Gainesville, a town near the Epes, Alabama based FSC/LAF Rural Training and Research Center. She now resides on the

land on which she was born and raised. She is the founder and organizer of a local farmers' market, a part time FSC/LAF employee, and is currently erecting a hoop house in her backyard in order to grow some vegetables for the community. The tour traveled over the expanse of "ancestral land" that Mrs. Quinney referred to the first time I met her. Mrs. Quinney knew this area as a child. During the tour, Mrs. Quinney narrated the history of the place and her visions for the future. The memory and meaning of the land motivated her community building efforts, and particularly the creation of the St. John's Farmers' Market. The market is named after the church that served this area. The Farmers' Market was designed to serve both an economic function and a communal function, rebuilding the vibrancy that Mrs. Quinney nostalgically remembered from her childhood.

The second film portrays a farm tour with Mr. Greyson, who lives just outside of Thomas, Alabama, nearly sixty miles from Epes. Mr. Greyson owns some land privately and farms on his family's heir property. Despite the vulnerability of this legal category, Mr. Greyson considers the land to be family land. This arrangement is common among many of the farmers the FSC/LAF works with. Like many farmers in the area, the Greysons interact with the FSC/LAF through field staff employed through the state field office, in this case the Alabama office located in Epes, Alabama. The Greysons attend FSC/LAF meetings and workshops and enjoy support and information from the FSC/LAF, but do not belong to a cooperative.

Finally, I look at three times I filmed Mr. Fairley's farming origin story. Mr. Fairley is both a member of the FSC/LAF and the president of SOGOCO, one of the FSC/LAF member cooperatives. The land on which he farms is also heir property. Mr.

Fairley's story about how he began farming reveals a series of considerations and rights associated with the land on which he farms. Not only does he insist on rights over the representation of space, the ownership of the property, but also rights over spatial practices upon the land. Each of the tellings of the story also exists within a different context, revealing the way that narratives are utilized as expressions in response to different situations and different audiences. Through each of these films, different forms of spatial production interact and shape how people pursue development and productivity.

Ancestral Land

Film 11: Ancestral Land https://vimeo.com/105447646/46f540f348

Mrs. Quinney grew up in Panola, Alabama, a small unincorporated community outside of Gainesville, Alabama. She lived most of her adult life outside of Alabama, working in theater, as a teacher, and as a minister. She moved back to Alabama when her parents needed additional care. She and her husband now reside on her family's land in a renovated trailer home. Although not a farm, the family plot is quite large and Mrs. Quinney's husband has been working to build a hoop house (a plastic tunnel placed on the ground that works like a greenhouse). They received funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Services, a branch of the USDA, for the structure but the payment does not cover the full expense, and is paid as a reimbursement. In order to save money, Mr. Quinney and some local men decided to put together the hoop house themselves.

The hoop house was part of a larger vision Mrs. Quinney has for revitalizing the community. She sees the issue of health, poverty, and community deeply tied together. The solution, for Mrs. Quinney, is to rebuild the once vital self-sustaining agricultural community that fed itself through locally grown and made food. In order to support this vision, she started a farmers market at the site of the old county store her uncle had once owned, and the site at which Civil Rights activists once organized. A few farmers in the area, and a few crafts people, participate in the market. Mrs. Quinney wants the market to encourage a local economy, encourage healthy eating, and an interest in farming. Hence, the hoop house is envisioned as a way to demonstrate and showcase how to grow vegetables.

Watch some clips from the St. John's farmers market

Film 12: St. John's Farmers Market https://vimeo.com/156184396/51bfe1adb0

Mrs. Quinney feels that it is important for the community, and especially the youth, to remember their history as a community of sharecroppers. Although this history is structured by institutions of oppression, Mrs. Quinney remembers how people built up a vibrant and connected society of their own. On a larger scale, Mrs. Quinney is committed to ensuring that African Americans, and especially rural African American youth, know the strength of their ancestors and the achievements of African American activists, organizers, and farmers. She has implemented other historical projects in the area. For example, she collected a series of oral histories from the elders in the community, which she presented to the local high school. She wrote and performed a one-woman play that portrayed heroic histories of African American women. She also helped the Sankofa Youth, a summer program facilitated by the FSC/LAF in Epes, to construct their own historic play about African American activism, which they performed at the FSC/LAF annual meeting. The tour with me, therefore, was part of her larger vision, connecting place, history, and farming together for the purpose of inspiring a community.

When Mrs. Quinney decided to take me on the tour, she first invited me over to her home. This in itself was an important crossing of boundaries. Mrs. Quinney mentioned that she did not like to accept outsiders into her home and white outsiders especially. However, I had been deemed enough of an insider, or at least committed enough to the cause of black farmers, to enter her residence. Her home was decorated with drawings and images of farming African Americans. The time period was ambiguous, but the images showed people in the fields with simple work clothes.

Before we began any filming, she interviewed me about my project, my work, my schooling, my history, and my family. We sat at her kitchen table, sipping ice water to ward off the heat and chatted for nearly an hour. She also told me about some of the obstacles involved in opening a farmers market. Because they were renting the space, the market needed to collect funds from the vendors to pay for the space, and a few other logistical items. Mrs. Quinney had tried several times to open a bank account for the farmers market, but had been denied by the bank. She then wrote to the manager accusing the bank of racism and discriminatory practices. In response, the manager wanted to come see her, but Mrs. Quinney refused, saying that she did not want personal platitudes; she wanted justice and equity. Her story was common to me, I had heard of several farmers and rural residents struggling to open bank accounts or to secure loans from banks. This is one of the reasons that the FSC/LAF promotes credit unions as part of the cooperative development efforts.

Finally satisfied with her interview of me, Mrs. Quinney ushered me, and her young niece who was visiting for the summer, into their mini-van to tell me the story of the landscape. Her niece, like many youth whose families have migrated out of the

rural south, was sent to stay with rural relatives for part of the summer in order to reinforce her connection to her roots. The rural areas are considered wholesome influences on the upbringing of youth. Additionally, they are the source of heritage and tradition for many African Americans who now live elsewhere. Mrs. Quinney's tour, although directed towards me, was conducted for the purpose of recording the oral history of the area to share with other youth in the area. Mrs. Quinney's niece was also part of the desired audience. Although she no longer lived in the area, the niece was one of the possible heirs of the family land upon which Mrs. Quinney now lived. It was important to Mrs. Quinney, therefore, to impart the history to this younger generation, and in particular her own family's younger generation.

We rode slowly down the county rode toward the site of the market, looking at what seemed like an expansive forest with random trailers and homes sprinkled along the side, some with crisp lawns, others apparently abandoned. All the areas that were now forested used to be in cotton, Mrs. Quinney explained, before timber replaced cotton as the area's major commodity. She told me to imagine all the farmers out there in the cotton fields doing backbreaking work.

Mrs. Quinney kept her hazards blinking, although the only other traffic we came across was a neighbor riding by on a tractor. The air-conditioning roared on high to counter-act the ninety-degree weather. Peering through the side windows, I struggled to catch the visuals Mrs. Quinney was pointing to while making sure to capture the narration she was telling. The stories of a vibrant community moving up and down this road contrasted with the reality of the heat, the sun, and the distance.

The tour lasted a little over three hours. Mrs. Quinney brought us through an expansive area surrounding the market. Her niece occasionally fell asleep in the back seat. We drove down a road where there were only homes on one side of the road. "Pay attention," Mrs. Quinney instructed, "There's a reason there are only houses on one side of the road." During the civil rights movement, sharecroppers around Panola began to organize, meeting at the site of the old county store. Many white landowners, threatened by the voting power of the African American majority, evicted tenants, and sharecroppers. The landowner on one side of the road allowed the sharecroppers to stay and many of the residents and their houses are still there today.

On the other side of the road, Mrs. Quinney pointed to raised mounds of dirt creating a bridge over the ditch to the road. These are the markers where homes use to be, each mound once serving as a driveway. Each raised mound had a story to go with it: the man with the pretty daughters, the woman who made ice cream, the schoolteacher whom everyone called "professor." Mrs. Quinney spoke aloud the names of each family, as if calling on their memories. She emphasized the importance of knowing who lived here, so that I could understand what this place was, and what it means to those who live here now. The landscape was not just a setting, it was a living history, and a living memory, with stories woven over it, but hidden from sight.

We drove past the church for which the market was named. It was nearly five miles from the beginning of the road we had been driving down, a length that was once frequently walked by the sharecroppers living in the area. Mrs. Quinney remembered different ministers who had spoken at the church, and those that inspired her to also pursue the profession.

As we pulled into the site of the market, Mrs. Quinney explained that the current landowner had wanted to make this a space for his riding club to hold parties. Mrs. Quinney could not let that happen. This place was part of her heritage. Nubbin Fork they use to call it, or nub by the fork, in reference to its central point between the Salem and St. John's community. The space had been deserted for several decades, but now on Saturdays it hosts lively interactions among the residents of these neighboring communities. Farmers show off their vegetables, consumers finger through the produce and ask about the quality. Many buyers swap recipes, with each other and with the farmers, explaining how they cook traditional produce such as collard greens, or asking about less familiar items such as shallots. Mrs. Quinney has large dreams that the market will reinvigorate the economy, but perhaps its purpose is to "reunite us as neighbors," she reflects. The market is not simply a space of buying and selling. People come and sit at the picnic tables, chat, gossip, and tell stories. Mrs. Quinney tries to arrange some sort of activity, a raffle, or watermelon contest, in order to engage the people. "It's becoming the Saturday morning social spot." This too, is another form of claiming space – through building a space of social activity. It is a micro-practice that in turn recreates the larger spatial patterns.

Mrs. Quinney's narration at once works in multiple ways to recreate the space. The narratives are part of production of space; as they are told, they construct and create space and time. By telling the story, she makes claims to the history and memory of the place. By narrating to researchers like me, and to have me document the story was a way to add a layer of meaning, archiving the stories, and creating disembeded versions capable of being passed around to other people.

The stories themselves also refer to other forms of spatial production that govern people's actions, such as the right to reside, the right to produce, the right to fair access to government programs, and the right to vote. The arrangement of property rights led to the mass eviction of sharecroppers in the area, not only displacing them but also further impeding their efforts to demand civil rights. Mrs. Quinney's efforts were more than just a claim to the story, the place, and the memory of the community she once knew. By rebuilding at the site of the old county store, the hub of the sharecropping community and the site of civil rights organizing in the area, she was actively resisting displacement, she was occupying the land not through ownership but through continued presence.

Family Land

Film 13: Family Land https://vimeo.com/105448209/fa7407e359

Filming with Mr. and Mrs. Greyson began in their kitchen, sitting around their kitchen table with their granddaughter. We had to be careful not to move too much, since Mrs. Greyson had a pound cake in the oven and any form of vibration would make it "drop." Mr. Greyson began by telling me the history of his farm. The land was originally bought from his family's former slave owner whose descendants now lived down the road. This property had been a source of sustenance, productivity, and residency for his family for many generations ensuring their well-being. He was doubtful, however, that any of his own descendants would keep the land or continue to farm on it. His granddaughter showed some interest in the farm, and spent part of her summers with her grandparents. The Greysons hoped she might decide to take on the farm in the future.

The conversation around the table covered the importance of land ownership, and farming, in enabling African Americans to progress after emancipation. Even those who had moved out of the rural areas had been sustained by the work of those who built up social and financial capital through farming. However, there had been many obstacles for African Americans. The Greysons were one of the families who filed claims with the Pigford class action lawsuit against the USDA for discriminatory practices (this will be discussed in more detail in chapter six). Overall, the Greysons were proud of what they had accomplished on their farm.

After our discussion, we toured the Greysons farm. The tour began on the area around the house where Mrs. Greyson raised chickens and Mr. Greyson tended to a small row garden of vegetables and some goats in the distance. Mrs. Greyson sold the eggs from the side of the road by their house. She left crates of eggs and a basket for

neighbors to leave their payment. Her eggs, she said, were better than any grocery store eggs. And they were the secret to her pound cake.

Mr. Greyson then showed me the house that he was born in, an old run-down cottage in the middle of his land. This house once sat in the middle of a field, he explained. He was therefore really born in the fields, which gave him the authenticity of being a "real country boy." The foundation of his identity was formed through aspects of the landscape that had meaning for him. The landscape itself was described relative to himself as he pointed out trees, panels on the old house, and furniture that was older than he was. The old cottage was unusable, and Mrs. Greyson was nervous we were even in there, in case the floorboards gave out or we were bit by snakes. Yet, it was completely filled, with furniture and knick-knacks, an old mirror, and decorations. The home was kept as a relic, neither refurbished nor dismantled. As it slowly decayed it served as a reminder, a literal memory palace that would one day completely fade, perhaps like many of the memories still held by Mr. and Mrs. Greyson.

We walked to the fields across the road where Mr. Greyson taught me about the crops he grew. He demonstrated the differences between varieties of corn, watermelon, and field peas. Each of these varieties grew best on a certain type of land and with a certain type of weather. He showed me signs of weather shifts and the effect on the crops. Mr. Greyson commented on the shifting climate in the area, as evidenced by the changing quality of the kernels on his corn. Mr. Greyson carefully directed me through the rows of vegetables, stopping to show me the leaves and fruit of each plant and pulling up handfuls of dirt that he held in front of the camera. At one point he

chuckled, telling me I would be teased at the university for being so interested in these agricultural details. Although he could not fathom how his knowledge would be interesting to academics, he nonetheless spent significant effort to ensure I understood the details of his operations.

Afterwards we hopped in the pick-up truck to go to the fields where he kept his cattle. Each section of the cattle pasture had a story. This is where my cousin and I hid during a flash flood when we were kids. This is where the cows graze when the sun is hot. A few bricks remained where a structure once stood. I asked if all the cows were his, and he corrected me, they were his and his wife's. They were partners in the farm.

As we drove to a far pasture, Mr. Greyson explained that this was his uncle's portion of the heir property, an unofficial allocation. Since his cousins had all left the farm, Mr. Greyson expanded his cattle pasture onto the land. Recently, though, his cousins had come back and were residing in trailer homes parked near the road. I asked if he was afraid that they would sell their share of the land. "They're squatters now," he replied, laughing. For Mr. Greyson, the question was not about land ownership, but about land use and maintenance. He had a right to the land because he stayed and farmed when his cousins had left. They could come back, since it was family land, but since they did not farm the land, they could not claim rights to it. Whether his relatives would respect this claim or not is unclear.

This answer highlighted the multiple meanings of heir property. The FSC/LAF staff try to educate landowners about transitioning their property from heir property to private property. They hold workshops and work with farmers individually to help them create wills and estate plans that would give clear rights to specific individuals.

Simultaneously, they advocate for states to change the laws governing heir property to better protect family landowners. On the other hand, many farmers, like the Greysons, consider heir property to be family land. Maintaining it as heir property is part of building family assets, which could potentially benefit multiple family members. Even though legally designating a single heir secures the legacy of land ownership, conceptually, heir property is often seen as a better insurance that the land will continue to benefit the family into the future, especially if no single family member seems inclined to take on the responsibility of maintaining the land. As heir property, no single person can sell the land either. In the Greysons' case, none of their children wants to continue farming. They are hoping their granddaughter will develop an interest, but she is too young to take over the farm at the moment, and will likely attend college and even live elsewhere before finally deciding whether or not to take over the farm, a pattern common among many descendants of heir property.

Even though many intend inherited property to benefit future generations of a family, it can also cause familial discord. Some farmers, who had decided to stay on or return to the farm in order to maintain the property, pay taxes, and even at times care for aging parents, felt they deserved clear ownership of the land as fair compensation and also to gain access to certain government grants and loans through having clear ownership of the deed. But not all family members agree. At other times, a family member may want to buy out the other heirs in order to secure a clear property title, but this too may meet with resistance. Some families fought bitterly over ownership and inheritance of the land.

Despite the risks of unclear property titles, and the possible family disputes, many of the farmers I spoke with talked about the concept of heir property not as vulnerability, but as a desirable form of ownership. They spoke of the desire to keep the land in the family and keep it open to the family to use or reside on if they ever choose to do so. The emphasis on heir property as a value demonstrates a shifting understanding of land, not as a commodity, but as place of family.

Home Land

Film 14: Home Land https://vimeo.com/105448210/1c8ec267a3

Mr. Fairley is the charismatic president of the Southeastern Goat Cooperative of Alabama, or SOGOCO. Nearly twenty years ago he decided to start farming on his family's land, heir property that was originally bought by his grandfather. He is a veteran and found that farming was a way to deal with some of the trauma remaining

from his experiences at war. Mr. Fairley does not live on his farm property but in a town approximately 90 miles away. Both he and his wife are retired, but he alone attends to the farm. The land is surrounded by white landowners, and is only accessible by a rough, barely passable dirt road through someone else's land. Mr. Fairley is trying to level out this road in order to make it more traversable, but it is hard and tedious work. Gaining access to his farm does not fall under state or county duties, since the road crosses private property. Yet, this lack of access limits the farm's potential as a financial enterprise.

Mr. Fairley grows a few crops on his farm, but mostly these are considered "deer crops," food to entice deer for hunters. He opens his land up to family and friends who want to hunt. He has also enlisted the help of some of the local hunters to help keep an eye on his farm, tend to his different crops, or help with other chores. Most recently, he has turned to goat farming.

After attending a workshop at the FSC/LAF, Mr. Fairley decided goat farming could be a viable agricultural enterprise. He bought two goats, received four more from the FSC/LAF's pass-on project, and put them all in a pen on his farm. Soon after, his goats disappeared. Mr. Fairley and several FSC/LAF staff looked extensively for the goats but never found them. Mr. Fairley concluded they were stolen. The loss of his goats was a defining moment for Mr. Fairley, shaping his involvement with goat farming and the forming of SOGOCO. He has since bought more goats and today he has a herd of nearly 30 goats that roam freely throughout his property.

The first time Mr. Fairley told me this story was during a field trip with the SOGOCO members and FSC/LAF staff to a meat processing plant. One of the biggest

obstacles for small goat farmers is processing their meat. SOGOCO's long-term goal is to own a processing plant in order to retain more profits from goat production for the farmers/members themselves. In the meantime, however, they want to start processing and labeling their meat in order to build the reputation of their co-op and learn about the market possibilities.

The trip to the processing plant took nearly four hours. This distance alone made the processing of his goats very costly. Part of the reason for the trip was to calculate the total costs of processing two goats in order to evaluate the best way to profit from goat farming. When we arrived, we met a man wearing a confederate flag hat. He was the manager of the processing plant, and cousin to the owner. He told us that they mostly work with local people they know. His attitude was cordial, and he even agreed to be filmed as he offered a tour of the plant and answered questions about prices and procedures. He helped unload Mr. Fairley's goats into the pen in the back, where they would wait until a USDA agent could be present to inspect them before slaughter. Despite the politeness of the tour, it was symbolically tense. Not only did the man's hat symbolize a certain southern attitude, but also his comment about working with local suppliers also indicated the racialization of this part of Alabama. Working with black goat farmers was not part of the regular operations of the plant. Yet, he did not seem to resist working with the cooperative. Mr. Fairley, for his part, wore his gun holsters during the tour. The footage captures a range of gestures and expressions that similarly reveal a level of tension beneath the veneer of politeness.

Watch the SOGOCO tour of the processing plant.

Film 15: Processing Plant Tour https://vimeo.com/154451744/205d79f0f2

After the tour, the SOGOCO members gathered outside and had me film their stories about working with SOGOCO. Mr. Fairley, who also works as a preacher, spent the most time explaining the vision, the goals, and the struggles of the cooperative. He also told the story of his goat theft. The theft of his goats is a story wrought with the racial tensions, especially considering the placement of his farm amongst a number of larger white farms. Mr. Fairley told the story through nuanced codes, referring to "them" who stole the goats in an effort to keep Mr. Fairley from reclaiming, and re-presencing this family land. "They" did not want him there. However, he was born there, and therefore insisted that he did belong there. He emphasized the role of the FSC/LAF staff in helping him look for his goats, and later in helping him rebuild his herd. Through claiming this birthright, Mr. Fairley is claiming ownership over his inherited land, over his family's legacy, and the right to consider this place a home land and to actively be present on this home land. Mr. Fairley went on to explain how the theft of his goats made him angry, not mad. And it was good to be angry, instead of mad, because he was motivated to do something; he bought more goats.

This telling of the story reflected the struggles that Mr. Fairley continued to face. His desire to make goat farming profitable was met with a number of obstacles, some inherent within the current set up for meat production, and some based upon the social arrangements that affected him as a black farmer in the South. Being productive and successful was part of place making. But even more, his story emphasized his right to build up his farm enterprise in this area, his right to claim the South as a homeland, and his farm in particular as part of his family legacy.

The second time I filmed Mr. Fairley's story was during a visit with FSC/LAF organizers to his farm. They were assisting Mr. Fairley in applying for an NRCS program that would provide funding for farmers interested in agroforestry. Mr. Fairley already had goats and extensive forests, and was interested in making both of these assets more productive. However, one of the requirements for the grant was that water needed to be provided to the goats near their shelters. Currently, Mr. Fairley's goats drank from the creek that ran through the lowest part of his hilly property. The FSC/LAF staff were considering how to pump water from his creek in order to provide a steady supply to troughs near his goat sheds. They were also discussing with him an upcoming visit by an Alabama A&M research team who were interested in establishing a series of test plots on small farms in the area. Their project was intended to explore the benefits of agroforestry (in this case goats and trees) for limited resource and small farmers. Their project was designed to supply the farmers who participated with a few resources to improve their current practices. Many African American farmers have mixed feelings about applying to government programs and working with university extension agents. After years of harassment and discrimination, many are

suspicious and frustrated with trying to access the resources of the US agricultural system. However, gaining access to these resources can provide significant support for establishing and upgrading a viable and profitable agricultural enterprise.

During this telling, Mr. Fairley shortened the explanation of the FSC/LAF's involvement in helping him set up his original goat operation. Instead, he emphasized that the theft of his goats was a sign that the goats must be valuable and that there must be a reason somebody wanted them. The tension, between him and the people who stole his goats was not just about his presence on the land, but his productivity on the land. Mr. Fairley was claiming a right to the productive potential of his land. Mr. Fairley's story was again a redemptive story in which he pushed back against pressures aiming to discourage him and instead took the setback as motivation and encouragement.

As we drove through the bumpy dirt road that led to the main road and the church, we stopped near the house in which Mr. Fairley was born, and he pointed out the window to indicate that this was where he, Pam, and Mr. Chavez looked for the goats. Tied together in place were his claims to this land as a birthright, his desire to make the land productive, and the support of the FSC/LAF network in facilitating this goal. Later we got out of the pick-up, and drove over the landscape through which they had wandered in search of the lost goats. I tried to imagine the three of them roaming this rough terrain, Mr. Fairley calling his notable cry for the goats. The area was rough, with few easy paths. This too, was part of his production of space, a creation of paths and experiences within the environment.

The third time I filmed Mr. Fairley's origin story was during a workshop he hosted on his land for friends, family, and neighbors (discussed in more detail in chapter five). The purpose of the workshop was to help smallholding African American farmers to begin or improve goat farming and to learn some of the basics involved. The workshop began in a small church across from Mr. Fairley's property during which FSC/LAF organizers provided information about the FSC/LAF, cooperative development, and an overview of goat farming. We then traveled to Mr. Fairley's land, carpooling in pick-up trucks to make it over the rough dirt road leading to his farm. At the farm, seasoned goat farmers gave hands-on lessons related to goat care and FSC/LAF staff spoke more about the logistics of getting the business up and running and getting resources from the USDA. We returned to the church for lunch, and Mr. Fairley summed up his thoughts on goat farming, including telling his origin story again.

In this version of the story, the "them" does not refer to the thieves, but to the FSC/LAF staff. They are in some senses outsiders in this setting, being introduced to a larger population of farmers. Mr. Fairley is bridging the gap, bringing together farmers and the FSC/LAF. He explains first meeting "them" (the FSC/LAF staff) and how they helped him get started in the goat business. In this version, the theft is less emphasized. He sums up the experience to a knowing chuckle in the room as the audience acknowledges this is common and expected. The racial innuendos are omitted, but knowingly understood within the room. The point of the story is to demonstrate the usefulness of organizations like the FSC/LAF and to encourage others to work cooperatively. The workshop and the story were part of Mr. Fairley's effort to

build a home base for goat farmers, a place to connect and build a new rural economy. In this telling, building a homeland was not just an individual effort on Mr. Fairley's part, but a collective goal. He was facilitating and encouraging more farmers to make claims to the rural South, to become productive and successful, and maintain this place as a place that would serve black farmers.

Each telling of Mr. Fairley's story both reveals a series of spatial claims, and is embedded within a set of spatial practices. In the first instance, Mr. Fairley claims his birthright to be a Southern landowner amidst racial tensions, while simultaneously building a method to process his meat within a racially tense atmosphere. Both economic and social factors shape this telling and his experience. In the second instance, his story is told during discussions of productivity and access to resources. This telling emphasizes his right to be productive and successful, and to do so upon the land he inherited. It is told on the very land the events took place, re-embedding the experience in place. The third telling emphasizes the importance of collective efforts and especially the role of the FSC/LAF as supporters of black farmers. This telling is to a collective, serving as a binding among the group, a way for them to relate and to know Mr. Fairley on a more intimate level. Both the act of telling, and the story itself, exist as part of a collective formation that ideally will persist within the space of the rural South, continually creating it as a space that black farmers can call home.

Conclusion: From Land Rights to Spatial Rights

In the rural areas of southeastern USA, African Americans have fought to maintain land ownership in order to protect independent farmers and maintain

economic and political freedom. Struggles over property rights in this region have a heavy history from enslavement to contemporary racial discrimination and rapid land loss among African American farmers. This chapter expands the issue of dispossession, and its connection to rural development, to explore the role of spatial production including perceptions, practices, narratives, and memories embedded in the landscape.

The examples explored in this chapter contribute to larger discussions around issues of land and land rights. In the first instance, the case of African American land loss expands the framework of land grabs to consider not just land that has weak property titles, but multiple forms of political, economic, and social dispossession. African American land owners have been systematically dispossessed of their landholdings through a series of legal manipulations, threats, and social practices that impede African American farmers' access to resources necessary for making land productive and landholdings sustainable. These processes relate to larger issues of dispossession of land from small holding farmers. Although the means are different, the phenomenon still revolves around issues of power and access to land. In response to African American dispossession, many organizers and activists, including the FSC/LAF staff and their member cooperatives, devise means to help African American landholders understand the legal structure and overcome some of the obstacles to resources. What these examples demonstrate is that resistance is not simply about fighting within the framework of property ownership. In each example, the right to land is being claimed through a series of spatial practices, thus making claims to not just land rights, but to spatial rights. By narrating the history of place, traversing place,

gathering on place, and producing upon land, farmers and rural residents make claims for their rights to be present and make meaning upon land, independent of ownership. These examples therefore expand possible considerations around land grabs from the political economic forms of property extractions, and along with these the inscription devices that make land investable, to the types of spatial practices that resist these impositions. Of course, resistance against land grabs must ultimately take place within the dominant framework of property rights, as is evidenced in these examples in which ownership itself is an ultimate goal for organizations like the FSC/LAF in their drive to prevent black land loss. Along side these efforts, spatial practices build another form of resistance.

These examples also contribute to discussions around space and place making. The case of African American farmers demonstrates another form of place making. Their spatial practices are akin to, but different than, urban spatial practices often discussed as part of a distinction between space and place, and indigenous places that are created through long existing traditions. In the rural South, African Americans were placed within an oppressive system, separated from their original traditions. Yet, despite this, many farmers and rural residents have built a place of memory and heritage. Mrs. Quinney's claim that this is ancestral land is built from her nostalgic memories of the sharecropping community in which she grew up. Despite the oppressive nature of sharecropping in the South, the community itself built its own form of space.

Furthermore, these examples demonstrate that space and place, or structure and practice, are not binary dualities, but part of a dialectical process. The meanings,

narrations, physical practices, and legal structures all interact with each other. In these examples, I have emphasized the narratives, meanings, and practices, but have placed these within a framework of ownership dilemmas. This is especially evident in the negotiations around heir property. Even though it creates a legal vulnerability, many African Americans maintain their family land as heir property because of the way this representation of land interacts with meanings and familial practices.

Finally, this chapter explores how video plays a role in elucidating the meaning of spatial rights. By filming the narrations of individual rural residents and farmers, I contributed to a set of spatial practices, and the creation of representational spaces. The films have been screened and circulated for the local communities and become another part of their storytelling practices. Additionally, my presence in walking along side and forming paths with individuals, contributes to the creation of space. However, along with the actual practice of filming, the films themselves offer something that my written analysis can only approximate. Film provides a means to explore these aspects through a sensory and embodied engagement with those who claim rights over the land. Through the use of film, this study looked at the interaction between people and their environments, and how spatial practices and narratives shape the concept of land rights and how this in turn effects development projects. Although I explain and analyze the clips in this chapter, they hold embodied meanings that can never be fully elucidated into discourse. Their presence within this chapter, therefore, adds another dimension to understanding the creation of space among the examples explored here.

The focus on spatial rights also contributes to this dissertation's larger questions on rural development. The dispossession of land among African Americans

has been the focus of many academic and activist groups who have pointed to the connection between land ownership, economic development, political power, and civil rights. For African Americans who find themselves within a system that privileges private land ownership, the lack of land is an impediment to development. This is the main reason that land ownership is one of the main strategic goals for the FSC/LAF. Landownership is considered the primary asset in building an independent economy in which African Americans can develop their own wealth, free from the racial limitations of the southern political and social structures. As this chapter explores, there is a deep connection between fighting for land ownership and understanding the meaning of place.

The examples here all drew from older residents, largely because many in the younger generations lack, or only superficially understand, the relevance of land. In these examples, it is the sense of place that drives individuals to pursue means of ownership and, when that is not possible, to find ways to occupy, reside upon, and imbue with meaning places in the rural South. Although practices and stories alone cannot form resistance against political-economic forces of dispossession, they facilitate the desire for individuals to pursue legal means, especially when the dominant framework of property ownership is so often rigged against them. As Lefebvre states, it is a dialectical relationship between the various productions of space and, in order for the FSC/LAF to pursue land retention, spatial practices and representational spaces must also be promoted and built among the rural population. Each of the individuals discussed here has the desire to transfer their own desires for spatial rights to younger generations or to the wider community. By understanding the process of spatial production, we can understand better how social change occurs, and therefore how development projects succeed.

For many of the farmers, organizers, and rural residents that I spoke with, land retention was simultaneously an economic strategy, a political goal, and a form of social empowerment. Land is both symbolic and material, laden with memories, used as a means of production, a residence, and a home place. Land in the US south is filled with historic collective memories of racial violence but land is also an ancestral home, and a birthplace.

Rights over places include more than just legal rights, but refer to people's own sense of entitlement to a place based on their own experiences. Space is not a neutral expanse to be claimed and delineated but is constantly being produced. It exists through the multiple interactions of people and environment and through the ways we perceive, conceive, and live in space. Producing space is a way to claim rights: the right to use land to be productive, the right to occupy and reside, the right to build community and the right to name, sense and embody a place. For contested landscapes, the framework of spatial rights challenges assumptions about who should have these rights. Within the framework of spatial rights, the laws governing land rights and the claims to ancestral lands are both processes within the production of places, neither more legitimate nor real in an ontological sense, but only within political frameworks.

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Chapter 5: Visualizing a Cooperative Movement

Introduction

A 1975 documentary on the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund (FSC/LAF) opens with a slideshow of iconic civil rights photographs playing to a civil rights song. A quotation from Alice Paris, one of the original FSC/LAF organizers plays, "It's not a one-person thing, it's everybody's thing." As the opening draws to a close, the name "Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund" is superimposed over photographs of civil rights marches. This opening breaks immediately to two men picking okra. Scenes of farm work are interspersed with interviews and a narrator explains the connection between farming and the civil rights. In one scene the camera follows young men picking watermelon out of the field, agilely tossing 40 pound watermelons along their human chain as they load up a truck and unload it into the packing shed. At the packing shed, people are busy sorting and packing different types of vegetables. Eventually we return to Alice Paris who is conducting a skills class with a group of women. The film concludes at the large, festive annual meeting at the Rural Training and Research Center (RTRC) in Epes, Alabama. Under large canopy tents, rows of men and women fan themselves in the heat as they share stories from their different regions, and exchange new knowledge, information, and skills. The RTRC continues to host the annual meeting today.

This film offers a pictorial demonstration of the FSC/LAF's vision for cooperative development. Cooperatives are a tool within the FSC/LAF's overarching

goal of transformation for black farmers, and all family farmers, in the rural south. The images contextualize the cooperative experience as more than just an institutional or business platform, but an affective and embodied practice that forms a new, communal, and hopeful rural south.

I see my own footage reflected in these images. I have filmed many of the same settings, the same activities, and the same events. Over the years, the FSC/LAF has cultivated a culture of black farmer resistance that revolves around cooperative development. Not all FSC/LAF members belong to cooperatives. But the culture of cooperation and the ideology of collective action as a tool for overcoming oppression pervade the membership, organizers, and affiliates of the FSC/LAF.

Many of the cooperatives portrayed in this earlier film have since dissolved, and new cooperatives have emerged as part of the FSC/LAF. But the cooperative movement has not faded over the years, and today the same call of the collective effort and cooperative movement is spread among FSC/LAF members. But what does the cooperative movement look like today? How do black farmers relate to cooperative building? Do they face many of the same obstacles? Do they share the same visions? What do the current cooperative practices look like?

This chapter looks at the current practices of cooperative development among FSC/LAF members. The structural formation, political and economic agendas, and governance among the cooperatives and between the cooperatives and the FSC/LAF have shifted and adapted over the years to a changing agricultural context. Yet, as the pervasive film images demonstrate, there exists an enduring sense of what cooperation means, and how cooperation is enacted within a rural and agricultural setting. This

chapter seeks to better understand the production and reproduction of this cooperation and how it ties into the FSC/LAF's strategy for rural development.

Specifically, I focus on three cooperatives that are part of the FSC/LAF: a cooperative formed in the 1960s that still operates today, a new cooperative that formed in 2006, and a beginning cooperative that formed during my field research in 2011. For each of these cases, I explore how the structure of the cooperative emerges from a set of practices carried out by members. Material, ideological, and aesthetic aspects constitute these practices. Both the material and ideological resources are in part drawn from the FSC/LAF. But the individual cooperatives are not simply FSC/LAF models. Each utilizes the material and ideological resources in unique ways, based on their own histories, ecological settings, and members. This chapter looks at the processes by which each cooperative emerges as an entity, and how it maintains its processes.

Defining Cooperatives

The FSC/LAF is not unique in its use of cooperatives as a development strategy. Globally, development organizations have promoted cooperatives as a key strategy for overcoming poverty and securing sustainable livelihoods (for example, the United Nations, Food and Agriculture Organization, World Bank, and United States Department of Agriculture all have promoted cooperatives as development strategies). In fact, the United Nations declared 2014 to be the International Year of Cooperatives. They celebrated this around the world, holding meetings, presentations, speaker series, and publishing a series of reports on the benefits of cooperatives for development. Cooperatives are hailed as an ideal institutional form offering democratic participation to

impoverished and marginalized groups. Cooperatives ideally provide an institutional framework for individuals to solve collective action dilemmas in the process of developing communal well-being (Hoyt, 2004). They presumably can help solve environmental problems and promote sustainable forms of development (Majee et al, 2011; Vilsack 2010). This push for cooperatives as an ideal solution for community-based and sustainable development raises the questions about the nature and function of this institutional framework.

The basic characteristics of cooperatives are that they are owned and controlled by members on a democratic basis (votes distributed evenly among members, not according to capital investments), surplus profit is either distributed back to the membership or used to reduce the prices of goods and services for members, and membership in the cooperative is voluntary (Marshall. 1971). Organizationally, cooperatives can be managed by an executive manager or director and governed by a board of directors. Or members can appoint a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer and use member votes for major decisions. Many of the FSC/LAF's farm cooperatives are small enough that decisions are made through in-person member meetings. The two key characteristics that make cooperatives useful for community-based development efforts are 1) Property arrangements are designed to increase services and wealth among members as a whole, rather than increase profits for external shareholders, and 2) Cooperatives are an easily accessible institutional form that can transform individuals into a collective force.

Cooperatives have long been promoted as an economic solution by many African American scholars and activists as a possible solution for members to gain control over

their own economic functions, to coordinate strategies towards a collective solution, and even to serve as foundations for political movements and activism (Nembhard, 2006). Marginalized groups have combated their lack of power through using cooperatives to overcome market imperfections in economic systems based on discrimination (Fairburn, 2004). Cooperatives are a way to change the power arrangements and distribution of adverse power systems at a community level, when either individual adaptation is too costly or threatens local values, or when marginalized communities do not have enough power to change the system at a large scale level (Fairburn, 2004). In addition to these economic and structural outcomes, cooperatives may also have spillover effects that are less easily recognizable. Jessica Gordan Nembhard suggests using a social accounting method to account for some of these benefits, such as leadership development, civic engagement, and local business expansion (Nembhard, 2004).

For the FSC/LAF, the guiding principles for cooperatives are: open membership; one person, one vote; limited return on investment; benefits returned according to use; business for cash whenever practical; constant expansion; constant education. These principles guide cooperatives to focus on member services and member benefits, over profit maximization. The goal of a cooperative, unlike a corporation, is for limited profit margins, most of which are returned to members after overhead costs are paid for. It is not an investment endeavor, but a service endeavor, providing for the business needs of its members. The FSC/LAF further emphasizes the democratic nature of cooperatives and the need for cooperation among cooperatives. Forms of cooperatives have ranged from credit unions, consumer cooperatives, farmer cooperatives, purchasing cooperatives, housing cooperatives, and self-help cooperatives. Some cooperatives combine more than

one of these functions, such a farm cooperative that offers both marketing and purchasing services for its members.

Over the years, cooperative members of the FSC/LAF have variably formed, flourished, diminished, or disbanded. FSC/LAF organizers and members cite many reasons for this. Based on anecdotes and cooperative visits, three key reasons seem to lead to the demise of cooperatives: 1) a lack of new membership, or continuing interest among members; 2) the circumstances that drew the group together no longer exist, or the context has shifted making the cooperative ineffectual or irrelevant; 3) the effort of maintaining the cooperative is not worth the diminishing returns, which could be due to member conflict, lack of member investment, or poor management. Many of the FSC/LAF's cooperatives were designed around the needs of small farmers, particularly small farmers who were racially discriminated against by southern markets. The cooperatives served to help purchase equipment that could be shared, buy bulk inputs at a lower price and from vendors outside the south, and to collectively sell to markets. As agriculture became increasingly industrialized, small farmers had difficulty even staying in business let alone supporting a cooperative. Machinery quickly became outdated, and without adequate capital flows, cooperatives could not compete with large-scale farms. These external pressures were compounded by the lessening of communal ties, based on migration out of the south, transition from agricultural to industrial jobs, and shifting patterns of segregation, which although generally desirable inadvertently depleted support for African American institutions and communities. However, more robust research would be needed to thoroughly examine the reasons why FSC/LAF member cooperatives have diminished or disbanded.

Cooperative as an Institution

One of the reasons cooperatives are viewed as ideal solutions for community-based development is that they are designed as a corrective to the exploitation of capitalism. Cooperatives operate both as part of the capitalist system and as an alternative. The key to this negotiated position is the arrangement of ownership and benefits under which a cooperative operates. In a cooperative, the owners of the business that provides the service or product are the users of that very good. Therefore, the business itself does not need to earn a profit. It only needs to satisfy the needs of its members/owners. In theory, this should blunt the ceaseless cycle of capital accumulation built into the logic of capitalist business. The only profits needed are the amount to keep the business running. Otherwise, members receive all returns. Furthermore, because of this ownership structure, those that provide the labor or services are also in charge of their own labor power, and benefit from the surplus of their own labor. Cooperatives are simultaneously treated as a tool for participating in the capitalist system. Cooperatives provide a means for individuals to collectively bargain for better prices, create value added products, or operate at a larger scale. This inherent contradiction is diversely resolved as cooperatives choose which function to privilege. Both of these functions are part of the institutional analysis of cooperatives, not their actual embodied enactments.

As an institution, cooperatives are unique in their investment structure and arrangement of property rights. Growth is tied to use, investment is tied to use, and ownership is tied to use. All of these functions are also distributed through various forms of equitable governance, thus preventing isolated control, ownership, or benefit from a

cooperative. This is sometimes seen as the reason why cooperatives are ideal for equitable and community-based development. But it is also considered the reason for institutional failures. For example, because of the lack of shareholder investment possibilities, cooperatives are assumed to have problems related to commitment, long-term portfolios, decision-making, and capital flow. These problems are commonly cited as the reasons for eventual cooperative failure (Cook, 1995; Egerstrom, 2004). Additionally, cooperatives are assumed to have short life-spans due to their inability for growth, in other words, their inability to accumulate profit.

The institutional framework has led economists to construct a life-cycle model for cooperatives in which they eventually will need to dissolve or convert to more flexible types of firms with value-added forms of production or looser property rights structures[13] (Cook, 1995; Harte, 1997). Using a life cycle model, Cook and Chaddad (2004) predict that cooperatives will inevitably face external threats (from technological advancement, member individualism, and market fluctuations) and internal obstacles (from vaguely defined property rights by which ownership rights and shares are limited to users and are nontransferable, non-appreciable, and distributed in proportion to patronage) (Cook and Chaddad, 2004). When these internal and external obstacles threaten the survival of the cooperative, the members involved can exit the cooperative, change the structure of the organization, or change their strategy. Many cooperatives form for the purpose of what may be considered a defensive strategy, which is reducing transaction costs and risks. However, in order to survive cooperatives must take an offensive approach by turning to

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[13] Although others contest this and claim that more empirical, and less theoretical, research is needed (Sexton and Iskow; Royer, 1999)

value-added processes and seeking outside investment through loosening their property rights structures (Cook and Chaddad, 2004).

Some cooperatives do shift their structure through acquiring outside investors, streamlining management, and growing their businesses to compete with other corporations. Other cooperatives choose instead to remain small, democratic, and transparent. The ideological frameworks guiding cooperatives determine how members negotiate the institutional organization. For example, in the US, two dominant frameworks for understanding cooperatives formed through the efforts and theories of Aaron Sapiro and Edward Nourse. Sapiro, a lawyer from California, considered cooperatives as a competitive marketing tool for farmers. Through forming cooperatives, farmers could fix the price of their commodities and compete with other agricultural corporations (Hogeland, 2002). His model was very successful among farmers growing specialty crops who were able rebrand their products, strike better deals with processors, and create value added products to extend their growing season. Some of the well-known cooperatives emerging from this model include Sunkist and Blue Diamond. Edward Nourse, on the other hand, believed that cooperatives should serve as a competitive yardstick, keeping commodity prices fair for farmers but never expanding beyond small, locally controlled entities. Nourse was adamantly opposed to Sapiro's vision and felt that cooperatives needed to resist the capitalist trends of agriculture and ensure fairness in the market (Hogeland, 2006). Working with commodity grain crops, the cooperatives organized by Nourse also were not able to effectively use tools such as boycotts to control the market.

Nourse and Sapiro demonstrate the interplay between material and ideological factors. Nourse's theory emerged in the area of commodity crops, where unions and boycotts were not possible, versus Sapiro who worked with specialty crops grown only in a certain region by a certain number of farmers, and with crops able to be stored and preserved. As these examples demonstrate, several factors influence the manifestation and success of cooperatives for the purposes of development. The material relations of the members largely determine the range of possibilities for creating and sustaining a cooperative enterprise, as seen in the contrast between Midwest grain cooperatives and California fruit and nut cooperatives. Even with similar crops, farmers may draw on different ideological frameworks. But cooperatives do not simply emerge from the material and ideological inputs of the members. They must be put into practice. A cooperative only exists for as long as the practices that give the organization form and meaning are continued and upheld by the members. Not only must these practices be upheld, but also others must recognize them as meaningful and constitutive of the social order they are meant to enforce. Although an institutional analysis is useful for examining the contours of the cooperative form, it only offers a snapshot of a moment in time and particular arrangement, and often an idealized arrangement at that. The actual cooperative itself only exists within the practices of the people who uphold and maintain it.

Cooperatives as Practice

Institutional analyses attempt to discover the ideal structural formations for producing the desired results. An institutional approach focuses on structural formations but relies on individualistic methodological approach for understanding the outcomes of a

given institution. Robert Bates (1995) has outlined the inherent problem in this individualist approach. If individuals behave in predictable, utilitarian-maximizing ways and if such behaviors lead to social dilemmas, then the solutions in the form of institutions are themselves social dilemmas. What convinces a group of people to design, implement, and enforce an institution? Bates proposes we turn to anthropology and political science to better understand how culture and politics become drivers in social formation (1995).

Institutional studies do attend to contextual details, political and economic variations, and the role of "informal institutions," such as culture, values, and ideology. However, ultimately, such an approach emphasizes how the formal arrangements of cooperatives, such as their distribution of property rights and emphasis on democratic management, may create sustainable or equitable development. This approach neglects the practices that manifest social orders and therefore often fail to predict or control desirable outcomes through manipulation of formal rules. The implementation of cooperatives rarely creates the desired results (Nash et al, 1976 provides a useful collection of comparative cooperative studies). As James Scott has pointed out, "It is far easier for would-be reformers to change the formal structure of an institution than to change its practices." (Scott, 1998; 255). The practices are both more enduring and fundamental to the workings of an institution than the formal rules and guidelines.

This dilemma is part of a larger tension commonly explored within the social science: that between structure and agency. Different attempts to understand social and organizational manifestations have privileged structural methodologies or individual methodologies, citing either individual choices as products of structural forces, or

institutions as amalgamations or aggregations of individual behaviors. Ultimately, though, neither approach is fully satisfactory.

Cooperatives are something more than the aggregation of individuals and produce unique qualities that both shape, and are shaped by, the individual parts. The issue of forming a cooperative illuminates the individual/collective dilemma on two fronts. One side of the issue is the creation of a collective entity in itself. What is the process by which individuals choose to put their time, resources, and trust into a collective entity? How do their efforts transform them from a collection of individuals into something new, something distinct from and with different qualities than the aggregation of individuals? The second front involves the social and collective settings in which the individuals find themselves to begin with. How do they overcome the forms of power that shape their lives in order to create something new?

A danger in deconstructing the idea of cooperative is to miss that it exists at all. Although I am arguing that the cooperative be considered a process, not an entity, it still does have an ontological reality and influence on individual lives. Coulter (2001) suggests one way to begin a practice-oriented examination of social order is to look how macro-social terms are used colloquially. This is not to over emphasize social orders as linguistic creations, but to find clues to the ontological conceptions of the people who use them. This also reveals that such terms do not hold consistent meaning.

For instance, among the three cooperatives used as case studies in my research, members differed in how they named and referred to the social order. Among SOGOCO members the collective group was alternatively referred to as a co-op, a company, and an organization. The term cooperative did not have significant meaning over and above the

function of doing business. This aligns with their underlying goals and missions, as discussed later. Among the Attala members the term cooperative was used consistently to refer to their collective organization, but it was largely used to highlight the services received from the collective, such as information, grants, or pass-on heifers (again, explained in more detail later). For the Indian Springs cooperative, the term most consistently was used to refer to the place of the packing facility. The cooperative then was a place, not a group, business, or network. This emphasized the role of this place in symbolically and materially tying together the members.

As discussed in the introduction, assemblages/networks/webs provide a framework through which to conceptualize collective entities, such as cooperatives. Here, particularly, I refer back to Tim Ingold's (2011) use of the term meshwork to describe these connections. Meshwork implies an embedded connection between actors and their environments, and among actors. These components are never distinct from the meshwork, but always a part of it, always in process. This shifts the focus from types of relationships, to the practices by which relationships come to exist. This is useful because it allows us to examine assemblages as constant processes, always in flux. Relationships, then, are not stable, but always in the process of becoming. The moment they are observed and described, they are already in the process of becoming something else, constantly being made in real time.

In the meshwork, individuals are not separate entities, tied together through entangled relationships but are themselves entanglements, connected along lines of becoming. People are not bounded, but rather are constantly making new choices and actions that shift the surrounding conditions. Action results from the interplay of forces

conducted along the lines of the meshwork (Ingold, 2011; 92). A cooperative is an entanglement of lines of action, the outcome of embodied, skilled practices. The key to understanding the process of cooperative formation is to look at the practices used to manifest cooperation.

There is a history of scholarship on practice theory in anthropology that argues structure is not externally imposed but is embodied, through the disposition and bodily practices of individuals. Sherry Ortner (2006) provides an outline of the historic shift towards a practice-based approach within anthropology. In her review, she notes a continuum of approaches, from Pierre Bourdieu to Anthony Giddens to Marshall Sahlins. Each offered a different emphasis of control between collective structure and individual agency. Paired with these practice scholars, Ortner lays out a similar continuum among what she terms "power" theorists: James Scott, Michel Foucault, and Raymond Williams. Ultimately these scholars, and the many others who have drawn from their work or advanced similar theories, have shifted the structure/agency dilemma from an oppositional issue to a dialectical occurrence. These two poles are not separate entities, but twin manifestations. They are constantly influencing each other and co-creating each other. Within this dialectic is the space for change. The question then is how to create change (or sometimes how to maintain stability). And how to direct that change towards desirable ends?

Practice theorist Theodore Schatzki (2010) considers social practices as more than just actions, but a collection of actions that involve practical understandings, rules, and teleoaffectivities. Practical understanding involves not just knowing how to do something (knowing how to X), but also how to identify that action and how to prompt or respond to

that action. Rules are the principles and formulations that guide what people do and say. Rules provide the ability for observers or practitioners to determine the correctness of a practice and its place within a given context. Teleoaffective structures involve the social norms, normal emotional states, and ordered ends of activities and tasks. Certain practices are designed to create specific affective states, which in turn inform the practice. For example saluting a flag is a practice through which national pride is both evoked and produced, just as the affective state itself may encourage the practice. Social orders emerge from the nexuses of social practices. Practices and social orders are not distinct entities, but are co-contextual; they are the background upon which the other emerges. Independent practices remain meaningless without the social orders that contextualize them. But at the same time, social orders cannot be sustained without practices. One way to understand these practices better is to shift the perspective from a focus on either the individuals involved, or the resultant social entities, to the moments in which the collective is formed. Schatski terms this the site of the social. In these sites human lives hang together through practical intelligibility, mentality, activity, and the setting of the site (Schatski, 2010). The films explored below are examples of these sites of the social, spaces in which key practices form the social order, just as the social order provides the meaning of the practices.

The collective is not simply a collection of practices or a pattern of individual action. Collectives develop a singularity that is difficult to define, since it is simultaneously always divulging into a multiplicity. But certain actions and practices, done for certain purposes and in certain contexts are the action of the collective itself. Coulter (2001) uses the example of the President declaring war. This is in some ways a

simple action by a single person. But the context and surrounding practices (such as the presence of the press, the reaction of other nations) make this an action of the State, not of the individual who happens to be President.

These actions rely on both material and ideological frames. Again, Coulter's example of an architect is useful. An architect does not make a building, but neither does a pile of bricks. Both the practice of the architect, and the builders who actually create a building, rely on assumptions and context surrounding a host of other practices as well. There is a constant interplay between ideological and material components. I would add to this the importance of symbolic or aesthetic aspects as well.

But not all practices are equally important in the creation and acting of a social order. A president declaring war can easily be recognized as an act of the state, and the act of war further aligns the concept of state among the warring parties. But a president sitting in the Oval Office drinking coffee, walking the halls of the White House, or acting in non-official capacities does little for creating or sustaining the concept of the state. And even some recognizable state-making practices may be less significant than others.

Ann Swiddler (2001) explores this issue through looking for anchoring practices. She determines that some practices are more effective in reproducing constitutive rules that define social orders. Sometimes these practices are public and demonstrative, at other times they are enduring, deep, and habitual. But those that anchor social orders are the practices that define social entities. Social orders can also be changed through creating new anchoring social practices. Sometimes this requires a significant amount of time and repetition. But a highly visible public enactment in which everyone can witness and affirm a shift in the social order may also work to significantly change a social order.

Often, the practices that anchor a social order are found at the center of antagonistic social relationships (Swiddler, 2001). The practices that are used to negotiate crucial tensions usually sustain order, even as the formal arrangements of an organization may shift and change. This last point is crucial for understanding the place of a cooperative. Within a given context, certain tensions may be crucial in the efforts for development projects. The implementation of a cooperative form will not necessarily change the practices used to negotiate this tension.

A practice-based approach to social orders highlights the processual nature of structures. Rather than being enduring entities, social orders are in fact in constant fluctuation, always in need of being reproduced. Vargas-Cetina (2005) offers the term "ephemeral association" to understand fluctuations among cooperatives and within the cooperative movement. Using Mexico as a case study, she argues that the decrease in government regulation, and increasing involvement of activists and NGOs in activities formerly carried out by the government has led to a constant fluctuation in the structure and organization of local cooperatives. Vargas-Cetina's definition of "ephemeral associations" is rather specific. As she states: "they are ephemeral in the sense that they are not expected to last indefinitely by their members, and in fact, may be seen as highly contextual and in constant flux; their membership is fully voluntary; their structure, membership, aims and purposes change continuously; their internal governance structure is weak, and their authority figures are contextual; and, finally, they are highly dependent on communications technology, from simple trails connecting hamlets to roads, to long-distance travel means, phone lines and electronic devices. Because of this, they are less dependent as collectives on meetings where members are physically present than

previous types of associations." (Vargas-Cetina, 2005). This characteristic of cooperatives, however, is not just a response to this neoliberal transition. The ephemeral nature of cooperatives is inherent in their nature. Certain institutional contexts provide the illusion of more stability, but the constant shifts are always in play. Perhaps, as Vargas-Cetina points out, there is an increasing velocity in the changing social forms as they adapt to globalization, neoliberal trends, and transnational dynamics. But the theoretical lens of social organizations as ephemeral is quite apt, regardless of the time period.

Vargas-Cetina's assessment of the current state of Mexican cooperatives, as ephemeral associations, on the one hand does allude to the sort of practice-based framework that has been set up in this chapter. Cooperatives, like all social orders, are constantly becoming, they are never stable or static entities. They are social processes, but they appear as social structures due to both continuity and intention. Vargas-Cetina's focus on the impact of neoliberalism highlights this shift in intentionality. As she points out, the cooperatives she surveys are not focused on maintaining a stable organization, consistent membership, or even physically present membership.

This shift in focus also affects the arrangements that positioned cooperatives as an alternative to capitalism and exploitation in the first place. As mentioned earlier, the reason cooperatives seem to be an alternative to capitalism is because of their focus on membership benefits and services as well as a collective solution for problems that cannot be solved individually. These strategies rely on member commitment, and constant alignment, of the collective goals and the collective good. In a climate in which values, goals, members, and activities fluctuate, these types of commitments are

threatened. Although a cooperative is always a process, the purpose and goals of that process do create more or less consistent responses to situations. The neoliberal trend is to abandon other values for the purpose of market efficiency. When cooperatives follow this logic their purpose changes and, perhaps, their significance as cooperatives also shifts.

Overall, changing the analysis of cooperatives from an institutional perspective to a practice-based perspective also shifts the nature of empirical studies. Rather than comparing institutional arrangements, this research focuses on the practices that form and sustain collective entities. Institutional arrangements do affect the nature of a cooperative, and such analyses offer predictions of outcomes. These in turn may help future cooperatives decide and determine the best institutional form for their intended goals. But an institutional analysis cannot attend to the varying realities of actual cooperatives, many of which perform contrary to predictions based on their institutional arrangements.

By framing cooperatives as a process, rather than an entity, their practices become the key component to understanding their outcomes. Within the case studies below, I utilize a practice-based approach to explore how individuals are forming collective entities. This includes focusing on sites of the social, within which key or anchoring practices are enacted. This focus brings to the fore of my inquiry the interplay between structure and agency. Individuals are in the process of forming, and being formed by, a collective entity. It also shifts the causal order of outcomes. Rather than seeing cooperatives as producing the outcomes of collective benefits, it is perhaps the effort of cooperation itself that produces the institution of the cooperative. But, even though I am framing cooperatives as ephemeral processes, without a structure of commitment, many

of their goals will fail to be enacted. Therefore, one of the keys to cooperative success is not only sustaining key practices, but also transforming these practices into an institutional form.

FSC/LAF's Cooperatives for Black Farmers

Cooperatives have been an important ideological and practical instrument for African Americans' struggle against oppression in the U.S. Jessica Gordan-Nembard, a cooperative scholar and long-time supporter of the FSC/LAF points out that telling the black cooperative history is also a retelling of the African American civil rights history (2014; 4). Many of the major actors are the same. Cooperatives are a tool for black farmers to change their relationships to and within the agricultural economic system. Partly, the FSC/LAF sees cooperatives as an alternative to capitalism, and the capitalist logic of economics. Mr. Zippert explains that capitalism teaches individualism, competition, and the desire for profits at all costs. Cooperatives, on the other hand, emphasize collaboration, collective action, and the production of goods and services for the community (Zippert, 2010). Not all cooperatives adhere to this framework as many examples demonstrate. The FSC/LAF differentiates its goals and its cooperatives from the common forms of agricultural cooperatives found within the US. For the FSC/LAF, certain principles of transparency, equity, and a goal of social development define a true cooperative (Idehen and Madzima, 2010).

While on the one hand cooperatives may offer an alternative to the capitalist system, they also offer black farmers a means by which to enter into the capitalist system, and therefore gain access to key resources necessary to better their own conditions.

Cooperatives can provide a means for collective bargaining, securing better input prices and facilitating market prices and commitments. Cooperatives also help farmers share and access knowledge, and as an entity can secure new forms of funding through grants and loans. This additional access to resources and increased scale of production also provides a way for farmers to create mechanisms for improving their production and creating value added products. Cooperatives are thus a way to transform individuals' ability to negotiate within the current system, while simultaneously providing the possibility to create an alternative to the dominant system.

This two-sided purpose of cooperatives is paired with two regions of action, one that resists external pressures, and one that builds internal cohesion. Cooperatives thus emerge through negotiations on two fronts. In one instance, cooperatives push against existing relations in which members are embedded, offering an alternative type of interaction, usually centralized around economic interactions. On the second front, cooperatives demand cohesion, or solidifying of relations among and between members. The cooperative is not simply an aggregation of individuals, but emerges as something new and different based on the mechanisms and processes involved in its formation.

Before looking at the specific formations of cooperatives among the FSC/LAF, it is important to first examine the ideological framework that the FSC/LAF promotes through its trainings and facilitation of cooperative development. It does not impose this ideological order, nor is it a dominating force among the individual cooperatives. The ideological framework serves as a tool, a scaffolding, or recipe which rural residents and farmers can use to build their own cooperatives.

The FSC/LAF regularly holds cooperative development workshops at its Rural Training and Research Center (RTRC) at Epes, Alabama. This workshop was my first introduction to the FSC/LAF, in 2009. I attended again in 2010 and filmed many of the presentations. At the 2010 cooperative workshop, Mr. Zippert presented the basic organizing structure of the FSC/LAF (a cooperative of cooperatives) and outlined their fundamental understanding of cooperative development, based on years of working in the South.

On a large poster pad, Mr. Zippert wrote the words 'Organize, Educate, Pool Resources, and Take Action.' Under 'Take Action', he made three little bullet points: legal charter; business plan; do business. He explained to the workshop participants that the FSC/LAF has learned the first and most important step in cooperative development is to organize people together to identify what their common problem is, what is causing the problem, and how to solve it. Before people can work together, they need to see their problem as a collective problem, and understand the solution as a collective solution. He said this was often the most time consuming step but also the most essential. Closely tied with this step was education. People needed to understand what a cooperative is and why it is a possible solution to their problems.

This main point is foundational to the FSC/LAF's approach to building cooperatives, and rural development in general. The FSC/LAF sees development ultimately as a form of collective mobilization. But this collective mobilization cannot be imposed, and does not have a consistent form. The role of the FSC/LAF, and any development organizer for that matter, is to facilitate individuals in their process of identifying collective solutions and offering resources for implementing these.

Mr. Zippert continued to the third point: potential members need to pool their resources together. This action is necessary for two reasons. First, pooling resources and money together demonstrated a form of trust among potential members. If members do not trust each other with their wealth, the cooperative would not succeed. Second, the new cooperative would need to demonstrate to potential funders and lenders that it was worthy of investment. Only after these steps were sufficiently completed should potential cooperatives go ahead and charter their organization, establish a business plan, and begin conducting business.

This emphasis demonstrates the FSC/LAF's main concern. Rather than promoting, first and foremost, the cooperative as an institutional model, the FSC/LAF advocated for building cooperation. Before the institutional form could even serve its function, farmers, or rural residents need to understand why they face a common problem and why a collective effort would be an ideal solution. This initial effort has the potential to create a type of resilience against the possible problems due to institutional structures or specific purposes of the formal cooperative. But, most importantly, this indicates that an understanding of cooperatives developed through the FSC/LAF will not be found from evaluating the institutional form, but must focus on the process by which individuals come to understand the reason for a collective entity in the first place. These practices are part of the two regions of action: one working to gain access to the dominant system and the other working to create an independent alternative.

Filming as Practice

The films that I explore within this chapter portray events that were relevant to the cooperatives. For each film, I straddled the roles of observer, participant, and documentarian. The films used in this section follow an observational technique and have very little direct address or direction from the participants. Each event was an event that the cooperative wanted documented, but also that I wanted to explore through the camera as part of my research. I drew largely on participant practices, embedding myself into the flow of action, but also creating an additional practice that became part of social order: that of documenting the event. Filming therefore is both a method for better understanding the other practices that make up the cooperatives and a practice in itself-one that becomes implicated in the formation of cooperatives. In the first instance, film privileges a focus on embodied performances in the moment. In the second instance, as a filmmaker, I become part of the space of action as well, and from the point of a participant I gain a different type of access, as well as a contribution, to the formation of the cooperative.

This way of filming differs from the type of filming laid out in the previous chapter. In chapter four, my filming was used to engage with place-based narratives of different participants. The camera was an active audience for participants who mostly spoke direct to the camera. The narrative structure of their addresses interacted with the environment of the story-telling process, creating spatially embedded and spatially relevant narratives about concepts of place. In this chapter, the focus and style of filming has shifted. While participants are still aware of my presence, I am filming as another

practitioner among a set of practices that make up an event. The films are not focused on narratives, but upon the arrangements of people as they form their collective entities.

Practices lend themselves towards a filmic methodology over a linguistic methodology. While language can describe and delineate the perceived aspects of social practices and social interactions, film offers a different and unique form of knowledge production. Using film to understand the practices is a way to retain the focus on the embodied and tacit practices instead of translating and communicating these through textual means. This can help tease out the nuanced interaction between form, aesthetics, ideology, and practices.

For instance, David MacDougall's use of film in exploring the Doon School helped demonstrate the way that children were trained and disciplined into the idealized school subjects. Any of the specific elements, such as the clothes, the meal time rituals, the classroom practices, or group exercises cannot be assigned causal importance of creating the social order of the school. But each of these practices together reveals the social order of the school. In fact, many anthropologically informed films, for instance Melissa Lewelyn-Davies' Masai films, focus on significant practices that give meaning and order to social groups. This early and continuous fascination with visual documentations of rituals is not simply based on a fascination with the visual spectacle among diverse cultures, but also an anthropological investigation into practices that define, create, maintain, and transform social arrangements and social orders.

For MacDougall's work at Doon, power became one prominent theme. Power takes on an aesthetic quality through its use of representational forms and the performance of social interactions. In my research, the main effort was to understand

cooperation. Cooperation also takes on a specific aesthetic quality in the way the FSC/LAF represents cooperatives and in how members cooperate together. This involved forms that represented cooperation (meetings, voting in meetings) and the social relations that developed around issues of cooperation.

Filming is a means to not only observe and be present in these spaces, but also enter into them and become part of the process in order to know the process. Filming the social interactions changes the social production of the moment. By documenting the interactions, the collective boundaries become expanded to include non-present but assumed future audiences. Participants react to the fact of filming by adjusting words and behaviors to adapt to their anticipation that they are also communicating with an extended viewing community. Because of my collaborative relationship with the cooperatives I worked with, these imagined audiences included the cooperative itself, its extended relations with other local farmers and residents, and the FSC/LAF. Filming also created a document that could be evaluated and analyzed later by the cooperative members and myself. This created a second moment of social formation through the focus of social analysis and therefore was a reflexive moment for all of us.

Examples

In order to examine the process of cooperative development and the formation of cooperation, I chose three distinctive cooperatives as examples. These cooperatives have many overlapping qualities but distinct features, which offer a broader perspective on the FSC/LAF membership. Two of the cooperatives are from Mississippi, and one is from Alabama. The difference of a state line affects not only the legal formation of a

cooperative (states have their own rules for cooperative charters), but more importantly for this study, demonstrates a difference in the state operations of the FSC/LAF. Mississippi state offices have more staff, and receive more of their funding independent of the centralized FSC/LAF structure, thus creating a more robust outreach program. In turn, Mississippi has more member cooperatives.

I chose three farmer cooperatives that had similar goals but for different products. Although they shared similar goals of buying inputs in bulk, sharing equipment and knowledge, and selling in bulk, they are variously successful at these goals, largely perhaps because of their respective ages. The cooperatives range from one of the oldest to one of the newest members of the FSC/LAF. The oldest cooperative is more stable, and has developed an enduring vegetable processing plant. The middle cooperative was nearing the end of the initial project that brought farmers together- a heifer pass-on project. The success of this project had built momentum among the members, but they were now concerned with how to continue the cooperative. The newest cooperative had the largest ambitions, but during my research was struggling to build a cohesive collective. Each cooperative therefore represented a different stage of growth and development within the framework of a farming cooperative. They brought attention to the various issues at different stages and to the effect that working in different sectors had on their ability to create a collective entity.

I also chose these three cooperatives based on their willingness to participate in my project, which to some extent is also indicative of their success in becoming a collective entity. I met several cooperatives during my research, in both Alabama and Mississippi. Some individual members invited me to visit their farms and gave me filmed

tours. However, few of the other cooperatives wanted to be filmed during their collective moments, such as meetings, workshops, or social events. Several cited reasons such as member discord, low activity, or just general unease around cameras. These three cooperatives, however, were not only welcoming of my filming, but eagerly invited me to regularly film events and subsequently requested to review the footage and circulate footage among their membership. While on the one hand, this is a form of opportunistic selection, it also points to a similarity among these cooperatives that make them apt for this study. They all had collective events that were significant enough that they wanted their events to be filmed for their own analysis. Each cooperative was interested in my filming not simply to help my research, but because they also wanted to document and observe their collective efforts. This indicated that their collective efforts were succinct enough to have formed into something distinct from individual actions done in the name of a cooperative. There existed a collective, which was to some extent beyond the knowledge of an individual, and my presence, research, and filming helped them to understand what this collective was.

The newest, Southeastern Goat Cooperative of Alabama (SOGOCO), was officially formed during my fieldwork. As the name implies, this is a goat cooperative based in Alabama. The Alabama branch of the FSC/LAF at the Rural Training and Research Center (RTRC) supports them. The second cooperative, Attala County Self Help Cooperative is based in northern Mississippi and was formed in 2005. They started as a cattle cooperative supporting hay producers and initiating a heifer pass-on project. The Attala cooperative is connected to the Mississippi Association of Cooperatives (MAC), the Mississippi branch of the FSC/LAF. The Indian Springs Farmers

Association, located outside of Petal, MS, is one of the oldest cooperatives of MAC. This is the home cooperative of Mr. Ben Burkett, the director of MAC, and his daughter Darnella Winston-Burkett, a MAC employee. Both are also farmers. Indian Springs cooperative focuses on vegetable producers. It has a processing and storage shed through which members can package and sell their produce. All of the cooperatives are integrated into the FSC/LAF network. Each cooperative has a FSC/LAF organizer as a key facilitator or member. This serves as a tie, first to the state association (Alabama and Mississippi) and then to the regional organization of the FSC/LAF. This tie is a conduit for information about programs, grants, new techniques, and events. Furthermore, at least one member, and sometimes several members, of each cooperative have attended cooperative trainings by the FSC/LAF. Therefore, the cooperatives share a similar fundamental framework for understanding the purpose, role, and organizational structure of cooperatives.

For each cooperative I begin by providing a brief history. Each cooperative has formed around different issues, for different purposes, and within different circumstances. The ecological, social, and political contexts shape the way the cooperative emerges and services its membership. Next I look at the main issues emerging during select cooperative meetings that I attended during my fieldwork. Meetings of the members are part of the formal structure of cooperatives taught by the FSC/LAF. The practice of holding a meeting itself gives form and meaning to the cooperative. The meetings are a space for the members to discuss and decide on the operating structure, goals, roles, and duties and offer avenues for resolving inevitable conflicts. Finally, I look at a short film that I produced from a key social practice that

served the process of cooperative formation. Although I provide a brief description of the event, the film itself offers insight into the ways in which members engage in cooperative development. These are glimpses into the process that is a cooperative. The cooperative is not an entity, but it exists and can only be found through the actions and practices that manifest it. The practices themselves rely on the material relations of the group, a shared ideology, and collective consciousness. Each of these components is both formed by and forms the ongoing practices that give rise to the cooperative. Their use, function, and balance vary for each cooperative. Such variation demonstrates that cooperatives are constantly adapting to the changing contextual circumstances, such as shifting membership, changing markets, or added resources. At the same time, a similar ideological stream traces through the different cooperatives. Despite their variation, each aims to produce a sense of collective cooperation in order to create better livelihoods for black farmers.

The Southeastern Goat Cooperative of Alabama

Film 16: Goat Workshop https://vimeo.com/112238967/cb70dc20e3

The Southeastern Goat Cooperative of Alabama, or SOGOCO, was formed during my fieldwork in 2011. The seeds of SOGOCO were planted six years earlier. SOGOCO was built to support the growing number of smallholding farmers in Alabama who were turning to goat production to revitalize their land and expand their farm enterprises. Goat production has been increasingly promoted as ideal for small farmers by several agricultural institutions in the southern US, including land-grant universities and USDA agencies. The logic behind this push for goats is based on the fact that goats, unlike cattle, adapt to mixed landscapes (trees and grasses) and graze on smaller acreages. Also, unlike grains or vegetable crops, goats can tolerate hilly and rocky land. Additionally, there is an increasing demand for goat meat in the US, but a limited amount of local production. Most US consumed goat meat is shipped in frozen from Australia and New Zealand creating a ripe opportunity for local farmers to offer a locally produced and fresh

alternative. Part of SOGOCO's goal is to capitalize on this opportunity by taking advantage of the institutional support and tapping into this new and potential market.

In order to promote goat production among smallholding farmers, agricultural universities, such as Tuskegee and Auburn have been holding goat production workshops, conducting research on goat raising, and supporting farmers through offering technical services, veterinary services, and husbandry trainings. Additionally, the USDA has offered cost share programs for goat fencing, sheds, and water troughs. The FSC/LAF staff in Epes, AL, has been coordinating with these efforts by providing demonstration plots on their premises for research, hosting goat workshops, providing goat pass-on programs, working with individual farmers interested in goat production, and supporting the development of a goat cooperative among the local farmers.

Six years earlier the Epes staff held several meetings for beginning or prospective goat farmers and offered cooperative training. However, these early efforts did not result in the creation of a cooperative. Organizers mentioned that there were tensions between different farmers and groups, and a splinter group broke off to organize separately. The reasons for this splinter are vague, but staff members mentioned that internal conflicts developed over ideological differences in cooperative principles and possible racial tensions. Meanwhile, the FSC/LAF continued to work with land-grant universities and the USDA to provide trainings and support for farmers interested in producing goats.

The driving force behind the new effort for a cooperative was a goat farmer named Mr. Samuel Fairley. The FSC/LAF insists that the farmers or rural residents themselves become the key organizers of cooperatives. Although they offer support and training, they want cooperatives to be owned and directed by the members themselves. In

2011 Mr. Fairley decided to work with the FSC/LAF to finally create the goat cooperative that had initially been planned. FSC/LAF field staff at Alabama drew together the new, emerging, and interested goat farmers to form the Southeastern Goat Cooperative of Alabama. The FSC/LAF helped them establish their official charter, register their coop, assign officers, and hold meetings. Additionally, the FSC/LAF helped with funding their travel to events and workshops to learn more about goat raising techniques and practices.

Some of the characteristics of SOGOCO posed more potential obstacles than other cooperatives I interacted with during my fieldwork. First, SOGOCO members were geographically spread out, and not previously connected through other communal networks. Other cooperatives were formed based on geographical location, or by members who were associated through churches, schools, or other social organizations. These previous associations provided a base for members to know and trust each other. SOGOCO members had to newly build this trust and familiarity. Additionally, being geographically dispersed imposed a financial burden on the farmers both through the cost of gas and the time required for the commute to a central meeting place.

However, the bigger obstacle for SOGOCO was the nature of the goat industry. SOGOCO members had spent time researching the goat industry, and understood that there existed a large goat market in the US that currently relied on frozen, imported goat meat. These consumers resided in Southern areas, with a large concentration in Texas and a growing concentration in Georgia. Therefore, the Alabama goat farmers could possibly offer a superior product of fresh and "local" goat meat. The problem, however, was the process of turning goats in the field to a product that could be sold in stores and across

state lines. Retail meat must be processed in a USDA approved processing plant under the inspection of USDA agents. This is a costly process and requires a large quantity of animals to make the costs worthwhile. There are a few USDA approved processing plants in Alabama, but using an outside processor diminishes the possible profit in selling goats.

Many of the goat farmers sold whole goats off their farm. But this technique of selling only brought in a limited number of customers and a limited price (on an average, $70-$100 per goat). This barely offset any possible inputs, depending on the quality of grazing land for the farmer. One of SOGOCO's goals was to own its own processing plant, but such an endeavor required both a large amount of capital and a guaranteed flow of goats to justify the costs. In part, then, SOGOCO aimed to build up the herds of the small farmers in the area in hopes of developing a constant supply of goats. In the meantime, SOGOCO members were assessing the costs and benefits of using existing processing plants to create goat sausage with their branded cooperative label to start putting in grocery stores. These factors led to a tension within the cooperative, between building the productivity of individual farms and strengthening the collective efforts, branding, and practices of the cooperative. Both efforts were seen as necessary, but the members differed in what should be the cooperative's main priorities, and the pace at which the cooperative could realistically grow. In particular, some cooperative members wanted members to give at least two of their individual goats to the cooperative as a form of investment. These collectively owned goats, when sold, would benefit the original owner but the offspring would benefit the cooperative. Collective ownership would increase the cooperative's potential for mass processing.

Meetings

As a very new cooperative, the main foci at SOGOCO meetings were defining a vision for the group, creating clear actionable steps, and outlining the relationship and roles among the farmers and the FSC/LAF staff in Epes. SOGOCO had two goals: to serve its members as a buying cooperative in order to receive reduced prices for goat inputs, and to serve as a marketing cooperative for goat meat. Buying inputs collectively in bulk is a common practice among the FSC/LAF cooperatives. Even before SOGOCO was formally a cooperative, the members were pooling together to purchase goat inputs. Over time they saw more ways to utilize their collective buying power. For instance, the USDA programs that support goat infrastructure, such as fences, sheds, and water troughs, are based on refunds, not up front grants. SOGOCO members were using their collective potential to find better loan options for the initial payment of these services. They also were able to negotiate with local builders in this area who were willing to defer payment until the USDA refunds were paid to the farmers. The goal of selling collectively was most strongly spearheaded by Mr. Fairley, the president of SOGOCO. But many of the members did not have access to customers who would even buy off their farms, and did not have the means to transport goats to processing plants in order to create packaged goat meat. Therefore, without a collective endeavor, many would not be able to sell their goats. Eventually members wanted to be able to sell processed meat with their own label, and maybe even invest in a processing plant. But in order to attain these long-term goals, the group had to help each individual farmer develop her/his own goat production and they needed to create the collective entity through which to take on these larger tasks.

The SOGOCO meetings were a space for members to discuss their visions for their cooperative, for FSC/LAF organizers to help educate members on cooperative principles and formal and legal requirements, and for members to discuss possible grants and projects. SOGOCO members wanted to apply for grants to help them begin to organize and create their cooperative enterprise. These funds could be used for educational purposes, marketing, or to offset costs from inputs or processing. Some of the members wanted to create a website to start marketing their goats right away. Others wanted to focus on building each farmer's own herd, and streamlining the processing of goat meat first. Many debates grew around these issues, especially the issue of a website. The farmers were split on whether or not they thought it would be useful to their productivity in the immediate term. This issue was also tied to a discussion around raising the annual dues by $10. The reason for the increase was to generally fund the cooperative, and specifically the website. Many members were opposed since they not see the immediate need for the website, and did not want to simply pay more to the cooperative without a clear plan.

As the membership of SOGOCO grew, tensions emerged over the vision and future of the cooperative. Mr. Fairley invited a friend and fellow veteran, who had no experience farming but claimed to have some background in business and finance, to become a member of SOGOCO. This newcomer saw SOGOCO as having the potential to make money, and therefore volunteered his time towards the organization. He himself was in need of financial stability, and a project to work on. His vision for the future of SOGOCO required an investment of goats and money from the other members. The idea was a grand marketing scheme, based on idealized possible sales, and guaranteed rapid

growth of goats. He was adamant and persistent about his idea, declaring that if the others were not interested in making money, he would take SOGOCO and his idea and make the money himself. The FSC/LAF organizers, however, insisted on the cooperative principles of democracy and fairness for all members. Tensions grew as this man became more involved, and the reasons were numerous. On the one hand, this outsider was an aggressive, white, male non-farmer. The women rarely spoke at the meetings, except for Pam, who is FSC/LAF staff. But the women had opinions, and would discuss these with me at other times, and would discuss them with their husbands or with the FSC/LAF staff.

Race was also a possible factor, but not the only factor causing friction. Another long time member of SOGOCO was white, which had never led to previous tensions of frictions. But this newcomer exasperated his differences, positioning himself as financially smarter than the rest of the membership. Other members told me that the first time they met him he wore a suit to their meeting. The suit served as a symbol for the rest of the membership. Additionally, the newcomer spoke in a condescending manner to the rest of the membership and accused them of being slow and lazy. Many did not agree with the newcomer's vision, both for economic and animal husbandry reasons.

The tensions of the SOGOCO meetings were not unusual on their own, but the fragmentation between the membership and the diversity of identities and positions, combined with the lack of previous or external connections, exasperated the tensions. The issues they were discussing were common and necessary for any growing establishment. As the organization grew, it was important for the members to lay out a clear path, understand their financial plans and commitments, and prioritize goals. One of the main

needs for SOGOCO was to build the trust and collective consciousness that was present in some of the other cooperatives, and help facilitate members through difficult decisions.

During one of the more tense meetings, I happened to have previous video footage that I wanted to share with the group from the field trip to the meat processing plant. This footage was taken very early in the formation of SOGOCO. After the tour of the processing plant, each member of SOGOCO spoke to the camera to express their reasons for participating and their goals for SOGOCO. After screening the footage, many of the members remarked that it was good to remember their original vision and mission, and why they had come together in the first place. This was a small reflection, but the video served, in a very minor way, to create a type of origin for the group, a foundation upon which to ideologically build their collective identity.

The SOGOCO meetings remained tense for many months throughout my research. Members debated over what the cooperative should do as a group, and how it should raise money to do so. The FSC/LAF staff struggled with how involved they should be, and how to encourage members to take on some of the administrative tasks often fulfilled by FSC/LAF staff. These struggles were not anomalies, but matched with precisely the work that Mr. Zippert had explained during the FSC/LAF's cooperative training. SOGOCO members were in the process of identifying how a collective solution might serve their needs, and how a cooperative might be an ideal form through which to address their concerns.

The practices involved in shaping the meetings, from the opening prayer, call to order, reading of the minutes and voting on key issues, structured how these tensions were brought to the fore, negotiated, and shaped the direction of the cooperative. It is not

that meetings are essential to cooperative formation, but in this case, the meetings were a means by which the social order could come to fruition. Even my participation, and the practice of my filming, became part of the production of a social order.

Workshops

The first weekend after Thanksgiving Mr. Fairley invited SOGOCO members, FSC/LAF staff, family, friends, and neighbors to attend a workshop on his farm. His goal was to make this an annual event, expanding every year until this becomes a stable anchor for the growing collective of goat producers. The workshop started in the recreational room off of the small church across from Mr. Fairley's farm. Mr. Fairley's farm is surrounded by other people's property, and the only road to his place is a rough dirt road that is only passable in pick-up trucks or ATVs. Therefore, the nearby church was a convenient meeting point. The session began with a prayer. Prayers began and ended nearly all events I attended, and revealed a nearly true assumption that all present shared a Christian affiliation. They served as a reminder to those present of their connection to a larger purpose and larger ideology, and often encouraged those present to use their commitment to a higher power as a reason to build and commit to a collective effort. After the prayer, Mr. Fairley asked participants to stand up, introduce themselves, and discuss if they had any goats or were interested in getting goats. This icebreaker was aimed at building intimacy among the participants. In part, this activity instigated discussion among participants. A light breakfast of drinks and pastries was also served, further building a sense of social engagement into the workshop.

Next, the FSC/LAF field staff from Epes offered a series of presentations on goat health and rearing in general, the possibilities of combining goats with timber production or crop growth, and the basics of cooperative development and organization including the cooperative organizational structure of the FSC/LAF. All of the FSC/LAF staff emphasized their willingness and availability to assist farmers with whatever their needs were, including helping develop a business plan for their farms, learn about and apply for grants, and build and develop their cooperative. Most of these presentations consisted of slides filled with technical information and specific agricultural or cooperative principles. The presentations were long and detailed, offered to a room full of people who were at various levels in the goat production, and none of who had note-taking tools. Audience members asked specific goat related questions, most of which were answered by Mr. Chavez, a goat farmer who has been in the business nearly 15 years and has become a local expert. Called Mr. Blackie by all who new him, Mr. Chavez was the only other white person present besides me, a point that was joked about during conversations referring to the group as "black farmers."

After the opening presentations, Mr. Fairley arranged rides to his farm. On his farm the participants spent time learning how to identify different breeds of goats, how to determine age, and how to examine the general health of male and female goats. Mr. Chavez facilitated most of the training. Along with basic identification, Mr. Chavez facilitated hands on training for the participants. He set up the goats to have their hooves trimmed and invited the participants to come and trying trimming. In general, he demonstrated how to handle, capture, tie up, and examine goats. Later, Mr. Fairley brought out one of his goats that had grown a cyst. Mr. Chavez demonstrated how to

drain the cyst safely. The participants observed the large amount of puss that oozed out of the drained wound, and commented on the smell of the secretion. Mr. Chavez commented that despite its foulness, the smell was a good sign that the cyst was simply an infection and would heal normally.

This type of on-farm training enabled a sensory, tacit, and embodied form of knowledge accumulation. Although the workshop began with a didactic form of education, the majority of the time, and in fact the core of the workshop, was spent on Mr. Fairley's farm during which participants handled, observed, and experienced the goats. Many of the participants had already or were in the process of purchasing goats and therefore were invested in learning a set of skills that would help them successfully raise and care for their goats. But the participants also brought along their children, who similarly were encouraged to touch, examine, and learn about the goats. Exposing the youth in this manner was a way to encourage general familiarity with farming practices.

The workshop also reinforced the symbolic markers of a "good farmer." Mr. Chavez continually commented that Mr. Fairley was doing well and had learned to be a good farmer. These comments were meant to encourage the others to emulate Mr. Fairley's efforts. Being a good farmer was not strictly about productivity, although this was included; the aesthetics of the goats and Mr. Fairley's farm also played a significant role. Being a good farmer also meant social recognition and validation as a farmer. For smallholding farmers, and especially for farmers breaking into a new business, such as goat farming, receiving this sort of validation was more difficult. Within the group, productive efforts, such as the growth of Mr. Fairley's herd, provided some form of validity as a good farmer.

During the workshop, many of the farmers also spent time questioning one of the FSC/LAF staff about the process of applying for USDA sponsored programs. A few farmers had difficulty at different USDA county offices and wanted advice on how to get fair treatment and how to best get what they needed. The FSC/LAF had been able to facilitate past difficulties African American farmers faced by bringing the issue to higher levels within the USDA. Their position, as a regional institution with the ability to communicate even to the D.C. offices of the USDA gave the FSC/LAF staff on the ground credibility and force when negotiating on behalf of African American farmers.

The barriers to resources, however, were not simply an overt form of racism (although this was still present within some county offices), but a lack of understanding of the process by which to apply, and the rules by which they could be denied. The FSC/LAF staff, therefore, worked with farmers individually and explained the process of application for different programs, grants, and loans. They also followed up with farmers to investigate why they were denied from programs or received less than expected. The problem was ultimately an issue of communication. The paper work and instructions (which were often posted online, another barrier for a population lacking regular internet access) were written in a manner often incomprehensible to farmers, and particularly African American farmers. This issue was exasperated when county agents failed to thoroughly explain procedures to farmers, or when they used detailed regulatory procedures to deny access, without full explanations. Spaces such as the goat workshop offered a chance for farmers to better understand the overall dynamics at play and to collectively better understand the continuing issues African American farmers faced.

The workshop concluded back at the church with another meal, prayer, and stories. The prayers, meals, stories, and introductions all facilitated a collective and social connection between the participants, working to bring together individual farmers and build on their shared customs and cultural norms. Discussions on the structural barriers black farmers faced also framed these as collective issues, and blended the technical aspects of goat farming with the political-economic realities. As Mr. Fairley hoped, he has continued to hold similar workshops on his property.

The workshop offered a chance to build the cooperative through engaged practices and shared experiences and knowledge. The filmed material offers insight into the interactions between the participants and their involvement in this type of learning activity. I show only the portion of the workshop that took place in the field. This was the most interactive portion of the workshop, and demonstrated the goal of the cooperative: to create a collectivity through training others in shared practices. The workshop was a place for the participants to align and cultivate their embodied and experiential knowledge related to goat rearing. While not all of the participants were SOGOCO members, the workshop represents SOGOCO's goal to cultivate local goat farmers and bring them together as a collective entity. This collectivity requires partly the educational portion that happened before the workshop. But in order to weave together individuals, the hands-on educational portion served as a visible, embodied, and engaged form of performing collective practices. Because of SOGOCOs goal on cultivating farmers, the workshop is an anchoring practice that gives meaning and context to the cooperative. And, as Mr. Fairley had hoped, he has continued to hold similar workshops on his property since this first one.

The practices that SOGOCO utilized to build its collective differed from the other two examples discussed below. In part, this was because of SOGOCO's relative newness. The cooperative was not yet established, and the goat operations of its members were still being formed as well. The members did not all know each other previously, and membership was still being solicited. Therefore, the workshop served to teach individual farmers about goat farming, become a regular event within the cooperative, and familiarize individual members with each other. The hope was that this set of practices would secure membership within the cooperative and commitment to goat farming.

Attala County Self-Help Cooperative

Film 17: Pass-on Day https://vimeo.com/139879226/db53d478be

Attala County lies just outside of the Mississippi Delta- a region known for its plantation economy. Attala consists of diverse landscapes, some more conducive to growing commodity row crops than others. This has created a pattern of land ownership and residency based on race. African Americans had better luck buying and retaining land that was hillier with poorer soil. Because of this, many African Americans grew few or modest commodity crops and focused instead on cattle, hay production, and timber along with food crops for consumption. The current cooperative members typically have land with poorer soils and tend to focus on livestock, specifically cattle breeding and rearing.

African Americans living in rural Attala County have faced ongoing poverty, lower education, and lower health standards. Mr. Fleming, one of the founders and president of Attala County Self-Help Cooperative (hereon referred to as Attala Co-op) has been actively working to remedy some of the persistent issues facing rural residents in Attala County, working primarily as a school teacher and later getting involved in education and local politics as ways to promote local entrepreneurship and overall economic development. Mississippi in general focuses less attention at local level economic development, and has instead tried to remedy its impoverished population through large schemes such as legalizing gambling and enticing large manufacturing companies, such as Nissan, to locate in Mississippi in exchange for tax incentives. Mr. Fleming, on the other hand, considers the best road to economic development for rural residents in Attala county, and rural Mississippi at large, to be through building up locally owned businesses. His goals are not to create massive solutions, but to build modest wealth at a local level.

Therefore, as Mr. Fleming became involved with MAC, the Mississippi division of the FSC, he turned to the idea of developing an agricultural cooperative in order to help rural residents build up their farm enterprises and take advantage of already existing land holdings. Many African Americans in the area own land that they do not farm due to lack of capital investments, time, or knowledge. And, some are not maximizing their land holdings. Additionally many of the youth have been leaving the area, abandoning farming, rural life, and the South for better opportunities elsewhere. The cooperative could possibly be a solution to help farmers and landholders build up their agricultural enterprises, teach youth about agriculture, and provide a base from which the population could begin to develop.

The initial goal of the cooperative was to buy chicken manure at a discounted price. Many cattle farmers grow hay and grasses in order to provide feed for their cattle, or to sell to other cattle farmers. As a cooperative, the members could buy chicken manure, a natural, sustainable, and very effective fertilizer, at a wholesale price and provide it to members at a substantially discounted price. Additionally they chose to sell extra fertilizer to non-members, at a slightly higher price. One problem that emerged was members' commitment to buying fertilizer only from the cooperative. Individual members did not always buy from the co-op, or sometimes bought only part of their needed fertilizer from the co-op. While this may have been a good individual strategy for finding the best quality at the lowest price and the best delivery system, without commitment and loyalty from the members, the cooperative would potentially lose money. Unlike commercial businesses that anticipate a large customer base and generic need, the cooperative developed its enterprises based on specific members' needs and

estimated member use. This is in fact an inherent problem within cooperatives. Service cooperatives and buying cooperatives that attempt to thwart the exploitations and fluctuations of a market economy rely on commitment from members, so that when the market prices shift in favor of the consumers, the cooperative is not abandoned. But such commitment is difficult to enforce. Cooperatives are voluntary and democratically controlled. A sense of collective obligation is needed to overcome individualized strategies. This dilemma also points to the inherent tension of a cooperative as a strategy within the dominant system, and as an alternative to the system. As a strategy for access to and competition with the current dominant system, individual strategies should in fact be supported over and above sustaining the cooperative itself. However, if the goal is to develop an alternative institutional form, then sustaining the cooperative takes precedence over individual needs. Among the cooperatives I visited, including Attala, neither goal is ever fully dominant, but the cooperative operates within this tension, constantly negotiating between these two goals. But these are not the only goals or purposes for a cooperative to exist. The cooperative serves other, social, and communal purposes, as discussed below.

The cooperative also organized to apply for a Heifer International grant. This grant provided some initial heifers, which were then used to implement a heifer pass-on project. Individual members would receive five heifers that they would keep as their own. As their heifers bred other heifers, they would raise the new calves until they were old enough to breed, and then pass on a bred heifer to another cooperative member, until they had passed on a total of five new heifers. This scheme was designed to increase all members' cattle herds and initiate the beginnings of capital development. The pass-on

project helped many farmers initiate, replenish, or revitalize their cattle operations. Problems emerged through the process. Individual members had to deal with issues of cattle death, infertile heifers, and variable quality among heifers. The cooperative developed a cattle board to oversee disputes concerning cattle within the co-op. Nonetheless, disputes still existed, at times resulting in heated arguments. Many times, however, the decision of the board was able to assuage most of the conflicts. The larger principle of democracy and fairness of the cooperative, adopted from the FSC/LAF and MAC general training in cooperative development, facilitated the commitment to a form of due diligence and collective decision making to which members would at times submit to over their own individual desires. Additionally, many of the members knew each other before joining the cooperative, and had external reasons to resolve disputes and maintain good relationships within the cooperative.

Along with these practical goals, many members of the cooperative also expressed a desire to build social and communal ties through the cooperative. They spoke nostalgically of a past in which rural residents were connected through a sense of community, had a common goal, purpose, and identity and in which youth were taught the basic principles of farm life. The cooperative hosted several social events, and turned many workshops into social events, as moments of creating a community. Many of the events were open to residents within the vicinity, and not limited to cooperative members, thus building ties extending beyond the cooperative and embedding the cooperative into the fabric of the local residents. At several events, organizers would nostalgically reference a past towards which they were trying to return, and sense of a once lived harmony in "that great circle called life" (Teague, 2012). This was mentioned

during speeches, and in informal conversations. Therefore cooperative events served to rhetorically express the desired image of what a collective entity should be, and evoke an imaginary on which to base the present actions. The gatherings, the speeches, shared meals, and celebrated holidays all helped to support these visions and give them manifest ways to exist. These moments brought together members to create a collective understanding of the cooperative, work out values, goals, and principles, and exist as a collective within that moment. Some of these events became moments that I filmed, others that I attended.

For the organizers of the co-op, attracting youth to participate in farming is a significant goal. Currently, one of their youth members was the first to complete his pass-on project — passing on to other farmers five new heifers from his growing herd. This young man is now at college, and his family proudly maintains his herd. For the co-op, farming has to be taught through practice, and youth need to have the experiences to appreciate the hard-work, skill, and knowledge involved in farming. Cooperative organizers wanted to entice the youth in order to strengthen the community and ensure its continuation. For the cooperative members, farming is a form of freedom, and continuing to build and reside in the rural communities is a desirable goal for farmers. Yet education and mobility are also values and forms of freedom. By teaching the youth the practice of agriculture, and encouraging them to go off to college, the cooperative can strengthen both of these goals. The practice of farming is more than just an occupation; it is a valuable form of practical knowledge. The material and ideological are merged through embodied, or kinesthetic, knowledge.

Each of these goals becomes a collective goal through the practices by which they are expressed. The practices that shaped the cooperative as a collective entity included the social events, the agricultural workshops and gatherings, and the cooperative meetings. The inherent tensions of a cooperative are negotiated within these spaces, never stably or finally resolved, but always as part of the ongoing process.

Meetings

The cooperative members were residents of Attala County and mostly knew each other before joining the cooperative. They had largely grown up together, and many had attended the same high school. Several of the members admitted that the main reason they joined the cooperative initially was not for the benefits of the organization, but because Mr. Fleming had asked. They respected Mr. Fleming, many of them knew him and his family from their childhoods, and they knew him as a member and teacher in the community. These communal ties connected the members even beyond the practical goals of the cooperative. The majority of the members had inherited land that they were trying to revitalize, or an agricultural practice they were trying to improve. Some had moved away from farming in order to find work. For some this meant living on a farm but working off-farm. Others had moved out of the rural South for work, but had returned after retirement. Those that moved back had bought land upon which they now farmed.

Attala cooperative meetings were spaces for dealing with multiple organizational and operational issues of the cooperative. One important issue that emerged during meetings was the functioning of sub-groups of the cooperatives. The cooperative had earned a grant for heifers, which resulted in a collectively owned resource to which

multiple members felt entitled. Issues of quality or death of a heifer were decided by the cattle board, a sub-group of the cooperative. The governing function of these sub-groups served an important role in providing solutions for various conflicts. But nonetheless, conflicts erupted, sometimes more expressively than others. At one meeting in particular, the members debated passionately over a specific incident between farmers, in which one member had received an infertile heifer. The debaters on both side argued for fairness and equity between the members. Ultimately, the president and rest of the members left the decision to the cattle board, and stated that they would hold that decision as final. The members later became deeply apologetic that I had to experience the tensions and conflict. They expressed their regret that I might have been uncomfortable witnessing their arguments. These moments, however, were no different from what I saw in other cooperatives. The imagined functioning of a cooperative, as a harmonious collective, was far from the reality. Collective formation is a rough and constant negotiation, and these meetings were practices through which this negotiation took place. But the group's concern over being as amicable as possible, towards each other and for my sake, demonstrated a commitment towards group cohesion and communal relations. This sentiment was repeated in other places as well, when members would reference other tensions that had emerged, arguments I was not privy to, for which they were trying to resolve and move forward as a united group.

The cooperative also had a subgroup for growing vegetables and raising goats. For vegetables, they helped members connect with USDA programs that provided grants for hoop houses, and connected members to local farmers markets. Several cooperative members identified this as the key purpose of the cooperative: to gain information about

programs and about markets. The cooperative also served as a grant receiving entity. As individuals, farmers were only eligible for certain types of grants and programs. As a cooperative they could apply for further funds. Specifically, the Attala cooperative applied for resources to start a goat demonstration plot, and to purchase a collectively owned tractor that could be used for hay and grass production. During my fieldwork the cooperative successfully received funding to buy a tractor. Once the funding was secured, the group had to decide, during its meetings, what type of tractor to buy, from where, and at what price point. They could add their own money in order to purchase a higher quality tractor, or only use the external funding and purchase a lower quality tractor. And this was only the beginning of the collective decisions. By the end of my fieldwork, the members were still attempting to determine a fair schedule for use of the tractor. Because of the large size of the cooperative, and the limited ideal timings for agricultural processes, developing a fair and equal schedule of use was a daunting task. Additionally, clauses had to be developed in case of accidents or machine damage. Further, the cooperative wanted to establish a rental fee for non-members as a way to continue to bring in enough income to cover potential costs related to the tractor.

Meetings were thus spaces within which the collective could negotiate key decisions and strategies for the cooperative. But these spaces also served to reinforce their collective commitment, despite the tensions that might arise over disagreements. Additionally, meetings were spaces of social engagements and constant reminders of the ties between the members.

Pass-on Day

One of the events I filmed with the Attala cooperative was a pass-on event. The cooperative members that were giving or receiving a heifer gathered to pass-on the designated cows. This event was accompanied by opening speeches and prayers, followed by the actual sorting and gathering of heifers, and a social lunch. Events like these are moments when the collective comes into being, is chosen, and formed. Past iterations, identities, and external and material factors all limit and shape the collective that comes into being. But these moments give expression to what the cooperative is.

Mr. Fleming, president of the cooperative, gave the first opening speech. Mr. Fleming began by expressing that this is a historic day, since on this day the first of their members has given his fifth pass-on heifer, thus completing his pass-on obligations. The completing member is also one of the youth members, which ties together two of the cooperatives goals. Not only did the pass-on project enhance a farm operation, but also involved a youth in agriculture. The youth himself, however, was not present since he was studying abroad as part of his college program. Even as the cooperative pushed for youth to become involved and learn about the farm, they also wanted their youth to pursue outside goals that would take them away, such as college, jobs, and opportunities abroad. The hope was that on-farm knowledge would provide a long-term connection and continuation of generational knowledge that would not be severed by travel and mobility.

After Mr. Fleming's opening remarks, one of the local ministers gave a prayer. Prayer marked nearly all activities of the farmers, cooperatives, MAC, and FSC/LAF. Prayer became a way to solidify and acknowledge commonly held beliefs, even in circumstances in which the beliefs were not perfectly held in common. During this

particular prayer, the fact that the cooperative members did not always agree was brought up, and the prayer sought guidance from God for the members to find their way through the disagreements. Also, the prayer sought to honor and acknowledge the role of the cooperative leaders, especially Mr. Fleming. The public performance of the prayer served multiple purposes. It acknowledged and provided a divine orientation for the members to which they should adhere to above their own personal desires or agendas. Part of this divine orientation included finding peace and commonality among the cooperative members, despite the disputes. The public airing that such disputes existed acknowledged members' grievances, while also moving away from addressing them individually to collectively. The goal was not to mediate between individuals, but to encourage all members to seek compromise for the sake of peace, since disputes disrupt the collective movement of the cooperative. Further, even though the cooperative was built on a foundation of democracy, the acknowledgement of the leaders' tireless efforts and work acknowledged that there should be some adherence from the members to the best judgment of the leaders, and that the only way for the organization to work was to support those that were willing to put in the time and effort to lead.

Following the prayer, a member of the completing youth member's family spoke on behalf of all the current heifer donors. While he was very proud of the youth, he emphasized that it was really the larger extended family that kept up the work in order to allow the youth to participate in the program and be able to go off to college and study abroad. All of these activities combined require the input of time, labor, and land from the larger family. Even individual farm enterprises are collective efforts, requiring the family to work together as a team and take on responsibilities when other family

members could not. Further, he emphasized that the heifers were in good condition and that he hoped the recipients would treat the heifers as well as they did. Finally, he again re-emphasized his owing and gratefulness to God as the source of all prosperity. After him, one of the recipients spoke, again emphasizing his hope in the good quality of the heifers, and his promise to treat the heifers better even than himself. These public proclamations on quality allude to the underlying tensions around quality issues in the cattle, and emphasize that despite tensions, each side is intending the best, at least publicly. Finally the hostess whose farm was the site of the pass-on officially welcomed everyone and also gave her thanks and praise to God.

After the opening speeches, the pass-on continued. To make it "fair," all the heifers that were to be passed-on were collected in a corral. The recipient order was pre-given and they received their designated heifers in the order they happen to enter into the chute. Each transaction was recorded, and heifers without an identification tag were given one. The whole process required multiple people coordinating the trailers to drop off the cows, wranglers to herd the cows, additional people to handle the fences, guide the heifers through the chutes, keep them from retreating, tagging them, and loading them into the recipients' trailers. These activities involved an embodied knowledge of handling machines and animals, and a style and pride involved with this knowledge.

These activities were repetitive, yet each iteration had its own unique qualities. The specificities of each trailer required a different approach to aligning the open trailer to the open gate. One group of men helped drivers back their trailers up to the gates, while another group of men helped align the gates and herd the heifers into (or out of) the

open trailer. Many of the men were younger, and less familiar with working in this manner. Older men shouted and cajoled them to perform their actions properly.

Another group of men, and the hostess, helped to wrangle the cattle and herd them through a chute. The chute was narrow enough to force the cattle to stand in single file, but these rather agile animals could turn and retreat if spooked. So as the heifers rushed through the chutes, the young men helping with gates rushed to place metal bars behind each of the heifers. This prevented them turning around or rearing up. But each heifer had its own personality, and so this action shifted for each heifer down the chute. Additionally, different farmers were receiving different numbers of heifers, so that the group of men had to variably secure one, two, or three heifers.

While the heifers were in the chute, Mrs. Fleming recorded the donor, recipient, tag number, and number of months bred of each heifer. Cows without an ear tag needed to receive one. In order to do this, one of the young farmers, a man who proved himself to be quite skilled working with cattle, would trap the heifer in a headlock at the end of the gate. This contraption served both as a lock for holding cows in place, and a one-way gate for loading cattle into trailers. Once secured, the man then pierced the ear of the heifer with an ear tag.

When the heifers were ready, they were loaded onto the recipient's trailer. But the well-designed one-way door of the chute did not fit many of the trailers, so the cattle were released into the open coral and wrangled into the trailer. This action too had complications. In one instance, a young calf got loose, and one of the farmers tackled it. This action brought on cheers from the crowd.

Each of these practices was performed as a collective. The flow of movement required coordination among the men at each stage of the process. These practices were also public, carried out under the watch of a crowd. This shifted the nature of the practices. They were more than simply utilitarian. The practices communicated an identity of "good farmer" and by doing so reinforced or encouraged pride in being able to perform these practices correctly. They align with Schatzki's concepts of social practices, which give rise to social orders. Each practice was known and recognized, and enacted under a set of rules and guidelines. Additionally, the practices had an affective overlay for individuals, and were spurred on by the reactions from the crowd. As a whole, the practices reinforce the sense of collective identity cultivated within the cooperative.

The pass-on event ended with another prayer, a group photo, and a lunch provided by the hostess. Each of these acts again reinforced the collective ties and significance of the day. Many of the participants stayed, ate, and lounged in the yard; their cows were safely packed in trailers waiting to go home. During this time, the key organizers of Attala County Cooperative also spoke to me on camera, making sure I had captured the important details.

Unlike SOGOCO, Attala members had already existing relationships between them, and had already formed the structures and commitments of their cooperative. Events like the pass-on exchange were used both to practically continue the utilitarian goals of the cooperative, but even more so, served as a social, performative, and communal event through which members engaged in demonstrating farm practices and solidifying their connections. The event was a reinforcement of the bonds that already existed, and a reminder to the group of the commitment they all needed to make to the

collective in order to succeed as an organization. This differed also from the events around Indian Springs Farmers Association, which was older, more stable materially, and therefore did not draw on the same sort of affectively binding practices.

Indian Spring Farmers' Association

Film 18: Vegetable Processing https://vimeo.com/122187866/266161f36f

The Indian Springs Farmers Association emerged during a time of racial strife and followed the pattern of a growing number of farmer cooperatives finding success in the South. Indian Springs began in 1966 based on a $250 grant from the Office of Economic Opportunity. The cooperative became formally incorporated and part of the FSC/LAF later in 1981. The original members included seven black farmers and one white farmer from Indian Springs, Mississippi, a small area outside the town of Petal located in Forrest County. This region of Mississippi, unlike most of the Blackbelt, is only nearly 40%

African American. Indian Springs always had both white and black farmers. As Mr. Burkett hypothesizes, small farmers needed to band together in order to survive, and this need often crossed racial boundaries. But mixed race cooperatives often received harsher intimidation and discrimination from the elite power blocs in the South than all black cooperatives.

The initial impetus to form the cooperative was a desire to purchase spraying equipment for farmers to spread pesticides on their field peas to combat a growing pest epidemic. But the cooperative soon became a means to help farmers negotiate better prices for their produce with farmers outside of the racist South.

Mr. Burkett became involved with Indian Springs in 1979 as a second-generation cooperative member and a fourth generation farmer. During this time, black farmers were receiving a much lower price on their produce than their white neighbors. The cooperative invested in a truck and began to pack and ship fruits and vegetables to Chicago to gain better prices. Many of these northern markets were established along familial lines. Produce was sold to northern immigrants who still longed for the southern food they had grown up with. Despite the large migration of African Americans leaving the south, most kept ties with family members creating informal networks.

Indian Springs began through informal means. Farmers would wash their greens and produce in old bath tubs in their back yards, package them with ice from a nearby gas station, and fill up a pick up truck to deliver the goods. Now Indian Springs has become an official certified wholesaler and retailer of produce. The older members remark on these earlier practices, noting that crossing state lines with a pick-up full of produce could have potentially cost them fines, fees, or possibly even arrests. These early efforts were

designed to confront racist social and economic structures and offer black farmers new possibilities for sustainable livelihoods.

In the 1990s, Indian Springs built a processing and storage shed in the Sheeplo community. The process was long and arduous involving intense negotiations over funding from the USDA and in the end nearly bankrupted the cooperative. Through partnerships with the USDA and Alcorn State University, and the sweat and effort of its members, the Indian Springs cooperative was able to build a place to collectively wash, cut, package, label, and store produce. Since building it, Indian Springs has also worked to attain Good Agricultural Practices and Good Handling Practices (GAP/GHP) certificates. These are voluntary but costly audits (facilitated by the USDA) that are often required by retail buyers, such as Walmart and Whole Foods. Some retailers though create their own certification requirements, adding more costs and obstacles for farmers.

Indian Springs currently serves as a purchasing cooperative for inputs for its members and provides members with a means to wash, process, package, and distribute their produce. Members from the 10 counties surrounding the cooperative are allowed to join. Every county with members also can have two board members. Members have an initial $250 buy in to become a shareholder, followed by monthly $18 dues. Members sell their produce to the co-op, which aggregates produce and attempts to coordinate sales. Indian Springs helps to sell produce by consolidating and selling at a variety of farmers' markets, institutions such as the casinos, and a growing number of schools. Mr. Burkett, the chair of MAC and a second-generation Indian Springs member, said that currently the coop's problem is not a lack of markets, but a lack of consistent produce. They only have five full time farmers among thirty-some members. Indian Springs tries to coordinate its

farmers to meet all the demands for produce. This helps farmers who are part time strategize their limited time and resources.

One of the functions of Indian Springs is to help member farmers coordinate and market their yearly yields. For instance, the staff noticed that red okra and kale had become popular products, and encouraged their members to grow more of these two products. Cooperative staff and MAC staff keep track of buying trends in direct markets, such as farmers' markets, and in contract sales. Using this data, Indian Spring members discuss how to coordinate their yearly crop production based on assumed needs and individual farm sizes. The cooperative also provides transportation and storage of produce, pricing information, and promotional efforts.

The Indian Springs cooperative also serves as a base for MAC functions, workshops, and trainings. It is the home cooperative of Mr. Burkett, his daughter, Darnella Winston, who provides cooperative development for MAC, and is served by another MAC field staff, Joe Barnes. Many demonstrations and tours utilize the Indian Springs packing facility to showcase the value-added production and a successful, long-term cooperative. Indian Springs is the hub for MAC's farm to school efforts. It hosts other cooperative members and offers cooperative trainings. The stability of the processing plant created a means by which new farmers could enter into the group construction. The processing shed itself is a site for multiple forms of organizing, training, meetings, demonstrations, production, and social events.

The strength of Indian Springs material relations lessened the need for forming and maintaining shared ideological commitments or a collective consciousness. I met several members of the cooperative that rarely came to group gatherings or meetings.

They were eager to help when called upon, such as through meeting me, mentoring new and beginning farmers, or providing produce to fill contracts for Indian Springs. But unlike SOGOCO or Attala, during my research there were very few events purposely designed to build community or construct a shared vision. The meetings I attended were focused on increasing membership and produce, training more young folks in farming, and expanding Indian Springs' services, perhaps to include credit possibilities. The vision and direction were implicitly agreed upon, the issues at hand were how to grow and expand the membership and production of Indian Springs.

Meetings

Most cooperatives have bylaws that require them to hold regular (monthly) meetings open to all members and interested parties. The Indian Springs Cooperative has nearly 33 members of which about five are steady producers for the cooperative and about 10 show up for meetings. Two themes were consistently brought up at the meetings I attended. One theme focused on increasing farmer participation in order to create a consistent supply of produce. Related to this discussion was a concern with low youth involvement in agriculture. It is widely acknowledged that the average age of farmers, not just in the Indian Springs area but widely, is generally increasing. Youth involvement, in terms of attracting 20-40 year olds, was a strategy for securing the sustainability of the rural community and agricultural life. Youth involvement also focuses on younger children under 18. The purpose of working with these children was to familiarize them with agricultural practices as well as increase their health knowledge.

The Indian Springs cooperative is fairly established and most of its regular functions happen without a need to readdress collective formation. The procedures of processing produce, marketing, distributing, cooperative rules, and member fees are decided without much discussion or conflict. One of the collective difficulties revealed in the meetings is the filling of the necessary cooperative positions. The cooperative bylaws require members fill the positions of president, vice president, secretary and treasurer. Many of the older members have already served in these positions and are not interested in serving again. Members used the services of the cooperative and participated in activities, but were less interested in working in an organizational capacity. A hired manager ran the packing facilitator, but a president was needed to maintain the direction, vision, and coordination of the cooperative. As an older and established cooperative, most of the collective formation was already set in motion and did not require continuous collective building as much as maintenance.

This is perhaps why the thrust of several meeting discussions centered on gaining new members, more farmers, and youth. Meetings were mostly brainstorming sessions and collective discussions. At the same time, the momentum meant that the group did not need to negotiate central decisions in the same manner as younger cooperatives. The process of negotiation itself helps to solidify and bind cooperatives together as a collective entity, and presumably this was a key part of the formation of Indian Springs at one point. At one of the meetings, members discussed raising the annual fees, an idea that passed easily and without resistance. This was a vastly different experience than the discussion among SOGOCO members, but points to the stability by which Indian Springs exists. There was no concern among the membership as to what fees would be used for,

since most members either trusted or understood the functions of Indian Springs. This cooperative existed as an entity for members to join and participate, but they were not collectively creating the existence of the cooperative; its formation had momentum beyond the collective membership. Yet, if the key players that continued the operations, or the key functions, were not continually maintained, the momentum would also subside.

In the Packing Shed

The processing plant in Sheeplo, MS is the central hub of the Indian Springs Farmers Association. Different activities flow in and out of this space, but its main purpose is to serve as a place for farmers to wash, package and store their produce until it is sold at a farmers market, sometimes by a single cooperative member, or to an institution or value-adding facility. The washing and packaging of produce was an activity I frequently participated in, observed, and filmed.

The day I filmed this clip, I had arrived early at Indian Springs to film Melvin Jones (MJ), the Indian Spring manager. MJ and I were interested in filming him during all the stages of growing and selling produce. First we went to Mr. Burkett's fields to weed between rows of okra. MJ was using the tractor to carefully turn over the soil in between the rows. At one point, he allowed me to drive the tractor as well. He insisted I keep the tractor in a low gear to maintain the precision of the plow dragging behind the tractor and digging trenches on either side of tiny new seedlings. This task was followed by hand weeding between each of the plants. This very laborious practice was done with a hoe. Again, I attempted to participate, but I could not match the ease and pace of MJ in

swiftly removing the weeds. This seemingly simply task involved a level of precision; the hoe could not go too deep and make divots, nor too shallow and miss the roots. Efficiency had to be matched with speed, as each row was about 50 yards long and the day was already beginning to heat up. Joe Barnes weeded alongside MJ, at a slightly slower pace since he was not as practiced. The mastering of this skill also created a sense of pride for farmers. After weeding his okra, MJ returned to the processing shed to pack some vegetables to take to the Hattiesburg farmers market 30 miles away from the co-op.

We arrived at the shed to meet up with Mr. Burkett. He was getting things ready for the farmers market and partially keeping an eye on a new member. Mr. Burkett pulled me aside and explained that this new member used to be a chicken farmer. The big chicken companies had been putting pressure on him, and after a bad year and some debt, the farmer was forced to sell his chicken houses and was close to losing his farm. He reached out to Mr. Burkett and MAC who suggested trying to grow some vegetables to at least make some income. He was bringing his first crop of greens to Indian Springs this day.

The ease with which the new member entered into the space indicated the stability of the cooperative as an existing entity, in part separate from the collection of individuals. The new farmer did not need to integrate socially into the collective group of people. Rather his participation was based on performing the practices central to the purposes of the processing shed: that of producing and providing vegetables for sale. The social order already had prescribed roles with known practices by which outsiders could enter into the space. The clarity and stability of these practices, as a defining part of cooperative, facilitated entrance into the cooperative and maintained it beyond the contributions of

individuals. Yet, it also meant that exiting the cooperative had a certain ease as well. The collective did not depend on regular commitment and involvement to forming and negotiating a social order, which both produced stability and a diminished personal commitment and involvement, hence the struggle to find members willing to serve as officers of the cooperative.

Mr. Burkett told me I should film the story of the new member, but not today. Mr. Burkett consistently guided my filming within the field and helped me negotiate my presence with a camera. In part this process gave me legitimacy and trust by association. Mr. Burkett's approval encouraged others to participate within the film project. His involvement also gave me access where I may not have had it on my own. But, his involvement also limited what I may have otherwise pursued as part of my research. I did not ask the new farmer about his story that day, and instead focused on filming the practices happening in the processing shed. But that was the last time I ever saw that farmer, he never did tell me his story.

Within the processing shed, a number of activities took place simultaneously as members worked to prepare the produce for MJ to take to the farmers market. At one end, the new farmer began a chain of activity by bundling his greens and cutting off the roots. He tossed these into a bin of water, from which MJ and another Indian Springs worker washed and removed the bundles and placed them in boxes. MJ packed these boxes with ice and placed them in the walk-in cooler. In the middle of the shed Mr. Burkett, Joe Barnes, and another farmer were packing yellow summer squash. Mr. Burkett joked with Joe as they put together boxes and sorted through the vegetables. These were washed together within the boxes. On the far end, Mr. Penn Travis was shelling field peas in the

automated sheller. This ingenious tool saved tremendous time for shelling peas. Some farmers sold the peas in the shell, but for a lower price, lowered both for the weight of the shells and the presumed effort of the consumer needed before preparing the peas. By shelling them before hand, farmers could sell field peas as a value added product. As the produce was boxed and prepared, MJ loaded boxes onto the back of his pick-up truck while Mr. Burkett shouted out the number of boxes MJ should take.

Each of these activities happened in conjunction with a steady rhythm and pace. They all demonstrated a form of embodied knowledge, and a tacit alignment with the cooperative's ideals and direction. All of these practices worked together to form the cooperative. Unlike the previously explored cooperatives, Indian Springs cooperative put less effort into affectively creating a sense of unity between its members. This is not to say that events on the premises were not social or communal. In fact Indian Springs hosted many events that brought in cooperative members and the wider community for both educational and social purposes. Members, MAC staff, and local community members regularly engaged in activities and events at the processing shed. However, the difference was the stability with which the purpose, direction, and practices of the cooperative were defined. This clear and stable vision steered the cooperative on, even in the absence of a current president. A head of the organization was needed, as was discussed during the meetings, but the lack of one did not halt the ongoing practices of the cooperative. Days such as the one in this film demonstrate the type of practices that maintained this form of stability.

Conclusion

The collective practices examined in this chapter have four common purposes. First, the social gatherings are moments for individuals to develop collective goals and guiding principles that direct their movement towards these goals. These collective moments then provide a venue for participants to come to understand development as a collective problem and to create collective solutions. Second, group moments help to create a collective identity, a sense of "we." Third, collective events were moments for defining the formal rules governing collective efforts. Fourth, collective practices reinforce and express embodied knowledge. The connection between members, the creation of a collective from an aggregate of individuals, builds on this embodied performance of a collective.

The film examples explored in this chapter demonstrate Schatzki's concept of social sites as spaces through which social practices and social orders co-create each other. These practices blend together material, ideological, and aesthetic aspects, each of which shapes how the cooperative comes to be. The variations result in diversely formed, and diversely stable cooperative forms. In the first example, SOGOCO, the members were still forming their material commitments to the cooperative. Part of the difficulty this cooperative faced was due to the difficulties of the goat industry itself. This was not yet a proven or profitable sector, but rather a new industry encouraged by development practitioners. The cooperative members therefore needed to simultaneously build the cooperative into a functioning entity, and build market pathways and consumer commitment, as well as individual farm enterprises. From an ideological standpoint, the members were in the process of building trust and intimacy between them, as well as a

shared vision and direction for the cooperative. The social sites, such as the workshop, were moments when individual farmers performed and embodied collective ideologies and aesthetics through a set of social practices. Learning to handle and identify goats became a shared activity by which farmers could move towards becoming a "good farmer." The workshop itself was intended to anchor the cooperative by creating an annual ritual. The activities before and after the workshop, such as the prayers, the shared food, and the icebreakers, all contributed to increasing intimacy, and with it ideological commitment, among the farmers.

The second example, Attala County Self-Help Cooperative, was materially connected through the heifer pass-on project. This project anchored the other material commitments, such as the joint purchasing of chicken manure and joint ownership of a tractor. The cooperative was also operating in a sector that was familiar to many of the farmers, even if they had left the cattle industry for some time. Cattle were a proven sector with markets already in place, and profitable offshoot businesses such as the selling of hay for feed. Ideologically, the group shared a general vision for the cooperative and had personal ties previous to the formation of the cooperative. This helped hold the cooperative together through the difficult decisions it faced. Social sites, such as the pass-on event, reinforced the material, ideological, and aesthetic commitments of the members. The practices were simultaneously materially utilitarian, ideologically collective, and aesthetically performative for the group as a whole. Showing off and sharing farm practices affirmed the cooperative's collective cohesion. These practices were also framed by prayers, speeches, and shared food, which similar reinforced a collective intimacy.

The third example, Indian Springs Farmers Association, differed even more from the first two examples. As one of the oldest cooperative members of the FSC/LAF, Indian Springs had well-established practices, a solidified vision, and long-term and even multi-generational members. Materially, the existence of the processing shed served to solidify the cooperative purpose and was a proven and profitable means for vegetable farmers to sell their produce. This established avenue for vegetable processing and sales not only eased the manner by which new members could enter into the cooperative, it reduced the risk for new members' material commitment. But even with the stability and longevity of Indian Springs, the ongoing practices were essential for sustaining the collective existence of the cooperative. The practices surrounding washing and packaging the vegetables for sale were moments that defined and reaffirmed the purpose of the cooperative. They were communal practices through which members could embody their participation and jointly share in a social activity. They also performed a sense of belonging and participation within the cooperative.

Each of these examples demonstrates how social practices are essential to forming and maintaining social orders. The cooperatives do not exist simply as institutions, they are processes sustained through ongoing efforts and practices. But the practices themselves would lack the same level of meaning without their position as central within formation of social orders. Washing vegetables, herding cattle, or handling goats are, on their own, simply farm practices. When positioned within the formation of cooperatives, and surrounded by reaffirming collective activities, these practices become part of the process of cooperative development.

These three examples also demonstrate the changes and shifts in cooperatives over time, and within different sectors. As Mr. Zippert indicated during his lessons on cooperative development, organizing and education are central activities for cooperative development, even more than the practice of conducting business. In many cases, the development of cooperation precedes the development of cooperatives. This has implications for our thinking about the causal outcomes of cooperatives and their role for development. If cooperation in fact precedes cooperatives, than it is not the formal rules of the cooperative that are solving the collective action problem, but rather the solving of the collective action problem that facilitates the possibility of formalizing a cooperative business. Similarly, the outcomes often associated with cooperatives, such as the spread of information, sharing of resources, development of leaders and skills, may in fact not necessarily be outcomes of cooperatives, but the result of efforts at promoting cooperation, which then only sometimes results in the formalization of a group into a chartered cooperative.

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Chapter 6: Rights and Resistance: Identity Politics and the Black Farmer

Introduction

During the preliminary stages of my research in 2010, nearly every event, workshop, or meeting hosted by the FSC/LAF scheduled time to discuss the Pigford class action lawsuit. Farmers would travel long distances, carrying bundles of papers in hand, in order to better understand their status as a member of the class and their ability to successfully file their claims. The Pigford case was a class action lawsuit originated by Timothy Pigford in 1997 against the Secretary of Agriculture (then Dan Glickman) alleging that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) discriminated against African American farmers by denying or delaying applications for benefit programs and loans. The class included all African American farmers who applied for participation in any USDA program between 1981 and 1996, believed they were discriminated against on the basis of race, and tried to file a written discrimination complaint with the USDA. This period of time spanned from the closing of the USDA Office of Civil Rights Enforcement and Adjudication (OCREA) by Ronald Reagan to its reopening by Bill Clinton. During this block of time there were no official channels to address civil rights complaints, leaving the USDA legally responsible for unaddressed discriminatory practices. Although discrimination has been documented as happening long before this time period (and after), the lack of a civil rights office in the USDA created the legal possibility for the class action lawsuit.

On April 14, 1999, Judge Paul L. Friedman of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia approved a settlement agreement and consent decree in Pigford lawsuit (Fong et al, 2011). Almost $1 billion was paid to more than 13,300 farmers. But nearly 70,000 black farmers were excluded from the class because they missed deadlines, largely because of notification problems and poor legal counsel. This exclusion mimicked the types of exclusions and misinformation faced by African Americans from the USDA county offices that were the source of the lawsuit to begin with. In 2008, congress passed into the U.S. Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (the Farm Bill) a provision that provided for $100 million to be paid out to late filers who demonstrated their qualifications. But activist groups and organizers brought to the attention of congress the much larger number of excluded claimants. In 2010, Attorney General Holder and Secretary of Agriculture Vilsack announced a $1.25 billion settlement with late filers. This extra money was approved by congress and the president through the Claims Resolution Act of 2010 (Fong et al, 2011). This set of payments was known as Pigford II. It was this track that farmers were trying to apply for during my research. They were late filers, people who were denied participation in the original Pigford class action lawsuit, and who were now trying to secure their payment.

But the process was quite difficult. Farmers needed to prove discrimination, prove that they tried to report this to the USDA, and prove that all their paper work was in fact in order by the time of the original Pigford lawsuit, but that they had not been included. All of this needed to be reported in proper "legalese," an additional barrier for a demographic of farmers with various levels of literacy and very little knowledge of the language of the legal system. Swindlers were taking advantage of this lack of knowledge.

People, posing as lawyers, would guarantee farmers that they could secure payments from the Pigford settlement in return for a small upfront payment. These so-called lawyers would disappear as soon as farmers paid the fee. The FSC/LAF offered continuous workshops to provide general information to groups of people, and individual sessions to help farmers work through the required paperwork. As the deadline for submitting claims approached, the FSC/LAF increased its efforts, and hired lawyers to travel across the South offering sessions for farmers.

At first, the Pigford lawsuit gained little attention outside of the rural south and Washington D.C., where politicians debated over supporting the Pigford II payments. A few left leaning groups remarked on the case, simplifying it as a set of reparations due to the general discrimination black farmers faced. But, in 2010, Andrew Breitbart, a conservative blogger and advocate of small government, reported on the case as evidence of government bloat, fraud, and an unnecessary burden on the American taxpayer.[14] His rants caught fire, and the critiques of the Pigford lawsuit began to spread to major newspapers and political speeches. Most notably, a New York Times (LaFraniere, 2013) article not only turned the Pigford lawsuit into a national discussion, but also gave credence to Breitbart's criticisms. The major critiques of the Pigford lawsuit centered on questions of fraud, the role of the government (and taxpayers by extension), but especially the problems of identity politics. Identity politics was slung as an insult in its own rights, with no further need of explanation. And the fact that Barak Obama, both as a Senator and now President, had supported this lawsuit only further fueled the claim that

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[14] See a collection of Andrew Breitbart's blog posts concerning Pigford at http://www.breitbart.com/big-government/2010/12/08/pigford-investigation-resources/

the lawsuit was an example of not just identity politics, but racial politics; an insult to the image of a merit-based and color-blind political system.

The FSC/LAF's support for the Pigford lawsuit is part of its larger mission "to develop, advocate and support public policies to benefit our membership of black and other family farmers and low-income rural communities" (Federation/History). This lawsuit was a means for black farmers to make claims on the State based on their particular identity as rightful citizens of the State, but historically lacking equal recognition and distribution of resources. Many of the participants in my research spoke adamantly that the wealth of the US was built upon the labor of black farmers, but in return they did not even receive their promised 40 acres and a mule (Childs, 2011). The continual claims black farmers make upon government entities, at a county, state, and federal level, stem from this ongoing failure of the State to fulfill its intended (and lauded) duties towards all its citizens equally. Even as African Americans have achieved equality under the letter of the law, the implementation of the rights and duties from the State continually fall short of expectations.

Furthermore, black farmers in particular make claims not simply as equal citizens, but as equal farmers within the national platform. In the U.S., a farmer is not just an occupation, but is a political position, offering individuals who occupy this role advantages, payments, and supports unique to this position. The Pigford lawsuit represented black farmers' claims for equal access to the political position of farmer. The Pigford lawsuit required the State to recognize the rights of black farmers and admit to past injustices (although legally they admitted to very little). These two demands, for redistribution and recognition, are necessary for what Nancy Frasier terms "parity of

participation" (Frasier, 1998; 8). They are a means for diversely identified groups to gain an equal footing within a political apparatus.

The lawsuit, and other political efforts by the FSC/LAF on behalf of black farmers, are a means to gain "parity of participation," or equality within the political system. But because these claims are made based on a racial identity, they also reaffirm a form a difference; they solidify the racial category of 'black'. This is true for the FSC/LAF's other efforts as well, such as their advocacy work for securing funding for minority and socially disadvantaged farmers. Such efforts formalize differences and embed them within the political apparatus itself. Rather than a uniform equality, then, black farmers gain their political access through espousing their difference. Along with the critiques from conservatives, such as Andrew Brietbart, that these forms of identity politics are an abuse of political power, others on the left warn against this process, concerned with the manner in which identity politics impacts individuals who utilize the category for political gain. But the efforts towards politicizing identity are not limited to claims made upon the State. By exploring the broader practices that are used to cultivate and politicize the identities of black farmers, this chapter aims to better understand identity politics not just as a political ploy, but also as an emancipatory practice.

Along with the FSC/LAF's institutional political strategies—their use of identity at a systemic level – they simultaneously work at an individual and interpersonal level. FSC/LAF engenders an independent cultural framework, unique subject position, and set of relations as part of the identity formation of black farmers that are used to promote development. My research explores how these institutional efforts interact with daily practices. How is identity politicized through practices and interactions among FSC/LAF

members? How does institutional change affect identity as an embodied practice? And how does this level of identity formation affect the FSC/LAF's efforts at institutional change?

Through restructuring concepts of self and the relationships involved with being a black farmer, the different organizational levels of the FSC/LAF create different political spaces for black farmers to exist. This chapter focuses on how these processes play out among members of the FSC/LAF and how they influence both individual and collective formations of identity. The chapter begins by examining some of the strategies and pitfalls of identity politics, both as a means to make claims on the state and as a form of cultural resistance. It then explores case studies within which embodied identity becomes a strategic tool for development.

Politicizing Identity

Identity politics has increasingly fallen under criticism from a variety of viewpoints. Common criticisms stem from arguments for a universally standardized form of equality based on merit alone. Arguably, such a perspective overlooks the reality of unequal privileges, histories, and capabilities among a population. But criticisms of identity politics have also stemmed from feminist, anti-racist, and post-modern viewpoints. These critiques claim that identity politics both perpetuates the suffering self, and seeks protection through the government thereby normalizing the regulatory and disciplinary functions of the state. This form of politicized identity has "an ontological investment in its own subjection" (Bickford, 1997; 115) and assumes a position of moral purity based on its own victimhood.

Identity politics can turn into a form of resentment politics, creating what Wendy Brown calls "wounded attachments" (1993; 391). This form of politics fails to live up to their emancipatory aims for subjects excluded from the dominant political apparatus. Partly, this happens in the process by which the "I" is subordinated to the abstract "we" used to ensure the state's universal freedom and equality. This process trivializes differences into simply one specific preference or attribute and depoliticizes the particularistic aspects of individuals through the universals of the abstract "we."

Furthermore, identity politics may potentially lead to separatist enclaves. Rather than creating a space for a multitude of identities, identity politics simplifies differences into single characteristics through which individuals seek to attain freedom and equality from the state (Brown, 1993). Each abstracted identity then mobilizes on behalf of those who fall within the boundaries of a newly created category. The claims of injustice made by each abstracted identity often utilize the concept of a normalized white, masculine, middle-class citizen as a standard of evaluation (Brown, 1993; 395). Rather than expanding the category of citizen, to include previously non-normalized identities, this form of identity politics may in fact reinforce such normalization through its own effort.

But these potential pitfalls only demonstrate possibilities, not essential qualities of identity politics. Both Bickford and Brown argue for a fluid, open, and dynamic form of identity politics, in which multiple identities and social positions can mutually interact. People can occupy multiple identities, simultaneously, or in succession. These identities can be used as rallying points, drawing people together around issues of injustice (Bickford, 1997). Rather than being tied to the resentment of oppression, these rallying

points can be anchored within desires and wants and as a commitment to redress injustices (Brown, 1993).

Identity politics can also be a means of challenging dominant norms and ideologies. Mary Wrenn (2014) considers identity politics as a coping mechanism in response to the irrationality of neoliberalism. With declining democratic control among the population, and limited government support of collective well-being, those who do not benefit from the current economic system draw on identities of inequality to respond to the dehumanization and persistent commodification of neoliberalism. This response happens in stages and identity is a crucial tool. First, individuals might "search for empowerment through extra-economic, social identities. [At this stage] the individual does not stand to lose anything as the state serves other interests anyway" (2014; 509). If the social issues brought forth from this form of extra-economic social identity claims are not addressed by the state, individuals will turn to extra-economic, extra-social identities in which norms and morals are determined irrespective of the dominant framework. This, for Wrenn, is the core of identity politics. Wrenn's framework for resistance alludes to the role of independent cultural formation, the "extra-social" formation of new norms and alternative ideologies. Rather than a progression, as Wrenn lays out, I see among the FSC/LAF's activities a simultaneous effort to claim rights within the dominant social sphere, and to create extra-social spaces of identity formation as well.

But the role of identity politics is not limited to addressing the inequalities resulting from the current neoliberal economic system. Identity politics results from an inherent tension between the universal and the particular. Purvis and Hunt (1999) argue that this tension is neither new, nor problematic. In fact the tension between these two

principles is crucial for sustaining democratic politics. Currently, the concept of citizenship as a means to ensure rights and equality is deteriorating as a result of the globalization of capital, the retreat of the state, and neoliberal ideologies (Purvis and Hunt, 1999). In light of these global changes the concept of citizenship as bounded within nation-states is growing increasingly ill equipped to handle contemporary politics and crises.

Citizenship represents an idealized open and universal category, but in fact it often excludes people, both through political and socio-cultural means. According to Purvis and Hunt, the most effective response is not the promotion of multiple and equal identities, but rather the cultivation of a counter-hegemony that provides a means to find common ground and minimum standards for all individuals and identities. Purvis and Hunt call this an incorporative hegemony, a concept which draws on citizenship rights as a stable but never fixed framework (1999; 475). Ultimately Purvis and Hunt claim that "the tension between seeking a universal ideal of equality, above any particular identity, and respect of particular aspirations arising from complex heterogeneity of civil society is a paradox with no permanent solution. The struggle between the two is the site of social democracy" (1999; 476).

Within development, this tension has emerged through discussions of rights-based approaches and extended into the concept of capabilities. Rights require a regulatory framework, concept of belonging, and strategy of enforcement. Typically, such requirements are achieved through a nation-state. But the concept of rights has exceeded the framework of the nation-state, most specifically through the idea of universal human rights. However it is still the nation-state that is held responsible for upholding these

human rights, and the question of enforcement, although shifted to the international community, still remains. Additionally, the UN's Declaration of Human Rights provokes questions of cultural relativism, the duty of positive rights, and the problem of conflicting rights. Development and legal scholars, most notably Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, have developed the concept of capabilities, over and above rights, to offer more substantial answers to some of these questions (Nussbaum, 1997; Nussbaum 2003; Sen, 1990; Sen, 2001).

Ultimately though, rights-based and capabilities-based approaches are attempts to create universal ideals, or frameworks. What may loosely be called identity politics responds to the oversight of universals, or to the exclusions that inevitably result. The tension between these two poles is the field upon which change happens through ongoing negotiations and contestations. The tension is in fact productive, and a necessary aspect of maintaining and ensuring the larger goals of well-being and social justice.

The FSC/LAF's use of identity, as a political tool, is part of this struggle. Their claims upon the state, through activities such as supporting the Pigford lawsuit, or simply supporting individual black farmer's right to equal access to USDA resources, on the one hand demands the ideal of universal equality granted through state functions upon the political role of farmers. On the other hand, the FSC/LAF's challenges to state functions have been a source of continual change. Their advocacy for black farmers has led to the creation of additional programs within the USDA including programs to support socially disadvantaged farmers, limited resource farmers, and funding to support organizations that provide outreach and assistance to socially disadvantaged farmers. These changes are institutional recognition of the diverse needs and differences among different groups of

farmers. Identity, then, is both a tool to bring attention to oppression and discrimination, in an attempt to create equal treatment, and an insistence on difference. These two goals form a creative tension, through which the goal of social democracy and social justice are pursued. Identity politics is a form of negotiation; it is always a compromise on the spectrum between a multitude of different needs and a universal granting of rights.

Both of these goals are focused on institutional change, but the act of supporting difference, through identity, is also a social process, embedded within the cultural formation of diverse groups. Advocating for black farmers involves more than making claims for State recognition and redistribution. In addition, the FSC/LAF uses identity formation as a means to cultivate independent social and cultural spaces for black farmers. As Purvis and Hunt (1999) state, citizenship is more than simply rights and duties bestowed by a nation state, but the norms, cultures, and practices promoted by the dominant culture. Most useful to capture these aspects is the concept of cultural citizenship.

Cultural Citizenship

Black farmers' long-term exclusion from first the category of personhood, then the rights of citizens, and finally access to the resources available to white farmers has led to a continual effort, by individual farmers and organizations such as the FSC/LAF, to secure recognition, redistribution, and equal participation within the political apparatus. But while the political goals have been for equal access, organizations such as the FSC/LAF have also been working towards creating spaces that support the black farmers'

differences as a unique cultural and social group. These efforts have not just been a resistance to State exclusion, but a form of negotiating within civil and social spaces.

Renato Rosaldo defines cultural citizenship as "the right to be different (in terms of race, ethnicity, or native language) with respect to the norms of the dominant national community without compromising one's right to belong, in the sense of participating in the nation-state's democratic processes" (1994: 57). Rosaldo emphasizes that political citizenship, and the legal rights bestowed upon citizens by the state, do not overcome the exclusions enacted by the dominant culture upon those that maintain their differences. Cultural citizenship offers a process to expand rights beyond the legal sphere into other public, cultural, and social realms. The idealized conception of a public square, in which all citizens have equal voice, is in fact false, both historically and conceptually. Rosaldo, therefore, calls for the dual process of social justice, redistribution, and recognition, as core to the process of true citizenship (Rosaldo, 1997). Diverse members must have both access to, and respect for their positions within public arenas. The demand by subordinated groups for respect in their everyday lives is the foundation of cultural citizenship (Rosaldo, 1997). For the FSC/LAF, part of claiming rights for black farmers has been to create public spaces within which they can negotiate these claims.

Aihwa Ong (1996) considers cultural citizenship as a dialectical process between the state and its subjects. This differs from the definition of cultural citizenship used by Rosaldo (1994), who sees cultural citizenship as demands made by those whose culture varies from the dominant culture. Ong understands this goal, but considers the concept of cultural citizenship as the cultural practices produced through negotiating with the dominant criteria for belonging (1996; 738). Cultural citizenship is therefore a "dual

process of self-making and being-made within the webs of power linked to the nation-state and civil society" (1996; 738). This dialectical process takes place not just between individuals and the State, but within civil society institutions as well.

Ong considers the implications of race and class on cultural citizenship. Race involves political and cultural construction and cannot be separated from performance or schemes of cultural assessment. Ong draws on Paul Gilroy, who elucidates the elusive and shifting meanings of racism embedded within notions of citizenship. These ideas are further integrated with ideas of class, and the implications of productivity and consumption as part of belonging (1996; 739). Ong therefore brings together neoliberal constructions of citizenship and the biopolitics of the American State to examine the normative standards of good citizens.

According to Ong, then, citizenship has an ideal subject. Marginal people's experience of negotiating with the State, and non-State organizations, creates a subject position for them, and specifically a racialized subject position. Ong emphasizes that the very means by which people make claims or enact belonging construct their subject position. By trying to be an equal first-class citizen, both legally and culturally, identity and social relations are reshaped and reconfigured.

Ong's arguments are similar to Gerald Jaynes' conception of the subjectification of the black laboring class. Jaynes (2000) explores the lack of incentive for African Americans to fulfill low-waged labor needs. Particularly, three points of consideration are relevant to such decisions: the value the labor market confers on the subject, the subject's self-valuation, and the subject's evaluation of the distributive principles of the labor market (2000; 130). The choice of employment is not simply a utilitarian decision but

involves the affirmation or denial of the validity of people's own self-perception and their demand for public respect and commensurate reward for the work. In order to avoid negative economic subject positions, the black laboring class rejects employment opportunities that may be deemed appropriate for them by the dominant culture.

In Jaynes' analysis as well, subject position is created dialectically through negotiating with external institutions, in this case employment institutions. Identity is mediated through social institutions and through interpersonal relationships within the institutional space, which may or may not conform to an individual's own self image (2000; 129-130). Jaynes' analyses are crucial to understanding the role of identity in development. In order to motivate participation in economic development projects, grassroots organizations, such as the FSC/LAF, need to form alternative institutional spaces and interpersonal relationships that affirm a positive subject position and support the cultural identity of black farmers.

Both Ong and Jaynes contend that identity is not simply an internal quality, but is created through interacting with external forces. Mary Wrenn, drawing on Davis' Jr. (2009, 2010), offers a triadic framework for understanding identity. The triadic construction consists of externally imposed, self-assigned, and socially affiliated forms of identity (Wrenn, 2014). Each component mutually constructs the others. The creation of institutional spaces and collectives by the FSC/LAF offer black farmers social-relational identities through their alignment and affiliation within the group. By creating positive forms of relational identity within these spaces, individuals presumably develop positive self-identities in turn. These two forms of identity constructions can then be used as part of the dialectical negotiation over the externally imposed identity black farmers face from

the State and the dominant culture in the US. Thus, the efforts of the FSC/LAF help to shift the cultural citizenship of black farmers through supporting more positive subject positions. Ultimately, then, the FSC/LAF's use of identity works to simultaneously make demands for equality within the dominant system and also to cultivate an alternative set of practices and subjectivities built on black farmers' own cultural frames. This interplay between the triadic constructions of identity (internal, external, and relational) happens not just through discursive or ideological commitments, but also through the practices, habits, bodies, and relationships of the people involved; it happens at an embodied level.

Sensing the Subject

Identity is used by the FSC/LAF on the one hand to make claims upon the State in response to exclusions and oppressions faced by the particular category of black farmers. But identity formation is also part of the creation of alternative institutional spaces through which individuals can relationally develop positive subject positions. These are spaces in which being a black farmer becomes endowed with forms of respect, recognition, and a sense of cultural heritage. By creating institutional spaces that affirm these positive subject positions, the FSC/LAF aims to cultivate a politicized form of identity that can resist cultural norms of the dominant society and demand both cultural citizenship, and equal recognition and distribution of resources from the State. This process begins with cultivating identity formation within their institutional spaces. But identity formation is not simply a matter of claiming certain forms of identity, or insisting on their cultural importance. Such efforts require a set of practices that shape the

embodied experience of individuals. These embodied practices aimed at identity formation can be considered as the creation of a sensorium.

Sensorium, according to Kathryn Linn Geurts, is the cultural formation of self through embodied experiences and the culturally constructed sensory order (Geurts, 2002). In her ethnography on bodily ways of knowing in Anlo-land, in West Africa, Geurts explores the connection between the cultural construction of a sensorium (or sensory order), a cultural moral code, a sense of self and identity, and concepts of health (Geurts, 2002). The sensorium offers a site for the construction and negotiation of identity in its embodied form.

The cultural construction of the sensorium is commonly studied to demonstrate variation among different groups of people. Such explications can give the illusion that sensory constructions are culturally distinct yet fixed and homogenous overarching impositions. Yet despite the inertia, and at times seeming dominance, of a sensorium, it is a fluid construction. This ability to change or shift the sensorium in turn affects the construction of identity, negotiated within its triadic formation. Part of the development process then is the creation of social institutions that affirm positive self-identity. These institutional spaces construct positive subject positions through communal ties and are transmitted through material, ideological, and aesthetic means.

Identity is in many ways a craft, similar to what Elizabeth Hallam and Tim Ingold call creative improvisation. Hallam and Ingold articulate improvisation as generative, relational, temporal, and part of the "way we work" (Hallam and Ingold, 2007; 1). Improvisation is generative, in that it exists in the doing and making of real things, rather than the design or imagined possibility. The relational of improvisation refers to the

entangled and mutually responsive interaction of actors/environments involved (Hallam and Ingold, 2007; 7). By temporal, Hallam and Ingold mean that improvisation has duration. It is not a moment in time, or a line between moments, but is itself time experienced. Finally improvisation can be considered a skilled practice. Hallam and Ingold use the examples of walking, writing, and playing music to explore how improvisation is the "way we work" (Hallam and Ingold, 2007; 14). Identity, as a creative improvisation, therefore happens through lived experiences and practices. Changing identity therefore consists of changing experiences and practices.

But such change is not simply a matter of choice and determination. As Bickford (1997) has pointed out, identity is implicated in power. The mutually constituting natures of imposed, chosen, and relative forms of identity are enmeshed in the given world of politics and power. Similarly identity is also enmeshed in the material, ecological, and social worlds that people inhabit. The FSC/LAF's effort to construct positive identity formation cannot be separated from the sensory and aesthetic constructs of the environments in which these activities take place. Identity, is therefore, both embodied, and embedded within spaces of activity. The nodes, or points at which identity-formation becomes most significant are knots among the multiple lines of becoming (Ingold, 2011).

Within anthropology, there has been a long interest in studying the senses, and cultural variations of the senses (Howes, 2010; Classen, 1997). Some scholars have pushed for more than just anthropology of the senses, but rather a sensory anthropology (Ingold, 2011a; 2011b; Pink, 2009; Pink and Howes, 2010; Stoller, 2010). If the sensorium is a place of identity construction, it makes sense that understanding this cultural construction would require forms of sensory experience by the researcher as

well. The researcher's body becomes implicated in the process of understanding embodiment itself. This mode of knowledge production assists in examining identity production beyond just the discursive and semiotic dimensions, which lend themselves to textual analysis more easily. Sensory modes of exploration assist in better understanding cultural sensoriums.

Finding the Embodied Experience

The examples within this chapter are films that aim to demonstrate spaces within which positive subject positions are cultivated. This process of identity formation happens through a combined ideological and sensory experience. For example, the cultivation of a positive association of the act of farming involves both analytically associating farming as a positive sensory experience of the practices involved. The FSC/LAF aims to create spaces that allow individuals to form relational identities aligned with their own vision and cultural concept of the black farmer. These spaces in turn are used to resist and demand rights from the dominant institutions. The films in this chapter explore these spaces, examining how practices are used to cultivate positive subject positions and embodied experiences.

The process of researching embodied experiences poses certain analytical and presentational problems. In the first instance, it is quite difficult to learn of another's subjective, affective, and sensory experience. Learning of these experiences often involves attending to the processes by which experiences are expressed, performed, or represented in analytical form. Some of the bodily practices can be indirectly experienced through shared engagement in a similar act, such as my participation in the practices of

farming, but these provide only approximations of someone else's experience. Secondly, discussing embodied experiences involves a level of abstraction from the actual experience. The articulation of feelings and senses rely on shared linguistic meanings that re-frame experiences as discourses. Thirdly, the presentation of research requires a further layer of abstraction, re-articulating experiences into a new meaningful form of academic communication.

Within my research, I use observational and collaborative methods of filmmaking to address some of these difficulties. While film is also an abstraction from the experience, it provides an alternative form of translation, or articulation, from the embodied experience. By foregrounding the process of filming in my research, I encounter participants with a focus on visual, aural, embodied, and performed aspects of their experiences. The presence of the camera itself encourages participants to engage both verbally and non-verbally in order to document their experiences. Because of the collaborative nature of this project, participants have input in what and how they would like to be filmed, and the films themselves are made for the FSC/LAF and farmers' own uses. This situation, therefore, provides a space in which participants have invested interest in communicating their experiences and the means to guide me in the process of what their experiences may entail.

The practice of filming also offers a way to understand, interact with, and imprint these embodied experiences. For example, Greg Downey (2010), in researching capoeira training, claims that the neural-architecture used when observing action maps on to the part of the brain designated for action. In other words, we feel the actions we perceive (Downey, 2010; S28). There is a connection between understanding, intersubjectively,

the practice of another and the effort to mimic and learn the practice. Film becomes a unique medium for better understanding this practice. During my research of farm practices, I alternated between engaging in the farm practice and filming the farm practice. In this way, I was attuning myself to the ways of being of the people I was working with. Then, when I picked up my camera, I used my camera in a way to observe through the same processes by which I was observing in order to learn the practice myself.

This had two results. First I learn the embodied practice better myself, as a researcher. Second, the film can help transmit and communicate this without the burden of being translated into words, which then requires the reader to translate them back into embodied perceptions. The film offers an opportunity for a distant third viewer to attempt and observe a process of bodily and motor observation, ideally entering into the neuro-architectural space Downey points to as inherently intersubjective. This is similar to the idea that Laura Marks puts forth that viewing offers a sensory experience (Marks, 2000). Although many distortions and distances exist between the embodied moment and the viewing on a screen, a visceral connection is possible. The bodily identification with the observed sensory experience transmits across the distance and distortions of the filming medium. Similarly, I expect that the physical embodied practices of farmers communicate an embodied sensory experience that does not necessarily need to be translated into words for viewers. It can remain in the realm of sensory experiences.

The film footage also serves as a tool for discussing and understanding participants' embodied perspectives. The footage provides an audio-visual representation of the embodied experience and through viewing and editing the footage in collaboration

with participants we can utilize these representational forms to reflect on and communicate the meaning of the experiences. The film footage provides another means, or language, by which participants can communicate their reflections on their experience. The process of collaboratively editing the pieces also provides a means for creating a shared interpretive presentation that expresses the meaning drawn from the research. The films subsequently offer another medium for academic communication as well. Ultimately this process may provide new insights into the process of community-based rural development promoted and implemented by the FSC/LAF and the role of affective and implicit meanings and identities in farming and development practices.

Filming was a way to enter into the dynamic space of identity formation. It served as a means to better relate to the process of cultivating a positive subject position, and understanding how individuals embodied the positive forms of identity constructed within the FSC/LAF's various spaces of existence. Additionally, each of the examples in this chapter became artifacts in the ongoing identity and cultural formation intended by the FSC/LAF. These examples are films that the participants specifically requested. Participants had specific goals in mind for these films, and were invested in not simply documenting the action that was happening, but in producing representational products that could further cultivate a positive identification for black farmers. Therefore, each film should be viewed as a highly performative engagement, in which participants are demonstrating an intended interpretation of black farmer culture. The films thus vacillate between ideological and embodied constructions of identity as the form among individuals within the FSC/LAF's institutional spaces.

Examples

Particular moments help highlight this tangle of relationship through which identities emerge and facilitate the overarching goals of the FSC/LAF. The vignettes examined here all demonstrate efforts by the FSC/LAF to cultivate positive subject positions for the next generation of farmers. In order to maintain the existence of black farmers, and motivate individuals to identify with, protect, and advocate for this category, individuals must positively relate to the relational identity of black farmers, and embody this identity internally. The underlying goal found within each of these films is the cultivation of a positive representational form of black farmers. First is a tour and interview with Mr. Ben Burkett, one of the key organizers with MAC. Mr. Burkett has farmed all his life and has worked with FSC/LAF for over thirty years. He serves as a spokesperson and representative for black farmers in many different capacities. Through this role, Mr. Burkett aligns his black farmer identity with positions of success and influence in the political, economic, and social realms. His popularity and political clout demonstrate that the position of black farmer is indeed a respectable and culturally relevant position for African Americans. This interview is followed by a film with Mr. Burkett's nephew and protégé, Melvin Jones (MJ). MJ was brought up in the Indian Springs Cooperative. As a young adult he started farming on his own, and recently became the manager of the Indian Springs Cooperative. MJ is in many ways the outcome of the efforts of Indian Springs to transform the embodied experience of young black farmers from one of drudgery and oppression, to one of pride and cultural relevance. MJ has not only idealized the work of elder black farmers since his youth, he stands apart from his peers who remain skeptical about the work of farming. The next two films show

some of the activities involving the Sankofa Youth, the youth organization facilitated by the Rural Training and Research Center in Epes, Alabama. The goals of this organization are to teach youth the practical skills of agriculture, offer summer employment for youth, and instill a sense of cultural heritage around the activities of black farmers and African Americans in general. The final piece showcases one of MAC's educational efforts. The Beginning Farmers' Reality Tour was organized by Darnella Burkett-Winston, Mr. Burkett's daughter who is also an organizer and farmer herself. She organized the tour as a way for young farmers to learn directly from established farmers. While the tour was explicitly designed for beginning farmers, implicitly, the conversations revolved around issues particular to black farmers.

Representing the Black Farmer

Film 19: Mr. Burkett's Tour https://vimeo.com/139875774/24aca55947

Mr. Burkett serves as an iconic figure for the FSC/LAF at large. He has the authenticity and legitimacy of a black farmer and a southerner, as someone who grew up in rural Mississippi. His father helped start the Indian Springs Farmers' Association, one of the oldest cooperatives in the FSC/LAF, and to which Mr. Burkett and his daughter now belong. Mr. Burkett continues to farm on his family land, work with the co-op, MAC, and FSC/LAF. He also is extensively knowledgeable about the political and economic structures that shape the experience of black farmers and family farmers in the US. He travels extensively around the world to collaborate and participate with international farmer organizations, movements, and cooperatives. He speaks regularly at conferences and workshops hosted by government organizations, NGOs, and grassroots organizations, both in the US and abroad.

The walls of Mr. Burkett's office in Jackson, Mississippi, are covered top to bottom with photographs, awards, certificates, and news clippings. In between these framed items are shelves with memorabilia from around the world, gathered and gifted to him during his international travels. The photographs are mostly of Mr. Burkett in a suit, shaking hands with government officials. The news articles show images of Mr. Burkett in his fields wearing overalls or coveralls. These represent two polar aspects of Mr. Burkett's public image: Mr. Burkett the political advocate and Mr. Burkett the farmer. These two sides are part of his constructed form of representation.

The decorations along Mr. Burkett's office walls index his public role, his position within the US public and political sphere. They reveal different positionings and configurations of the identities of a black farmer and a community organizer. In one

photograph, Mr. Burkett is shown shaking hands with Mr. Dan Glickman, the US Secretary of Agriculture. This photo demonstrates Mr. Burkett as a political representative of black farmers, negotiating with the USDA. In a newspaper spread, he is pictured on his farm under the title Family Farmer, and again he is shown on the cover of Farmers Cooperative. These reveal Mr. Burkett as part of an idealized vision of family farmers, cooperatively working together. The business section of another newspaper shows Mr. Burkett in the processing shed in Indian Springs, and offers insight into the economic benefit of growing root crops. Here Mr. Burkett is an entrepreneur. The Living section of another newspaper offers the title "A Farm Life" and asks, "What is richness, if not enjoyment of one's way of life?" Mr. Burkett's lifestyle evokes a sense of the rural idyll, independent of his economic or political ability. In one of the largest frames, a six by four inch photo is displayed within tan matting, encircled with official letters, showing Mr. Burkett shaking President Clinton's hand. This not only demonstrates the height of Mr. Burkett's political access, but the framing and positioning of the photo also demonstrates the importance of the moment for Mr. Burkett.

These different entries into political and cultural mainstream life are facilitated by the different institutional spaces to which Mr. Burkett belongs. The FSC/LAF, MAC, Indian Springs, and his own, fourth generation farm offer different configurations of his identity as a black farmer, and the expectations of what the role means. These spaces provide a means to demand recognition, on a cultural and political scale. For instance, as a representative of the FSC/LAF, Mr. Burkett demands political recognition for black farmers at large, and has access to higher levels of political interactions. As a political entity, the FSC/LAF negotiates with USDA officials at the federal level. As a

representative of MAC, Mr. Burkett is recognized as part of an economic endeavor and cooperative organization. As a farmer, Mr. Burkett represents idealized visions of a bucolic rural lifestyle.

These forms of representation are largely constructed by external expectations; Mr. Burkett alternately fills the image of a farmer for glossy magazine images, a businessman for economic layouts, or a grass-roots organizer for political photos. But his representation is much more carefully crafted than the images reveal. There is a vast amount of agency in the construction of his image as a black farmer and organizer.

The first time I filmed Mr. Burkett, he had anticipated the moment before I even arrived. I first filmed Mr. Burkett at the Indian Springs processing shed just outside of Petal, Mississippi. Mr. Burkett perhaps had a stronger idea about what he wanted out of the filming session than I did. By the time I had my camera unpacked and set up he was already beginning his soliloquy. He was quite comfortable on camera, engaging me in an ongoing conversation about farming and agriculture. He knew what he wanted out of the performance, and created the type of presence and information that was relevant.

The conversation was effortless but Mr. Burkett was always on the move. I found myself almost chasing him around the farm. We toured his fields, his machines, the inside of the processing shed, and stopped to take care of little tasks along the way. It was a moving, vibrant interview, flowing between stories, information and opinions about the current policies or economic shifts, and specific details about the landscape and his crops. I did not have to say much, barely prompting the next topic.

At the beginning of the presentation, Mr. Burkett spoke about the changing landscape of farming. Changing political and economic pressures caused many farmers to

go out of business. He commented that big farms are dominating the current agricultural scene, and young people are no longer interested in becoming family famers. I asked him if it was important to keep people in the farming business and maintain small farmers. He responded that perhaps it was time for large corporations to produce our food, since it appeared to be so efficient. But what was missing in this equation was the ability of all people to be able to support and feed themselves. Blacks, whites, Hispanics, Hmong people should all know how to feed themselves.

Mr. Burkett emphasized the importance of a people keeping their agricultural knowledge. Most people, he declared, are about two generations removed from agriculture. In Mississippi, they are just coming up on one to one and a half generations removed. It is important for a diversity of people to know about farming. Blacks, too, deserved their own food sovereignty. This perspective maintained a separate identity, a separate group of people designated by the term black farmers.

If farming is kept only in the hands of a few, they have the power to control the food supply. One of the key goals for development, and food sovereignty, then is to encourage youth to maintain a farming tradition. According to Mr. Burkett, in the South, one of the main reasons young folks do not like to farm is that it is associated with slavery. The struggle for organizations like the FSC/LAF is to shift this association, and to create a positive association with the practice of farming.

Mr. Burkett's anticipation of my filming significantly reveals several aspects about his identity construction. First, his performance was not simply reactive. It was not me in particular that he was performing for, nor for academia per se. During the first filming encounter he barely knew me, and could only vaguely anticipate the final

destination of the footage I would be shooting. He was very concerned with obtaining copies of the footage, but other than that he was not overly inquisitive as to whom I foresaw future audiences to be. His performance, therefore, was not designed for a particular venue or audience, but was self-referential and independent. Mr. Burkett's representational form was not simply about participation in conversations with the dominant political and cultural spaces. By creating and maintaining a form of identity that was meaningful and independent of these dominant spaces, Mr. Burkett was forging spaces for other black farmers, most notably those coming up through the Indian Springs cooperative, to also create and maintain self-referential and positive identities.

Mr. Burkett had been filmed, recorded, and interviewed many times before I came to visit him. During our filming session, Mr. Burkett referred to another filmmaker who had made a short film about his life story. He had negotiated with the film crew and agreed to participate in exchange for 100 DVDs that he could distribute himself. However, he disliked the final film, and so still had almost all the DVD copies. He gave me one to take home, but told me not to share it with others. I tried to inquire about what was wrong with this film, hoping not to create the same mistakes. Mr. Burkett was vague and diplomatic, offering little concrete advice on what I could do differently.

When I got home and watched the film I found that many of the same stories that Mr. Burkett told me were portrayed on the earlier film as well. Later, when I brought up this film with his daughter, Darnella (who was also briefly in the film), she too was vague about what was wrong with it. The only clue she offered was that the film made them look too "country." This word was often used throughout my research to refer to a certain aesthetic, and the political implications of this aesthetic sensibility. I concluded that since

the stories Mr. Burkett told were quite similar, that it was the aesthetic dimension that he was disappointed with. Perhaps this was also why his analysis was vague. It was not something specific that was wrong, but the overall form of this earlier film had not quite captured the way Mr. Burkett saw himself.

The importance of the aesthetic dimension was not limited to media productions or external representations. Throughout my time with Mr. Burkett, he conducted himself with a specific style manifested through his dress, his gestures, his speech, and his interactions. This style was consistent throughout the many different spaces he occupied, whether teaching youth, working in the fields, telling stories, or giving keynote lectures. His style was so distinctive that it was even mimicked at times, sometimes partly in jest, but mostly because he was an honored and respected figure among the farming community (and especially for black farmers).

I continued to film Mr. Burkett through my time in the field, each time with a deeper relationship. But I am continually drawn back to the first film encounter I had with Mr. Burkett. I still find it the best production I have with him. It demonstrates his extensive knowledge, and puts him in the driver's seat, as a knowledgeable expert in the field and the producer of his own image of what it means to be a black farmer.

The problem of representation can never fully be overcome. The experiences, identities, opinions, and truths of people cannot be directly observed, but are always communicated through a representational form, and the form is always a derivative. By manipulating the form, people can thus manipulate how their lives and experiences, or knowledge, are understood. Form can resist dominant stereotypes and can create an alternative, perhaps even ideal subjective position. But the problem with a form that is

too obscure from the dominant discourse is that it cannot be read. Bridges, or connections, between expectations from audiences across disjunctures must exist to assist any form of drastic shift from the expected. Form cannot be completely removed from content either. The representations affect identity, just as identity shapes representations. Mr. Burkett's intentional production of representation demonstrates these connections. His awareness and purposeful construction of his representational form was designed to effectively communicate his rural perspective, development goals, and experiences being a black farmer. This cultivated representational form also served to inspire and model a positive role for other black farmers.

Becoming the Black Farmer

Film 20: Planting in the Fields https://vimeo.com/139879225/589a5d5a12

Melvin Jones (MJ) grew up around the Indian Springs Farmers Association. He is the nephew of Mr. Ben Burkett and has extended family throughout the region surrounding the cooperative. His family owns the land he currently farms. It was previously owned by one of his uncles, who faced increasing debt and had to sell the land. Aware of the growing interest in land by housing developments and industrial farmers, MJ's family bought the land to keep it in the family and maintain a presence of small farmers. MJ, not wanting the land to turn to weeds, decided to try farming on it. He started with only a few rows of vegetable crops and over the years has increased his vegetable production and expanded into livestock as well. He also helps his mother maintain her gardens, and works on Mr. Burkett's fields when he is out of town.

MJ is being trained through the cooperative, both to be a farmer, manager, and organizer. Partly, the goal for Indian Springs is to bring young people into farming, to continue the legacy and practice of being black farmers. But this training also enables mobility, and a possibility of moving beyond the confines of the local community. As Mr. Burkett comments, "We train them up and they go off to find better jobs." The co-op, and other FSC/LAF institutional spaces, offers inroads to developing a professionalization that is recognized outside of farming. This is the dual goal of organizations like the FSC/LAF. One the one hand, they work to develop independent institutional spaces through which young farmers, such as MJ, gain agricultural training and a sense of cultural heritage. Simultaneously, these spaces train youth in skills that help them enter into and be competitive within current economic and political spaces. Many of the youth who have worked within the FSC/LAF institutional spaces have gone

on to have political careers, jobs within government extension programs, or careers beyond the agricultural sector.

For MJ, the struggle is to find growing opportunities while staying connected to his farm. The same day I came to film MJ planting he had a late morning meeting with a woman from FoodCorp. He was applying for a job that would require him to live in Jackson, Mississippi. Many of the MAC organizers live in or around Jackson, even those with family farms. But MJ is in charge of the fields he has inherited. He did not want to leave his farm, and was trying to work out an arrangement in which he could get the job and commute to the places he needed to be. In many ways, he is working to set up a situation similar to his uncle, Mr. Burkett.

MJ was one of my regular contacts at the Indian Springs Farmers' Association. During my research he served as the cooperative manager. He wanted the activities of farming and the cooperative documented on film, and therefore made sure I was able to capture many of the key moments. The short piece here happened later in my research but represents an early stage in farming. In early April, MJ had decided to plant some greens and some okra. He was planning on using the air-pressure planting machine. This piece of equipment, owned by the cooperative, planted very small vegetable seeds in precise rows using air pressure. Mr. Burkett had been showing the machine at different workshops, and MJ was excited for me to film the machine in action.

That day when I arrived we headed to Mr. Burkett's farm first to pick up the tractor. While driving the tractor from Mr. Burkett's farm to Melvin's fields we passed Melvin's mother's house. She came out to say hi, and see her son be on film. She teased him for dressing up for the camera, commenting that he did not need to be all "GQ" for

farming.[15] Yet, this was the outfit I regularly saw MJ wear. She said that she just dressed like a farmer when she was in the fields. This aesthetic shift was just one of the ways that MJ, as the younger generation, was changing what it meant to be a black farmer.

The image of black bodies working by hand in the fields reverberates against historic memories and visions. Farmers and rural residents adorn their walls with images of African Americans working by hand in fields, sometimes behind a horse drawn plow. These images do not hold many temporal markers. The clothing is simple work clothes, men often in overalls, which even today this is a common image seen in the fields of vegetable farms among the FSC/LAF membership. This is why the image of young black man in embroidered jeans riding a tractor disrupts the common imagery. It is a new image, an alternative.

During my filming, one of the men helping MJ told me that MJ was planting too early. The old folks all wait to plant. He still helped MJ plant, but continued to voice his opinion. MJ wanted to plant early in order to harvest sooner and get to market sooner. But he has already lost another early planting of corn to a late frost. The concern that he is planting too early was right, and later, when I returned, MJ had lost a portion of his field after a heavy rain pooled water that froze during an especially cold night. MJ continually emphasized the importance of listening to the elders. He credited his success to the training he received from his elders, and even encouraged others to seek advice from those who had been farming for a long time. But despite these claims, he still pushed to try new things. This is part of the formation of the younger generation of

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[15] GQ is a men's fashion magazine.

farmers. MJ's strength stems from the support he received from established farmers, but with this strength he tests his own limits, and experiments with new ways of farming.

For young farmers like MJ, one of the struggles is to find available labor to help with certain tasks. Sometimes farmers will exchange labor, helping on each other's farms. There are also a number of men around the cooperative who will help out for an hourly wage. Employment in the area is low and extra work is largely welcomed, but those that help are usually older. MJ has mentioned several times that those who are his age just don't want to get out and do hard work.

For MJ, his youth becomes a problem when trying to hire extra labor. There is a tension between the social hierarchy of age, and the role of the farm owner over the hired help. This tension emerges in the jostling between terms of reference between MJ and the men who help him. Typically, MJ would refer to all people older than himself as "Mr., Ms., Ma'am, or Sir." But the men who work for MJ play with the tension, alternately calling him "kid" or "son," and then "sir" or even "yessir." MJ also struggles, between making demands and requests, and similarly alternates between the use of titles and first names. The conflicting values assigned by different systems emerge through the simple moments of calling one's name.

For MJ, the cooperative serves as a necessary institutional space for supporting his success. He mentioned repeatedly that the value of belonging to the cooperative is that he both receives assistance in selling his produce and wisdom from the elders. He acknowledges the support and guidance of the older farmers in the cooperative as the source of his success and ability to make money after he decided to take over his family's land. He qualifies the knowledge as well: it is knowledge that you have to be there to get;

it is passed on through embodied interactions, moments of being together and farming together, interacting. Part of this knowledge includes the history of the co-op. MJ serves as a repository of the oral history of the cooperative. He already knows many stories about the origins of the Indian Springs Farmers' Association, but he mentions his need to learn more, especially from elders that are close to dying. Interestingly, though, the origin stories shift slightly when MJ tells them. The history he tells is not of the suffering and struggles of black farmers, but of the innovation of the Indian Springs Cooperative. As he talks about the origins of Indian Springs, he emphasizes their marketing skills and overall development practice. He leaves out the racial tension that often colors stories about the beginning of Indian Springs told by older members.

MJ epitomizes the goals and vision the FSC/LAF has for the youth. He embraces the practices of farming, not just as a means to an end, but as a desirable practice and a cultural heritage. He portrays the type of positive sensory experience that FSC/LAF institutional spaces attempt to cultivate. Additionally, MJ has developed the skills and techniques needed for running his own farm. He explains how he learned to farm through growing up around the cooperative and spending time with the elders. Now he has established a viable enterprise and is looking for ways to expand and build his farm. MJ has changed the narrative, and the experience of farming, embodying a positive and productive point of view.

Growing Young Black Farmers

Film 21: Sankofa Youth Farming https://vimeo.com/157086233/63dd5173e7

One of the programs run by the FSC/LAF staff at the Rural Training and Research Center in Epes, Alabama is the Sankofa Youth program. This program was designed to both teach local youth about farming and offer them summer employment. FSC/LAF staff recruit youth from the local high schools and churches; some are the children of members or associates. The FSC/LAF supervises the youth during their daily activities working in the gardens at the RTRC. Some years, the youth also raise chickens, or tend to the demonstration goats. In the garden, the youth are responsible for the produce from seed to the farmers market. They are taught how to plan, plant, weed, harvest, and sell their vegetables at local farmers' markets.

Throughout the summer, the youth gradually build up their familiarity with agricultural practices. Some are from farming families, but even those who may have families with land have very little experience working on a farm. Largely, youth are not initially attracted to working with the FSC/LAF because they desire to gain agricultural

knowledge, but rather because they are seeking summer employment and there are very few options in the rural areas. The purpose of the program though is to engender familiarity, comfort, and pride for farming. Peers eventually encourage each other to better perform agricultural practices, and tease those that are less skilled. By the end of the summer, the youth sell their produce at local farmers markets and at the FSC/LAF annual meeting. They eventually begin to develop a sense of pride in the work they have done all summer. Although it is employment, unlike wage jobs, they have a final product as a result of their work, a product that is valued by the larger black farmer network.

Along with agricultural lessons, the youth are taught how to open a bank account and manage their finances. During different years, volunteers or staff may expand on the educational program adding reading, writing, speaking, or history lessons. In 2010, a VISTA volunteer and recent college graduate provided readings to the youth on the history of farming and race in the area, and had the youth present summaries and thoughts on what they read. These activities are meant to supplement the failures within the educational system and encourage pride within the process of learning. Often, learning itself is not part of the youth identity.

The African organizers at Epes comment about this disillusionment with education, especially in comparison to rural and impoverished areas in Africa. But educational institutions in the rural areas are frequently lacking in quality, and education is not a guaranteed path out of impoverishment. Even for youth who complete high school, college is frequently out of reach. And if a college degree is attained, there are very few jobs available. It is often a more practical decision to seek out a regular blue-collar job, such as trucking, than to spend money on a college degree. Some high school

students even comment on the inevitability of eventually living on welfare, and calculate childbearing based on the assumed future needs for welfare payments. Even if students are motivated to attend college, and finances for college are secured, many students face racial prejudice within the academy. This preponderance of obstacles cultivates despondence among the youth. Part of the goal of the Sankofa Youth program is to encourage an overall sense of pride among young black rural residents, pride in their history and culture, and pride in their own ability to learn and succeed.

In 2011, Mrs. Quinney, a local community organizer and member of FSC/LAF, facilitated the youth in researching, writing, and performing a play on the life of Ella Baker. This play was performed at the 2011 FSC/LAF annual meeting in front of the FSC/LAF membership. The play was intended to teach the students about their history, about public speaking, and about the importance of the FSC/LAF's movement for rural development as a continuation of the ongoing struggles of African Americans in general, and black farmers in particular. The students embodied key tropes and stories of not just Ella Baker, but of African American history. One youth acted as a grandmother who had lived most of her life in slavery. In another scene, a young Ella Baker comments on segregated drinking fountains. The youth ended with a song, composed by Mrs. Quinney. Even the youth that were nervous about public speaking were part of the performance, and gently coaxed and applauded by an understanding audience. This was again an institutional space designed to cultivate positive forms of identity.

Film 22: Sankofa Youth Play https://vimeo.com/157085212/61efd87348

These different efforts for the Sankofa Youth reflect the underlying philosophy of the FSC/LAF towards youth education as an essential component of rural development. For many of the youth in the rural South, future opportunities are limited. There are few jobs available, and most pay only minimum wage. Migration may offer new opportunities, but without specialized skills or education, most urban or northern opportunities are similarly limited. In fact, many people are returning to the rural south and reclaiming family land in order to find better opportunities, and a better way of life than found in cities. This situation is not dissimilar to many rural situations around the world.

The FSC/LAF sees the rural South as a possibility for a new form of economic independence, or at the very least economic sustainability. Many families own plots of land, which offers a substantial resource, if managed successfully. Part of the

purpose of the Sankofa project is to provide youth with an introduction to the process of farming. Their theory is that if the youth start to see the economic possibilities in farming, they can utilize the resources available to them as a sustainable form of supplemental income. Farming can offer a satisfying way of life and a sustainable form of supplemental income. Farming may not offer a full livelihood for a family, especially for families with limited acreage, but it can offer a continued source of food and some form of income.

But in order for the youth to commit to farming, an enterprise that requires long-term investment and hard work before it can be profitable, they need to see it as a desirable occupation. The supporting educational lessons provide scaffolding for students to better understand farming as a business and enterprise. But more importantly, the historic lessons, and celebrations of history, are a means to cultivate a sense of pride in the occupation of farming, and African-Americans' role in agriculture within the southern USA.

Teaching Black Farmers

Film 23: Beginning Farmers Reality Tour https://vimeo.com/91532675/8b631bf510

In spring 2012, the Mississippi Association of Cooperatives (MAC), the Mississippi branch of the FSC/LAF, hosted a Beginning Farmer Reality Tour on the premise that some realities of farming and development are not known, and not visible, particularly to new farmers. The tour was designed to offer new and beginning farmers exposure to established farms and the experiences of long-time farmers, a familiar idea among farm extension services as the prominence of field days and farm visits demonstrate. But this particular tour had a different undertone. The "reality" being shared was more than just demonstrating agricultural principles in practice, as hosts emphasized the social, economic, and political dimensions of being a black farmer in the US South. Thus the heart of the tour consisted of on-farm conversations with older established farmers during which new farmers were encouraged to ask frank questions concerning

topics often avoided in professional or public workshops. I was invited along to film the tour to create an archive and resource for education, thus further making visible intimate and hidden knowledge.

Darnella Winston-Burkett, a Mississippi FSC/LAF organizer, cooperative member, and farmer, organized the tour. Her occupation as a fifth generation farmer herself, not solely an organizer, positioned her alongside the other beginning farmers and lent an authenticity to her comments. "It's just me, ya'll, I'm just country and laid back," she told them. Country, in this sense, served as a shared aesthetic through which Darnella communicated her belonging within the rural areas. After explaining the logistics for the two-day tour, Darnella gave examples of farmers with whom the FSC/LAF works and broke down the numbers for farms as small as ten acres to emphasize that small-scale farming can indeed be profitable. Many of the FSC/LAF organizers and cooperatives focus on helping smallholding and family farmers. In the face of industrial agriculture's emphasis on scaling up, many FSC/LAF organizers see a benefit in farmers maintaining small plots. If small plots are able to earn at least supplemental income, rural residents can simultaneously improve their livelihoods, better sustain their landholdings, and continue a farming tradition.

Darnella emphasized that the tour was the participants' chance to get real information and that now was the time to ask questions that usually remain unasked. In this statement, she was comparing the atmosphere of typical extension and education programs, sponsored by universities or government programs, to the type of atmosphere that was being cultivated in this tour. Black farmers may face issues and have questions that could be looked down upon, considered inappropriate, or even not be acknowledged

in other educational spaces. Darnella wanted to encourage these beginning farmers to be able to voice their concerns freely and discuss topics that may be taboo or insignificant in other spaces. She repeated this sentiment, for the beginning farmers to open up and ask questions freely, throughout the tour.

The main theme among many of the established farmers was to encourage beginning farmers to gain knowledge and build their experience gradually, ideally apprenticing with established farmers. Presentations offered by established farmers focused not just on knowledge itself, but processes of knowledge accumulation. Each spoke of methods to gain new knowledge and pitfalls and obstacles new farmers may face. For instance, Col. Carl Holden encouraged the beginning farmers to read farm magazines, attend conferences, and most importantly, to learn from their elders. "This is college," he stated, giving credence to diverse forms of knowledge accumulation. Agricultural expertise could be gained outside of the dominant university system. Col. Holden also showed the participants his different tractors and equipment. He encouraged them not to buy the newest or best equipment, but to start small, even sharing equipment, and begin by learning how to be efficient and profitable.

The advice to share equipment was repeated by Mr. Don Malloy, another established farmer. If each farmer only has a few acres, explained Mr. Malloy, then you should buy equipment together. But "they don't want you to do that," he stated, explaining that many support programs, from government grants to private loans, encourage farmers to buy equipment individually. And this is not the only way the system works against small, black farmers, according to Mr. Malloy. He asked how many had been given the wrong kind of information in school, or just enough "to hang"

themselves. Slowly, the whole crowd began to raise their hands, jointly admitting that so-called "educational" spaces may in fact be a detriment for their success. But Mr. Malloy did not just warn about dominant educational spaces; he also pointed out that black farmers might be hesitant to share information with each other—something they all needed to work to overcome. As he explained, "Black men are afraid to pass on information, afraid I'm going to get a little too much." But you cannot take it with you [when you die], explained Mr. Malloy, asking them if they all went to church. In church, you learn to help one another and if this lesson was brought into farming, there is a chance of getting the whole pie.

Mr. Malloy was encouraging a collectivist approach to farming, an approach that is not supported or encouraged within the industrial agricultural paradigm. The collectivist approach was a means to not only help farmers with smaller acreages, but also, as Mr. Malloy continued to explain, black farmers were often behind their white counterpoints due to lack of capital, resulting in an inability to create value added products or own their means of production. A collectivist approach would provide both resources and power to small holding black farmers. The dilemma, according to Mr. Malloy, was cultivating a collectivist attitude among black farmers, along with a general pride in farming. "We, as young Blacks, we don't want to go to the field. The first thing we say is, 'We come out of the cotton patch.'" The history of farming among African Americans is one of oppression and exploitation. In order to cultivate the vision Mr. Malloy was promoting, young black farmers need to both gain pride in farming, and trust in building collective enterprises. He was encouraging a new form of black identity, one that simultaneously resisted the external degraded position imposed by dominant

institutions, and that also worked against the negative norms common within black culture.

Mr. Penn Travis similarly emphasized the importance of pride and desire in making farming successful. "It's a wanna do. Ain't no show off thing." For Mr. Travis, farming was about the passion and freedom, not status or wealth. But unlike some of the other established farmers, Mr. Travis was slightly more optimistic about government support for small, black farmers. He stated that the government is starting to care about us poor small farmers. As evidence, he pointed to the hoop house (a plastic covered tunnel that works like a green house, but uses the ground for planting). He had tried to make one himself, as a means to extend his growing season of fresh vegetables. But a grant through the USDA enabled him to erect a more sophisticated and better-engineered hoop house. He proudly showed his abundant produce that he was already selling, while many farmers were only beginning to plant.

The general tenor of conversations with established farmers framed new farmers as capable agents who need to understand their social, political, and economic environments while simultaneously learning key farming techniques and various levels of tacit knowledge, to become what Mr. Braxton Bullock called a "physical farmer." Mr. Bullock began explaining that the universities now promoted computerized farming, or what is being called precision farming. This reduces farming to a set of variables. On the other side is what Mr. Bullock called physical farming, by which he meant the type of farmers who make decisions not based on discrete variables, but rather on continuous presence and observation of their crops and animals. Tacit knowledge of farming is gained through continued experience, so that eventually, small details are combined to

understand comprehensive patterns. This enables farmers to understand how to address the constantly shifting variables of farming. As he was about to discuss these issues further, he promptly turned to me and told me to turn off the camera. He continued the conversation with the farmers, discussing the specific paradigms of farming promoted by universities, government organizations, and industrial agriculture in general. His decision to remain off the record furthered the overall agenda of this tour, which was designed to support and evoke conversations that may have political or social consequences, but that were important nonetheless for beginning farmers.

In general, the tour offered beginning black farmers an alternative form of agricultural education. In the first instance, the type of knowledge presented was more diverse. Along with specific techniques and agricultural knowledge, the established farmers divulged insights into the process of gaining knowledge, attitudinal challenges, political obstacles, and continuing issues of racism. The beginning farmers also were able to experience the established farmers' farms. After conversations with each established farmer, the participants spent time on each farm observing and learning each farmer's particular approach to and practice of farming. Through the tour, the beginning farmers gained experiential knowledge of the crops, animals, machinery, and general set-up of a number of existing farms. Secondly, the form of communication used in the tour differed from that of typical extension programs. Not only were the established farmers communicating in informal, local vernaculars, but also the push by Darnella and other FSC/LAF organizers to encourage frank conversations led to a number of intimate conversations. Finally, the established farmers emphasized a systemic analysis of appropriating and incorporating knowledge. They did not categorically reject any form or

institution of education. Rather, they cautioned the farmers to think carefully about their own goals and paradigms to farming, and to use this to govern which methods, techniques, and information they would adopt into their own practices.

This tone was contrasted by the supplemental presentations offered by two USDA agents and a university researcher who focused on farm-to-school issues. Each of these presenters spoke from their own respective positions–as government agents or from within the school system. The farmers were tasked with the duty of conforming to the positions deemed appropriate by these institutions. For example, the woman who presented on farm-to-school initiatives, spoke about the regulations and obstacles involved with supplying local schools with local food. Ultimately, the food service director of the school system controls these decisions, so the researcher urged farmers to understand how to best work with the director. They would need to find ways to appeal to the director, such as offering to present themselves at the school as examples of local farmers, offering taste tests of their local produce, or creating biographies with photographs for the schools—a strategy the researcher emphasized as part of the pilot program in the local school district where children could view them in the hallway to the school cafeteria while waiting in line. Her point was that farmers needed to brand themselves as the right kind of farmers and to make this branding available for use by schools and attractive to the director. The researcher also stressed the need for uniform, reliable, and timely food products branded with an ideal image of "good local food" and appropriately packaged to fit school lunch needs. Her slideshow supported her assertions by showing pictures of happy children eating wholesome food.

The USDA agents similarly offered detailed presentations on the specific regulations of different government programs that may be of interest to the new farmers, such as the program that partially funded farmers' hoop houses like Mr. Travis'. These presentations were offered in a communicative style vastly different than the conversations with farmers. The tone, language, and style were all drawn from the agents' experiences as professionals. The information was dryly communicated, without story or interpretation. The vast amounts of details were linearly listed to an audience without any form of note taking. Some of the MAC staff present took handouts from the USDA agents so that they could themselves learn the information and help the individual farmers at a later point in time.

The reality tour demonstrates two key strategies for the FSC/LAF. The FSC/LAF tries to fulfill services typically offered by state agencies from which black farmers have historically been excluded. But beyond the material exclusions, black farmers have also been excluded from educational services and involvement in social, political, and economic spaces. These types of exclusions may be subtler or more difficult to measure and evaluate. Similarly, they are more nuanced forms of exclusion. For instance, exclusions from knowledge and participation may function based on literacy or professionalization. Often coded cultural references to language, dress, or ways of being become a basis for participation and exclusion. Also, the vastness of rural areas creates another blanket of means to exclude. Black farmers may live in remote areas that are not known by or easily accessibly by government extension agents. The FSC/LAF therefore often takes up the role of extension agent by connecting black farmers to educational resources, government programs, and information important to the occupation of

farming. The tour is an example of this type of effort. Along with meeting established farmers, the beginning farmers were taught about possibilities for acquiring loans, government programs, educational opportunities, and other resources necessary for building successful livelihoods.

But the FSC/LAF programs do more than mimic the existing extension program from which black farmers are excluded. They also create independent institutional spaces through which to build alternative ideological frameworks and cultural references for the existence of black farmers. These alternative spaces celebrate and encourage cultural and ideological differences of black farmers. While still acknowledging that access to mainstream material and political resources (redistribution and recognition) are essential for black farmers, the creation of independent spaces for cultivating farmers and farmer knowledge are a way to maintain and resist cultural hegemony.

Conclusion

Political access is a crucial part of the FSC/LAF's three-part strategy. The FSC/LAF mobilizes identity to redress injustices, oppression, and marginalization faced by black farmers, family farmers, small farmers, and limited-resource farmers, thereby connecting issues of class and race. Through political involvement, the FSC/LAF attempts to secure more just distribution of resources and goods, and secure equal support for black farmers from government and civil society organizations. In part, the FSC/LAF utilizes its institutional strength to make claims upon the state, claims for equality as citizens, and as farmers. The Pigford lawsuit was one of the most notable manifestations of this form of claim making. Through the lawsuit, black farmers demanded recognition

of their status as equal political participants, and as part of this recognition they demanded a redistribution of resources owed to them.

But through my research, I found that what is being sought by the FSC/LAF in these political efforts is not simply the inclusion of multiple identities within the given system, but the creation within the given system for alternative subject positions and community practices to exist—room for an 'us' in the realm of a 'them'. This means that simply allowing black farmers to join the dominant agricultural system, and gain access to the political position of farmer, would not be a sufficient outcome. Rather, identity is used to galvanize the collective formation of an alternative agricultural system.

The FSC/LAF's strategy was for a type of radical independence that began with carving out political space and securing resources in order to build land-based economic development, which would ultimately lead to the ability to develop independent communities that could cultivate ideal subject positions and cultural practices of black farmers. Gaining equal access to the political apparatus and resources of the state was not the end goal, it was a first step.

Claiming political rights and distributional equity is only part of the development efforts of the FSC/LAF. Through its institutional spaces, at regional, state, cooperative or individual farm level, the FSC/LAF aims to cultivate a desirable subject position and a set of communal relationships that support a positive self-identity and sense of cultural heritage among black farmers. These aspects become just as crucial for the development of rural communities, but are sometimes overlooked. Community formation and cultural pride are not given entities but are in need of constant cultivation. It is from these spaces that farmers and rural residents create alternative practices and resist hegemonic

subjectification, perhaps not completely but in part. This process of identity formation requires not just an ideological platform, but also a sensory experience through which the values, identities, and norms can be embodied. This process is not simple, linear, or singular. Black farmers' self identities are constructed through multiple types of institutional spaces that offer relational identities or imposed identities. Thus there is a constant negotiation between the goals of the FSC/LAF and the external spaces they occupy. Identity is always embedded within structures of power.

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Chapter 7: Conclusion

This research began with the premise that the current dominant agricultural system is unsustainable. The industrialization of agriculture within the US has led to increased rural poverty, environmental pollution, and unhealthy food. And this system is being exported around the world, developing a form of global agriculture that will ultimately lead to environmental and social degradation without necessarily solving the issues of sufficiently feeding a growing population. Many different organizations and activists have developed and promoted diverse alternatives to the dominant industrialized agricultural system, such as the promotion of organic food, fair trade, and sustainable products. Some of these solutions require consumer commitment, others policy changes, and others confront corporate power. This research has been interested in solutions enacted by rural populations and farmers. How can rural populations confront and change the impacts of an industrialized agricultural system?

Using the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund (FSC/LAF) as a case study, this research explored the strategies and practices developed through grassroots organizing among black farmers in the US South. The FSC/LAF promotes collective organizing among black farmers in particular, and family farmers in general, in order to simultaneously confront the structures of the dominant agricultural system, while also building alternative organizational forms that engender more sustainable and socially just forms of agriculture. Specifically, they utilize the strategies of land retention, cooperative development, and policy change in order to support these efforts. Each of these strategies is aimed at addressing the structural forms that shape black farmers'

livelihoods. But structural forms, such as property ownership, cooperatives, or the State, are not discrete entities in themselves, but processes built through ongoing practices. This research explored the practices that arise from and give shape to the FSC/LAF's institutional strategies.

Structural forms are assemblages that are created, sustained, and changed through a series of practices. Forms such as the family, a cooperative, or the State gain meaning through practices that give shape and significance to their form. For instance, sharing a daily meal together may manifest a collective identity of a family. The family as an organizational form emerges from numerous practices, such as this. But the institutional contexts within which practices take place continue to influence, shape, and imbue meaning upon the practices themselves. An economic structure that requires a ten-hour workday may limit the time available for practices related to family, or the ability to share a meal together. Marriage laws may shape legal rights for families. Social norms may overly emphasize, or fail to recognize, certain practices as family forming. Institutional and contextual factors constantly interact with practices to co-create organizational forms. But, even with the lack of institutional support, practices can reshape organizational forms.

This has implications for development projects, specifically transformative development. Transformative development, as discussed in chapter one, aims not simply at increasing resources for a target population, or improving their market access. Instead, transformative development aims to transform the systems (assemblages) that produce poverty and inequity. For farmers and rural communities, such transformations emerge from enacting practices that lead to more sustainable and just forms of agricultural. This

is not to say that institutional strategies are not simultaneously important, but to turn attention to the transformative capabilities of practices. For the FSC/LAF's strategies to be successful, then, they must be accompanied by a set of transformative practices.

In order to explore the manifestation of transformative practices associated with each of the FSC/LAF's institutional strategies, I utilized a form of collaborative filmmaking, or *adaptive co-production.* Through this method, I worked at the intersection between farmers/rural residents and FSC/LAF organizers to explore how the FSC/LAF's strategies and rural development efforts led to a set of practices. Each of the key strategies manifested among rural populations in diverse ways. For instance, at an institutional level, the FSC/LAF advocates for land retention and land ownership as a necessary asset for rural development. Along with efforts for ownership, this research found farmers and rural residents engaging in a set of spatial practices that made claims not only to their rights to land, but also to their rights to spaces. Similarly, the institutional strategy of cooperative development was supported by a set of practices fostering cooperation. These practices were essential to the formation and stability of cooperatives. Also, while the FSC/LAF sought for political recognition and redistribution from the State for black farmers, through their collective spaces they worked to engender a positive subject position and cultural pride for black farmers.

Each of these sets of practices reshaped not just the structural forms in which they were embedded, but changed and shifted the parameters by which these structures gained power and meaning. For instance, by enacting spatial practices, farmers and rural residents expanded the importance of land beyond its use as an asset. The collective actions and efforts of those involved with the FSC/LAF worked to recreate new

institutional forms, and with these forms, new sets of values and meanings relevant culturally and socially to black farmers. These shifts, or transformations, were enacted on two fronts: one against the dominant system and one in an effort to create an alternative system. Such transformative efforts involved material, ideological, and aesthetic components. These three components mutually shaped and were shaped by the practices involved.

These sets of practices also reshaped the people involved at an embodied level. The practices involved in supporting and manifesting the FSC/LAF's strategies emerged through embodied transformations of the farmers, rural residents, and organizers themselves, and in turn the FSC/LAF realized the importance of attending to and reshaping embodied experiences. Thus, rural development, at a practiced level, happened through the embodied activities and experiences of the people involved.

Visceral Development

Wendell Paris is a long time organizer and activist in the rural communities of Alabama and Mississippi. His father was a well-known extension agent, climbing from local agent at Tuskegee to state agent for all of Alabama. Wendell Paris grew up understanding the severity of racism in the South and the importance of the black farmers movement for the future of African Americans.

In Wendell Paris's speech at the 2013 Mississippi Association of Cooperatives' (MAC) annual meeting, he articulated the vision of the organization, and of the FSC/LAF at large. He began with its founding goal to extend civil rights beyond the right to sit at a lunch counter, or stay in any hotel. Without money, the right to do these things is

meaningless. Paris contrasted the common push to get a good job with the larger goal of MAC to build and independent economic base. "Folks would have you say, 'get a good job, get a good job, get a good job.' But that is not the promise of America." The promise of America, according to Paris, is that citizens can be more than just hired (and often exploited labor); the promise of America is that its citizens can control of their own productive abilities. And those that are part of MAC understand the role of land in this process. Land and the land-based enterprises (including agriculture) provide the base for a growing independent economy. The problem is that many African Americans look down on agriculture and land-based enterprises. As Paris points out, many folks do not want to be seen as country. Being country is associated with being backwards and naive. It is an insult, used to categorize those things that seem like residual markers of the black population that emerged during slavery or the Jim Crow era and should be eliminated. But Paris charges those who are present to better understand the problems in this connotation and to understand the importance of land and farming as processes in building independent enterprises. MAC organizers and members need to fully understand this so that they can bring this vision to other folks and help them to understand it on a visceral level, Paris explains, bringing his hands to his stomach, emphasizing the physical nature of this knowledge. Mr. Paris emphasizes the embodied nature of knowing what the project of farming can actually do for black farmers in particular, and African Americans in general. The best way to teach this, he offers, is through doing. And the best way of doing is through building cooperatives.

In a matter of minutes Mr. Paris summarizes the core vision of MAC and the FSC/LAF. Civil rights are not enough, but true empowerment means building an

independent economic base, and one of the best ways to build an independent economic base is through land-based enterprises. But in order to rally people together to collectively commit to building this independent land-based society, they must know and understand this vision at an embodied level. And to know this, they need to be able to experience success from farming and owning their own enterprises; they need to experience how it feels to be able to determine their own future. And the best way to do this is to build cooperatives.

Mr. Paris's speech indicates the importance and relevance of bodily practices in forming meaning and an affective frame relevant to the processes of agricultural development. Discussions concerning racial identity, history, discrimination, and cultural pride were not just discursive concepts, but were given meaning through the sensory experiences and practices involved in being a black farmer in the southern US. He is advocating for visceral development.

Mr. Paris was not unique in connecting development efforts with visceral experiences. Repeatedly, organizers and farmers attending meetings discussed the need to change "how it feels to be a black farmer" in order to cultivate a sense of pride, a sense of heritage between generations, and a visceral realization that farming was an emancipatory occupation in pursuit of radical independence. I have heuristically divided these embodied experiences into three specific nodes: the creation of a positive sensory experience of farming; a desirable aesthetic expression; and the continuation of embodied, or tacit, ways of knowing. Each section below outlines how embodiment is developed among the black farming community associated with the FSC/LAF.

Sensory Farming

Sensory perception is the basis of bodily experience and the way we experience and understand our bodies in the world. While sensory experiences may be pre-analytical, or pre-objective, they are not, however, pre-cultural (Classen, 1997). The way sensory experiences are interpreted, perceived, and create meaning is shaped through cultural frameworks that identify and categorize sense experiences (Merleau-Ponty, 1964). The perception gained through bodily senses interacts with the practices performed through the body, which together place bodily experiences in the world and in connection to environments and other people. This embodied way of being in the world can be understood as somatic modes of attention, defined as "culturally elaborated ways of attending to and with one's body in surroundings that include the embodied presence of others" (Csordas, 1993).

When applied to the practices of farming, somatic modes of attention highlight the farmers' engagement with the material environment and with the social setting of farming. It is through the embodied experience that culture and identity take shape and form meaning. As the FSC/LAF works to restructure the material conditions for black farmers, their embodied experiences also change. New material relationships create new cultural frames that are used to make sense of and order sensory experiences. Therefore, the sensory experience of farming on one's own farm is different from the sensory experience of hired labor, especially within exploitative situations. The exact actions may not be very different, but the framework through which sensory experiences are understood shift in relation to changing circumstances. Many of the farm owners I met worked long, hard hours on their farms through the extreme heat of the summer and the

cold of the winter. What shifts with the changing material relationships is the framing of the sensory experience, the pre-analytical experience that orders the sensory information.

During my research, two common embodied perspectives were told to me by farmers and rural residents, and echoed by FSC/LAF organizers in their description of local community perspectives. On the one hand, many rural residents expressed that farming and agriculture have negative connotations among African Americans in the southern US. The act of farming is a reminder of the systems of slavery and sharecropping. The practices of going to the field and planting, picking, and hoeing were part of an oppressive system. Many older informants remembered being a child of a sharecropper and the struggles under that system. This narrative shaped attitudes towards the rural lifestyle. Often both local residents and organizers used this narrative as an excuse as to why development was difficult among rural African American communities.

Simultaneously, another perspective emerged. Many saw farming as a cultural heritage and source of pride. The practices of farming were tied to childhood memories of helping parents or grandparents. The work of the earlier generation was spoken of as being essential for helping the current generation move forward. Therefore, the toil in the field was one of sacrifice toward a greater goal. Many people who were actively choosing a farm lifestyle expressed their joy and gratitude for their childhood farm experiences. The hard physical labor of farming was recast as a desirable bodily experience. At times this was accompanied by references to natural elements that provided pleasant sensory experiences, such as the cool breeze, the sunshine, being outdoors, moving as opposed to sitting behind a desk. Furthermore, a few stated that the US itself was built on the labor, skills, and knowledge of black farmers.

Rather than run contrary to each other, these patterns of stories actually overlapped. These two perspectives were sometimes shared within one family, one person at different times, or sometimes even within the same interview. This embodied, perceptual space was a site of potential change for the FSC/LAF. During the 2010 Annual Meeting, a group of farmers, organizers, and staff gathered to discuss the issues surrounding the practice of farming, cultural pride, and a sense of heritage. The discussion revolved around the problem of African Americans holding a negative connotation of farming, and the need to instill a sense of pride and heritage, especially in the youth. Many present spoke explicitly of different farm practices such as turning watermelon, walking through fields, hoeing, and planting. They expressed their on-going and mixed interpretations and experiences of these practices. The practices themselves were the site of understanding an emotional, cultural, and political connection to farming. By the end of the discussion, the group agreed that an important key for furthering rural development was to encourage pride in the act of farming. And pride emerged within the practices of farming. The discussion tied together goals of economic development with the cultivation of a certain attitude and embodied experience.

This is not a linear causal relationship between external structures and embodied experiences, but rather a bounded relationship. And practices are the medium through which these two aspects manifest. While changing social structures can provide opportunities for shifting embodied experience, a change in embodied experiences can also be an impetus for implementing change in existing social structures. The FSC/LAF realizes the importance of embodied experiences for rural development. This process is part of the FSC/LAF's development strategy as can be seen through their efforts to

cultivate a cultural framework through which farming is experienced with a sense of pride and cultural heritage. Cultural pride aids the process of collective action through which farmers can work together to build cooperatives or simply share knowledge and encourage each other. Events and conferences are places to encourage and share a sense of cultural heritage and pride. Additionally, farmers sometimes hold social events to celebrate on-farm activities, such as the installation of hoop-houses, or animal pass-on events. The FSC/LAF also holds special youth programs, including summer jobs at a community garden, camps, and even skits celebrating African American heroes. These events are designed to cultivate a positive affective experience for youth in association with the activities of black farmers.

Aesthetic Expressions

The meaning of farming is not only experienced through the body, but also expressed through the body. The meaning of being a black farmer involves not just the sensory experience, but also the performed expression of being in the world. This expressed form of being a black farmer can be considered an aesthetic practice. As discussed in chapter two, aesthetics is often associated with a disinterested hierarchical form of evaluation that is limited to objects formally recognized as art. However, there are traditions both in anthropology and philosophy that draw on the concept's reference to sensory experience. Here, I want to draw specifically on the idea of an embodied aesthetic. An embodied aesthetic is somatically based and culturally mediated encounter with form, style, or beauty (Mascia-Lees, 2012). Aesthetics, in this sense, is not just experienced, but also expressed through the body. Embodied aesthetics is a form of

experiencing meaning, rather than cognizing value (Berleant, 2005; 86). This meaning can be forms of beliefs, cultural norms, or behavioral patterns. The aesthetic body is both receiver and generator of sense experience. Therefore, the body both is affected by and in turn affects how these cultural and relational categories exist in the world (Berleant, 2005). The embodied aesthetic expresses identity not just through form, but also through practices, performances, and behaviors that give meaning to individual and collective identities (Jackson, 2003).

The aesthetic aspects surrounding farming play a significant role in the attitudes and actions of rural residents and farmers. As ideological frameworks shape the aesthetics of a community, aesthetics in turn also shape how individuals understand themselves and their relationship to each other and their environments. This dialectical relationship between ideology and aesthetics is an important part of the communication involved in the process of creating and implementing rural development. The movement towards cultural pride includes an aesthetic form through which people can re-create and re-imagine themselves.

During my research, one way the aesthetic aspects were spoken of was in terms of "being country." The term has multiple layers of meaning. Farming and associated activities, such as hunting and fishing, along with the clothes, gear, and lifestyles that accompany these activities are often conceived as white spaces. The term country, such as in reference to country music, evokes a connotation of whiteness. Some participants, in response, redefined and reclaimed the meaning of a country aesthetic. One organizer spoke of his struggle to legitimize these activities as part of his authentic identity as both a rural resident, or "country boy" and as a black farmer, stating that, "white people don't

own the wilderness." His interest in fishing, hunting, driving a pick-up truck, or wearing cowboy boots were wrapped up in part of his self-assigned and externally imposed forms of identity. Such tensions emerged for him especially in normalizing spaces, such as the large fishing chain store, Bass. His treatment and lack of recognition in such places were part of his experience over the contested notions of what it means to be "country" in the US.

However, the word also holds derogatory meaning, especially among urban African American communities. "Country" can be an adjective to describe something as backwards or uneducated. This connotation arose in different discussion around the films as I shared footage and edited pieces with participants. Some remarked that they did not want to appear, or sound, too country. These struggles to authenticate the "country" identity push not only against dominant Euro-American ideologies, but also against dominant African American ideologies that may exclude or demote rural identities. The efforts demonstrate the role of an aesthetic embodiment as a site for cultural meaning and identity.

Aesthetics offers more than a form of identity expression, it also offers a way to understand development itself. Aesthetics becomes a site for knowing through different means than propositional or analytical knowledge. According to Alexis Shotwell, "Aesthetics are practical, sensory, political, situated, and relational; the knowledge expressed in aesthetics is termed 'sensuous knowledge," naming its mediating connection between our corporeal sensorium and our relationally constructed cognitive schemas." (Shotwell, 2011; 48). Ideological framings of development are deeply tied to their aesthetic dimension.

Clyde Woods, in writing about rural development in the Mississippi Delta, emphasized the role of aesthetics as a way for African Americans to develop their own unique conception and epistemological framework of development. He argues that southern rural African Americans use a blues aesthetic and blues epistemology in the construction of a system of explanation that informs their daily life, organizational activity, culture, religion, and social movements (Woods, 1998; 16). The aesthetics and ideology (or epistemology) of development are deeply intertwined and necessary for the cultivation of an alternative agricultural movement.

Aesthetic expressions also shape the negotiation of black farmers with material aspects of development. The aesthetic form of farming and rural development cultivated among black farmers serves as a cultural form through which black farmers can articulate their material needs while also maintaining their cultural heritage. Embodying and expressing this aesthetic form offers a possibility for farmers to create their own form of rural development. This aesthetic aspect is not just the coloring, the decoration upon a universal content. It fundamentally shapes the epistemological framing of development; this is why Woods refers to Mississippi as not just having a blues aesthetic but having a blues epistemology. The aesthetic and expressive forms interact with the way development is practiced.

Knowing the Farm

The body becomes the site for knowledge that evades propositional order and linguistic notation. This sort of knowledge, by its very essence, remains difficult to talk and write about, but continues to hold interest for many scholars. Alexia Shotwell, in her

book *Knowing Otherwise*, examines four types of non-propositional knowledge: implicit, practical, somatic, and affective (Shotwell, 2011; xx). Of particular interest for farming is the practical knowledge that is passed on through farmer-to-farmer training. Shotwell draws on scholars such as Bourdieu and Michael Polanyi to explore non-propositional knowledge. Polanyi, an anti-positivist scientist turned philosopher and social scientists, wrote extensively on the idea of personal, or tacit knowledge. He claimed that there are things we know, but cannot speak. This knowing dwells within our embodied experiential understanding (1967). The current paradigm of industrial agriculture contains and transmits agricultural knowledge through university settings and technical trainings. Largely, this paradigm relies on propositional knowledge. Farm apprenticeship, on the other hand, prioritizes embodied, tacit, and practical knowledge over propositional knowledge.

One way that embodied knowledge is transmitted is through bodily mimicry. Students or apprentices copy the movements of teachers and elders in order to train their body into the proper practices. This type of embodiment shares similarities with Bourdieu's concept of the habitus. But such training is ultimately more heterogeneous, and more purposeful. As Downey (2010) points out in his study of capoeira training, the students consciously attempt to mimic the bodily form while incorporating the ideological underpinnings of the movement. But the ability to mimic either of these qualities varies among students, and the ideological content does not match onto physical competency of the movements (Downey, 2010). Downey also begins to investigate the physical repercussions of the bodily imitation. The practice of mimicry not only is a

process of learning new skills, but ultimate transforms the body/mind itself. The person recreates the self through the process of training.

Even in the simplest of tasks I found this type of bodily training present in my farming experiences. For example, the most common and often performed task among small vegetable farmers is weeding the rows of crops. This is especially important while the vegetable plants are small and in competition with sprouting weeds. However, when the desired plants are small, more care is also needed in carefully removing weeds while leaving the vegetables in tact. At the same time, too much care would take too much time, and so a balance between efficiency and care is needed. Hoeing too deep leaves divots in the dirt. Hoeing too shallow leaves the roots of the weeds that will quickly sprout again. This seemingly simply task had a specificity to it, one that I failed to master during my time on the farms. Farmers demonstrated the action, corrected my bodily posture, and verbally explained to me the requirements of perfected hoeing. Yet the ease and flow with which farmers, especially elder farmers, hoed up and down vegetable rows was something I never was able to mimic.

Embodied learning involves not just bodily practices, but an embodied observation as well. This more closely resembles what Michael Polanyi spoke of in his book *The Tacit Dimension* (1967). There is a type of knowledge that is gained only through experience. This type of training overlapped with generational knowledge; old secrets that farmers passed down that were learned through trained observations by their parents and grandparents. Certain propositions can be made about these observations; lessons put into words like recipes describing the correct action. For example, many of the beginning goat farmers were taught to look at the whites of the goat's eye to check to

see if the goat had worms. This simple technique was explained and demonstrated to me repeatedly. A simple picture of a healthy goat's eye versus a worm-infected goat's eye could transmit this knowledge quickly among the beginning goat farmers. Yet beginning farmers, who lacked the experiential knowledge, still questioned their own observation. The certainty that a goat had worms developed through experienced observation, not the simple memorization of the criteria. The nuanced understanding of how best to tend to the animals and plants is often summed up in the way it "feels," or just how it "looks." There is an ineffable quality to the knowledge that is only gained through experience and training.

This is one of the reasons why FSC/LAF farmers focus on encouraging youth to become involved in farming: to continue the tradition of embodied knowledge, developed through generations of farming, and passed on through somatic and kinesthetic practices. The goal is not always to encourage youth to become full-time farmers, but rather to provide them with experiences of the farm so that they know the farm. Even if youth leave the farm and seek other careers, providing them with embodied knowledge is important for their own growth, and preservation of valuable cultural and generational knowledge. This embodied, generational knowledge must be preserved in practice, not abstracted into written or documented form. It is this sense of necessary practiced preservation that farmers refer to when discussing the problems of generational gaps in the continuity of farming. If knowledge is not passed, from one generation to the next, there is a risk that it could be lost.

Embodied knowledge also addresses and communicates the affective and implicit understandings of what it means to be a black farmer. Through teaching youth, farmers

continue the traditions of the past, but also redefine and recreate meaning in the moment. While drawing on the past, and reclaiming their historical legacy, African American farmers also shift the embodied experience and aesthetic expression to match the desired meaning and identity of farming. These ideals, meanings, and identities can be communicated through embodied knowledge. This process is key to the FSC/LAF goals of encouraging pride and cultural heritage in order to promote rural development.

These three aspects, the sensory experience, aesthetic expressions, and embodied knowledge, are dimensions through which development practices are enacted. There is an ongoing dialectical relationship between the embodied and institutional realms. By paying attention to the embodied aspects of development, this research reconsiders the locus of change necessary for transformative development. Change cannot simply be produced through implementing ideal project designs or institutional forms, but must be incorporated into the daily lives of the people involved.

Contributions and Continued Research

Through a focus on the role of embodied practices necessary for rural development, this research makes contributions to the field of development studies, African American studies, and visual anthropology. From a development perspective, the FSC/LAF presents an interesting case study of community-based development implemented by an organization that serves as an intermediary between local farmers and the dominant system. For its part, the FSC/LAF works to facilitate access to and knowledge of resources from government organizations, it extends university-based extension services to often excluded or overlooked farmers, it advocates for better

policies, and it networks individual farmers together. Through building cooperatives within this network, individual farmers also gained increased bargaining power for buying and selling products, and can expand the scale of their individual enterprises. But while the FSC/LAF works to facilitate these changes for black farmers, it continually insists that the individuals involved must first be educated on the sources of the obstacles they face, and choose their own solutions for which they must be responsible. This position is difficult and often negotiated as farmers struggle to take ownership of their own interests and solutions. For instance, when helping new and beginning cooperatives, such as SOGOCO, many of the FSC/LAF staff may initially take on duties that should ideally be the responsibility of the cooperative. At several of the SOGOCO meetings, the FSC/LAF revisited and discussed this issue, encouraging the cooperative itself to clearly outline what role they thought would be best for the FSC/LAF. Part of this hands-off approach stems from an ideal of empowering local communities, but it is also based on an ideology of sustainability. Without local control, any sort of development effort will inevitably be short lived.

Key to engendering local control was promoting and facilitating embodied practices. As discussed above, this manifested through encouraging pride in black farmer culture, positive affective responses to the practices of farming, and the continuation of embodied knowledge. These elements helped to engage individuals within the vision and purpose set out by the FSC/LAF. The embodied practices become central to local tie in, and local ownership of development initiatives.

These embodied practices also form the collective identity of black farmers, as a distinct group. The use of a racial category on the one hand helps black farmers draw

attention to the historic trajectory and current forms of discrimination and oppression that lead to continued impoverishment and inequity. But the racial category is not solely an externally imposed categorization of people. As part of the FSC/LAF's development strategies, the term black farmer becomes an organizing concept through which to address oppression at large. It is part of the FSC/LAF's conception of food sovereignty, a right to farming and farm related livelihoods for all people. But the term also is specifically embedded within the historic and cultural formation of African Americans in the US. Evoking and promoting the collective identity of black farmers is a means to build a form of cultural relevance among African Americans engaged in farming, and this in turn supports individuals' commitment to rural development.

In order to engage with and understand the role of embodied practices, this research utilized *adaptive co-produced filmmaking* with participants. This type of filmmaking was based on a type of experimental practice-based research, in which the process of making films was a means to explore and discuss rural development with participants. This type of filmmaking departs from illustrative uses, or documentation based forms of filmmaking, in which the films either popularize, or more accurately capture data. Instead, films were a creative medium through which an intersubjective engagement could be formed both verbally and performatively. Through the ongoing process of filming, editing, sharing footage, and filming again, the process was refined over time, and the knowledge produced from each film enhanced. Filmmaking was especially useful for engaging with the embodied aspects of practices. By using an observational approach (as described in chapter two), filmmaking enabled an interaction

with the sensory, aesthetic, and tacit forms of development that often evade discursive description.

Two areas of expansion would further benefit this research. First, while this research was designed as an in depth study of a particular set of practices, it lacks a more comprehensive evaluation of the FSC/LAF as a whole, or the multitude of cooperatives and farmers within the FSC/LAF not only in Alabama and Mississippi but in other states as well. Using the knowledge derived from this project, further research could be produced through more pointed and broad investigation of the different spaces of activities throughout the FSC/LAF's network. And a broader comparison could be made upon between the different cooperative members and especially between diverse forms of cooperatives. This could lead to better understanding of the role and function of cooperatives in rural development in general.

Second, this project mostly shared footage and rushes with participants who were within the films themselves. Further research could be made on the circulation and reception of films. This could include circulation within the FSC/LAF's networks, and the reception and circulation of the films outside of the rural south. Finally, additional research could be made comparing the FSC/LAF to other rural development organizations in the south, and elsewhere, and between cooperatives within the FSC/LAF, and elsewhere. These comparisons would again create a more thorough understanding of rural development in general.

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