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Toward a Global Organic Culture: Ethnographic Perspectives on Wwoofing Practices in Peru and New Zealand

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I explore the meaning behind sustainable living among organic farmers and their families in two countries. It is based on original, ethnographic research that I conducted in New Zealand in fall 2012 and Peru in summer 2012 with support from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology Meerwarth Undergraduate Research Fund. In carrying out my research I relied on participant-observation, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and writing ethnographic fieldnotes. Drawing on contemporary scholarship in the anthropology of food and the environment, my thesis contributes to cross-culturally understandings of sustainability and local and global foodways. Specifically, I will interpret the meaning and significance of my informants' decision to live sustainably through their participation in wwoofing.

The global network of wwoofing aims to connect volunteers interested in learning about organic farming techniques with farmers looking for labor assistance. Volunteers exchange work for food, accommodation, knowledge, and experience. As a method of farming and a subjective ideological orientation, this global movement allows travelers from all over the world to experience organic lifestyles worldwide. In my thesis, I connect my experiences of organic living in Peru and New Zealand. In comparing wwoofing practices in these two field sites, I argue that despite observable differences in organic practices, a global organic culture is emerging. Here I highlight some shared features of this global organic culture, such as food authenticity, sustainability of the earth, and a personal connection of individuals to the land. The global organic culture

emphasizes a conscious awareness of what is going into one's body and why. Using food as an expression of values and beliefs, organic farmers reconnect to the land and their food in attempts to construct an alternative identity. By focusing on food authenticity, my informants develop vast relationships with the land, which shapes their identity and creates new forms of self-enhancement.

INTRODUCTION: RESEARCH ON WWOOFING

The values, beliefs, and meaning that we as human beings attribute to ideas and actions both individually and collectively combine to create our personal perception, or understanding of the world that which surrounds us. As cultural anthropologist Eric Gable (2011:18) writes, "When we use the word 'culture,' we are generally referring to a system of meanings, a system of ideas present in a myriad of human actions, from the most mundane to the most exalted." This complex system of meanings reveals vast layers that anthropologists must interpret in order to understand a particular way of life.

The environment, actively shapes and influences culture as people interact with it on a daily basis. Individuals commonly think about the environment and culture in terms of a dichotomy, with a shared mutual influence of one upon the other. Considering this relationship, many people have become concerned with the destructive practices and methods of industrial agriculture. Organic agriculture and sustainable practices have expanded in response, rejecting these damaging mainstream methods. Organic farmers are motivated by desires to reconnect with their source of food and increase the standard of quality, focusing on promoting ecological growth within the landscape. As environmental sociologist Jack Kloppenburg states (2000:182) "ecological sustainability may involve organic and biodynamic methods, but more importantly is characterized by a philosophical relationship with the land that is nonexploitative and regenerative."

In my honors thesis, I explore the meaning behind sustainable living among organic farmers and their families in Peru and New Zealand. It is based on original,

ethnographic research I conducted in New Zealand, following my semester abroad in fall 2011 and the summer of 2012 in Peru. My thesis will contribute to the anthropological study of food and landscape and the symbolic representation of these topics cross-culturally. Specifically, I will interpret the meaning and significance behind my informants' decision to live sustainably. I explore the meaning of Kloppenburg's phrase, a "philosophical relationship with the land," by focusing on the various customs, rituals, and forms of sustainability I encountered in my research. Finally, comparing my data from Peru and New Zealand, I identify some of the observable shared features of the global "organic culture," which I suggest is emerging worldwide.

Wwoofing: Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms

Sue Coppard developed "Working Weekends on Organic Farms" as a system of exchange between volunteers and organic farmers in 1971, when she was working as a secretary in England. This organization provided an opportunity for individuals to work weekends on organic farms and to re-connect with their food source. The increased demand for longer periods of stay initiated the change in name to "Willing Workers on Organic Farms" (Mosedale 2009:25). Recognizing the subsequent transformation into a global system of exchange, the name was modified yet again to "Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms."

The global network of *wwoofing* aims to connect volunteers interested in learning about organic farming techniques with farmers looking for labor assistance. Volunteers

exchange work for food, accommodation, knowledge, and experience. According to Mosedale (2009:25):

> In essence, Wwoofing emerged from a desire to engage with the organic food movement and is now seen as a good way to increase the awareness of alternative solutions to industrial agriculture and at the same time to act as conduit for a transfer of knowledge within and outside the movement.

As both an objective method of farming and a subjective ideological orientation, wwoofing according to Ord (n.d.:9) underscores the following principles:

> protecting the environment, minimizing soil degradation and soil erosion, decreasing pollution, optimizing biological productivity, maintaining long-term soil fertility, and maintaining biological diversity within the system.

Host farms, including both independent farms and national organizations, currently can be found in a total of 95 countries. This exchange helps to foster an alternative lifestyle, form of mobility, and sustainable method of tourism (Ord n.d.:3). The global presence of the Wwoof movement allows travelers from all over the world the opportunity to experience a lifestyle representative of organic practices. As Mosedale (2009:26-7) states:

> Motivations of Wwoofers are similarly varied with some using it merely as a cheap way to travel around New Zealand without real interest in learning about organic practices, whereas for others the interaction with the hosts or other Wwoofers is the key to a successful experience. This interaction is how knowledge about organic practices is transferred and how wwoofers experience different lifestyles. An important aspect for these types of wwoofers is to learn about techniques and lifestyles in order to a) strengthen their own aspiration for alternative lifestyles and b) take on knowledge in order to inform their own practices and to be able to emulate the chosen alternative lifestyle.

I first learned about wwoofing through backpackers I met while travelling through New Zealand in 2011. Wwoofing was immediately appealing to me because it constituted an affordable method to travel and a way to prolong my stay in New Zealand. It was also

an extremely interesting organization, as I was drawn to the emphasis of organic principles. My first wwoofing experience was unforgettable. I lived with the Guthries for ten days, where I learned about biodynamic farming, composting, medicinal herbalism, vegetarianism, and spiritualism. Before heading home, I traveled to the North Island of New Zealand to wwoof with Warren Snow, an older host who was consumed by his management work in sustainability. As a result of my experiences wwoofing in New Zealand, I decided to try wwoofing in Peru and to compare the experiences ethnographically in an honors thesis. As Mosedale (2009:27) states, "much of the attraction and popularity of wwoofing lies in the complex interplay of unpredictability, alternative lifestyles, being embedded in local culture and cheapness." Indeed, although one never truly knows what to expect upon arrival as a volunteer on an organic farm; it is the mutual trust, faith, commitment and humanity of both parties that allows this international movement to continuously grow and flourish, transforming countless lives globally. This cultural exchange involving sustainability and the shared ideals of the organic lifestyle presents an incredibly enriching experience for hosts and volunteers alike. Drawing on contemporary scholarship in the anthropology of food and the environment, my thesis contributes to cross-cultural understandings of sustainability, local and global foodways, and the emerging, global organic culture.

The Anthropology of Food

According to Sidney Mintz (2002:102), "In-depth studies of food systems remind us of the pervasive role of food in human life. Next to breathing, eating is perhaps the

most essential of all human activities, and one with which much of social life is entwined." Indeed, food can be seen and interpreted symbolically by examining its relation to social change, authenticity, security or insecurity, rituals, practices, and identity formation. Food is a means of communication, revealing deep cultural values (e.g., Williams-Forson and Counihan 2012, eds.). Similarly, eating is also shaped by cultural values and beliefs. The meanings that individuals attribute to various forms of consumption in addition to the choice to consume or not to consume itself are culturally relative and reveal varied meanings (e.g., Counihan and Van Esterik, eds. 2013; Weis 1996). According to Delind (2005:136), "food not only connects bodies to place and to the cultures and soils of place, but it teaches us a great deal about who we are and where we belong." Despite the biological function of food, the associated cultural aspects provide a particularly rich topic for investigation within the field of anthropology.

The global culture of organic farming sets itself apart from the culture of mainstream foodways. Within the age of mass production and consumption, there is increasing demand for sustainability along with the proper management of the Earth and its resources. As Kloppenburg (2000:178) states, food is central to this demand: "How we eat is now recognized as a major determinant of how natural resources and human labor are used and misused." Local food enthusiasts perceive the global dependency on mass production as inherently connected to the loss of cultural identification through food (e.g. Weis 2011; Williams-Forson and Counihan 2012, eds.). Sustainability can be interpreted as not only a long-term responsibility of proper resource usage, but also a form of expressing social values. According to Delind (2005:123), the local food movement

"focuses on reconnecting people to their food supply and reinvigorating the values (and relationships) inherent in community through the production, purchase, and consumption of local food." Organic farmers reject the mainstream detachment of individuals to their food sources and imbue food and foodways with value and meaning. Motivated to reconnect to the land and their food, organic farmers attempt to reclaim and preserve identity by placing vast significance on the authenticity of food.

Environmental Anthropology

The environment is a relative concept that people perceive differently across cultures (e.g. Basso 1988; Tsing 2001; Anderson and Nuttall 2004, eds.). Shoreman-Ouimet and Kopnina (2011:17) distinguish two separate constructs that comprise the environment, the social and natural (physical) domains. The social environment consists of culture and the society in which populations develop, while the natural environment encompasses the ecological unit of natural and organic components. Because of the complex relationships that people develop with their surrounding environment, a reciprocal affiliation between land and people develops. Populations intentionally or inadvertently shape their surrounding environment, while simultaneously the environment influences them and their culture.

The global organic culture attempts to restructure the relationship of the individual to the natural environment. All of my informants expressed a shared desire to reconnect to the Earth through the natural environment. Each family preserves, develops, and sustains their respective land, drawing identity from the landscape. This connection

between identity and the land embodies the distinctive beliefs and values that characterize the global organic culture. Organic farmers commonly perceive the farm as an entity, which embodies cultural values across the landscape. Organic agricultural practices, which diverge from the goals of industrial agriculture, focus closely on the development and sustainability of the land through various organic methods. Members of the organic culture consider the environment not as a controllable source of unlimited resources, but instead as an organic entity that is in jeopardy of being destroyed. Organic farming, is commonly defined by what it does *not* do in comparison to other forms of agriculture. This can include rejecting the use of pesticides, artificial fertilizers, chemicals, growth hormones, and genetically modified organisms (GMO's). It is a holistic approach that according to Lockie (2006:3) encompasses:

> practices that enhance soil health, biodiversity, and natural ecological processes of nutrient and energy recycling; that allow animals to act out natural patterns of behaviour; and which reduce the impacts of farming on the wider landscape.

Similarly, Milton (1993:211) states, "As an agricultural strategy, organic farming is seen by its opponents as naïve in its emphasis on future cooperation with, rather than domination of, the natural world." Opposing the dominant methods of industrial agriculture, organic farmers connect to their landscape through a symbiotic relationship that embodies the values and beliefs of the organic lifestyle, while sustaining the earth for future generations.

Methodology

I conducted the ethnographic research that informs my thesis in four separate field sites, two in New Zealand and two in Peru, with support from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology Meerwarth Undergraduate Research Fund. Following my semester abroad in November 2011, I prolonged my stay in New Zealand through my participation in the wwoof exchange. As a result of these experiences, in the summer of 2012 I made arrangements to wwoof in Peru in two separate locations. The duration of my stay in both field sites in New Zealand was ten days, while in Peru my stay was approximately a week at each field site. My methodology consisted mainly of participant-observation, through which I immersed myself into the local communities and kept detailed records of my observations in my fieldnotes. I also conducted semi-structured interviews, life histories, and focus groups with select informants. My informants included the hosts with whom I lived and spent my time, their families, friends and other community members. I also spoke with fellow travelers, backpackers and *wwoofers* I met while traveling, in order to gain a different perspective from my principal informant pool. The ethnographic fieldnotes I wrote throughout my stay in New Zealand and Peru comprise the bulk of my informant pool, along with the extensive anthropological literature on food and sustainability, organic farming, and the environment.

Here I connect my experiences of organic farming from my field sites in Peru and New Zealand by examining the shared features of the emerging global culture of organic farming. In comparing *wwoofing* practices in New Zealand and Peru, I analyze global

perspectives on organic agriculture through both etic ("outsider") and emic ("insider") understandings. The shared features I found in my research demonstrate the importance of learning from cultures different from our own. The discovery of a shared global culture of organic farming sheds new light on the greater significance of sustainable living. I suggest that an understanding of sustainability and organic agriculture from the point of view of my informants provides vast insight into the meaning and significance of this lifestyle choice and the wider culture that shapes it. I argue that despite observable differences in organic practices, a global organic culture is emerging. In my thesis, I highlight some shared features of this global organic culture, such as food authenticity, sustainability of the earth, and a personal connection of individuals to the land.

Outline of the Thesis

In Chapter One, I focus on the meaning and symbolism of food in both global and local contexts. Every culture has a distinct way of experiencing and imagining food, including specific rituals, practices and other social customs and traditions. In short, food is a lens into understanding a multitude of aspects of a culture. As Counihan (1992:56) states, "Anthropologists have studied food rules and taboos to explain cultural constructions of gender, class, nature, religion, morality, health, and the social order." I present vignettes from my fieldwork in order to consider the significance and meaning my informants give to the production and consumption of food. A common topic of concern regarding food in the modern world has become the questionable degree to its nutritious value, and what we might term its "authenticity." Some describe food as a

commodity within the modern world, which has lost much if not all of its connection to the Earth. From mass production to consumption, feeding oneself no longer entails going out back to slaughter an animal, but instead merely taking a short trip to the grocery store and acquiring anything and everything one might want or need, pre-packaged and ready to go. According to organic farmers, food has lost its quality and authenticity through its increasingly distant relation to the Earth. Within the organic culture, there is a conscious awareness of what is going into one's body and why. In this chapter, I focus on the meaning of the word "organic" for each individual family I worked with in both field sites. I examine the consumption of food, rituals, food symbolism, and what makes food "authentic" or inauthentic within the global organic culture.

Chapter Two explores the relationship of my informants to their surrounding landscape. Differing from the noticeable disconnect between food and the land in Western contexts, the organic culture views human beings as a part of nature. This culture perceives nature as a holistic entity in which people live, and emphasize awareness of and gratitude for the resources they are able to attain. My informants value the natural environment, and this becomes the underlying factor for its future preservation. Indeed, the garden or farm is an essential element to all of the organic lifestyles I observed during my fieldwork. I emphasize the identity that home gardens and farms take on through their owners and caretakers in both New Zealand and Peru. I suggest that a harmonious relationship develops connecting the individual to the earth, shaping identity formation and other forms of self-enrichment. Planting, nurturing, raising, controlling, caring, and manipulating the earth envelop individuals, and the plants

themselves become like family members. In the lives of my informants, time spent within the garden provides forms of meditation, reflection, contemplation, and spirituality. Because of the value given to organically grown food, there is a strong desire to guard, supervise and care for the plants. The garden or farm is often perceived as an additional family member, requiring the same long-term love and care given to a child. Biodynamic farming, composting and soil preservation are all examples of efforts to sustain the earth in a long-term fashion. Delind (2006:136) writes: "Through soil (like culture), we are fed by our ancestors as we will feed our decedents. It connects the past to the present to the future and holds a people in place." The intimate relationship of the individual to the environment provides a greater understanding of the significance my informants attribute to the land.

In Chapter Three, I present two separate case studies from my distinct experiences in Peru and New Zealand. Specifically, I describe each family I stayed with and I explore wwoofing practices as I observed and experienced them while volunteering on my informants' organic farms. I emphasize the methods and various techniques of organic farming in addition to the observable features of each of my informants' lifestyle. After discussing these two experiences, I compare and contrast my two host families and understandings of their organic practices. My informants in each setting identified shared values and beliefs that they put into practice in their everyday lives. In interpreting my findings, I demonstrate that these organic lifestyles reflect a consistent set of ethics and morals, which focus on individual agency and on making a difference at the local level. Despite certain cultural, economic, and environmental differences in my two sites, the

certain shared features of my informants' lifestyle underscore the presence of an emerging global organic culture.

Members of the organic culture oppose many methods and beliefs of mainstream society such as the misuse of environmental resources. Organic farmers collectively create a global culture centered on a consistent set of values and beliefs. The organization of wwoofing expresses the ideology and practice of the emerging global organic culture, while expanding the methods and techniques of this alternative form of agriculture. Although "organic" is a multivalent term that can reflect many different meanings, a shared understanding is present within members of the organic culture. The goal of my thesis is to discuss the broader significance of sustainable living, as well as its real world applicability. Through observing these noticeable cultural expressions, I portray the vast presence and meaning of the "organic culture," that is emerging globally.

Broader Significance

With the continuous depletion of the earth's resources, a universal shift towards sustainability has increased within people. These individuals believe that the plants, animal life, and fossil fuels that comprise the Earth's resources are unable to maintain the ever-growing exponential population increase. At the local level, families, communities, and organizations are making considerable efforts to evoke change. As Delind (2006:129) states, "It is just such a connection to a commons, to land and landscape, to people and place, that [members of the local food movement] wish to strengthen and that they believe will emerge through the production and consumption of local food."

The organic counterculture is the topic of my ethnographic research. By interpreting and conceptualizing organic food and sustainable agriculture from an anthropological perspective, I suggest that we can gain a greater understanding and connection to the overall significance of this choice in lifestyle. Through the use of individual educational resources and organizations, such as *wwoofing* centered on the ideals of sustainable organic living and the efficient use of resources, global change in lifestyles are developing, transcending differences within and among cultures worldwide. This emerging global organic culture transcends specific families and communities to unify peoples across the globe, through a shared set of beliefs and ideals.

CH. 1: FOOD, CULTURE, AND ORGANIC FARMING

Human beings are all connected through the shared act of eating. Aside from containing the vital nourishment to provide and sustain life, food bridges time, place, and individuals universally. Anthropologists of food have shown that expanding beyond its purely biological role, food has developed globally in its function and meaning to provide more than just a means of survival (e.g. Counihan and Van Esterik 1997, eds.; Mintz 2002; Weis 2012; Haines and Sammells 2010, eds.). As Counihan and Van Esterik (1997:1) state, "Food is life, and life can be studied and understood through food." Every person understands and experiences food in a distinct way, depending on his or her personal, social, and cultural values. Every day we "perform food" as Counihan and Williams-Forson state (2012:3). This performance is represented by the things we do with food. We acquire, prepare, create and consume, and consequently, food becomes intertwined within our lives, carrying meaning. The significance of food is shaped and absorbed by a multitude of surrounding variables that change in importance and impact, but nonetheless affect our choices or lack thereof, surrounding food.

Food itself is necessary for survival and is consumed by individuals several times a day. But the importance of food extends well beyond its status as an object of consumption, into the realm of meaning: the behaviors, communication, and ideologies that surround it. As pleasure, a social marker, medicine, or symbolic communication, food expresses a multitude of different meanings. Anthropologists have argued food cannot be studied and researched without taking a holistic approach to the intersecting

social practices, such as the variables that impact decision-making or ritual practices. The environment, culture, biology, social and personal identities all influence the choices people make surrounding food. In her work among the Hua of New Guinea, Meigs (1997:105) states, "To eat a food is economic, social, nutritive, but also emotional and mystical." Eating is a form of cultural expression that creates connections between people. It is a universally shared ritual that forms countless relations, regardless of space or boundaries. As Williams-Forson and Counihan (2012:2) state, "Consumption choices are powerful and where they exist they are often based on several considerations including personal values, economic considerations, politics, convenience, and knowledge of health and nutrition." That is, what, how, where and why we choose to eat one thing over another are all prominent facets that exemplify the diverse, symbolic meanings of food.

What is Edible?

Stark differences in environment both geographically and socially define and characterize each area of the world from continent to city to family. As the global population of nearly seven billion individuals continuously rises, the boundless cultures that exist continue to evolve, disperse, and endure. Influenced by our surroundings locally and globally, food remains a viable source through which to understand and interpret cultures. Why do we eat what we eat? Anthropologists have shown that culture shapes what is understood as edible. Members of one culture may rely on a specific food source while another may consider such a diet harmful or inedible. These choices can ultimately shape local constructs of personhood and identity. As Messer (2007:53) states:

> The definitions and boundaries of 'real food' are basic subjects of anthropological inquiry, because in all societies, human beings connect eating constraints and human identities. By accepting certain items as 'food' and rejecting others, and also by culturally processing raw items and combining them in structured and patterned ways, human beings define what it means to be a particular kind of human being, one who belongs to a particular community or identifies with a particular social class or way of life.

Human beings may even choose for distinct reasons to eat food that lacks nutritional value, completely subverting the biological aspects of eating and engaging in cultural ones. As Cantarero (2007:208) states:

> Human beings are able to consume, consciously, foods that they know to have a negative or neutral effect on their organism. By consuming them they do not seek a nutritional benefit nor adaptation to the environment, but the satisfaction of cultural and psychological needs.

In the 21st century as the world population continues to increase, people have raised concern regarding the authenticity, or the nutritional value, of food. As Mead (1970:179) states:

> A second major shift in the United States and in the world, is the increasing magnitude of commercial agriculture, in which food is seen not as food which nourishes men, women, and children, but as a staple crop on which the prosperity of a country or region and the economic prosperity- as opposed to the simple livelihood- of the individual farmer depend.

The notion of consuming the inedible through the global distribution of foods that lack nutrition has fueled the global organic culture, and is a major purpose for change. Our consumption is no longer an isolated function of production, as food holds vast meanings that are shaped by social and cultural factors. Expressed through the creation of organizations, local food movements, and individual practices, there is an aspiration to retain or re-create lost cultural practices through food. Members of the organic culture avoid the consumption of mass-produced and packaged food, as they perceive it to be

inauthentic. Though authenticity is a construct that reflects individuals' own personalized definitions, the desire to eat in the pursuit of good health motivates organic farmers. Mead (1970:181) states, "Divorced from its primary function of feeding people, treated simply as a commercial commodity, food loses this primary significance; the land is mined instead of replenished and conserved." The primary objective of my informants in both New Zealand and Peru was the production and consumption of authentic food. Despite some local variations, however, in economies, the environment, and social values, I suggest that there is an emerging global organic culture. Growing and consuming authentic, "real food" shape this global organic culture.

Although biology may determine human nutritional needs and instincts, this is merely one variable in the act of consumption. Anderson (2005:4) advocates a bio-cultural perspective on food stating, "Foodways simply cannot be explained by simple nutritional considerations, or by simple cultural ones (such as symbol, meaning, or text)." Although nutrition, health and biology are several variables involved in the act of consumption, people use food in numerous functions apart from mere nutritional needs. Following Anderson, I suggest that the meaning of food can only be understood through a holistic approach to all variables present within a culture. Within the culture of organic farming, my informants portray food through biological, individual, social, and environmental values. This shared perspective underscores both local and global aspects of food.

Biological Value: Health & Medicinal Properties

Members of the organic culture consider nutritional value to be one of the most important aspects of food. This does not mean that my informants do not derive pleasure from eating, but rather that they consider nutrition to be the main function and fundamental purpose behind eating. In their view, organic food increases an individual's biological makeup and ultimately aids in achieving or maintaining good health. In my fieldwork in Peru and New Zealand, I observed that meals are constructed and created with a concentration on nutrition, which informs both a national cuisine and local beliefs about health. According to Anderson (1997:81), "The Chinese traditional science of nutrition is based on the commonsense observation that foods provide energy for the body. Different amounts of energy are contained in different foods, and the energy takes different forms." This perspective attempts to achieve a culturally prescribed balance, as some foods are considered strengthening and others are thought to be weakening. With a vast knowledge of food and the properties that each holds, food extends beyond the realm of obligatory consumption into creating and developing a body free from disease. As Williams (1983:108) writes, "health may be conceived of not merely as the absence of illness, but also, and distinctly, as a reserve of strength, which provides resources both for health activity and, where necessary, for engaging in combat with disease." Food contains power in relation to health as some foods, herbs, or nutrients are thought to cause disease or death (in excess), while others are considered to have numerous medicinal properties for healing.

Understandings of health and nutrition vary cross-culturally and impact individual decisions surrounding food and consumption. My informants in New Zealand and Peru all explained that health refers to both body and mind, and that food impacts health. Barthes (1997:24) describes health as, "a simple relay midway between the body and the mind." Health also includes a spiritual component, as certain foods are thought to aid or thwart an individual's consciousness. According to my informants, food is believed to feed both the body, mind, and spirit. As Meigs (1997:103) states, "Food as object and eating as act resonate with attitudes and emotions related to the individual's understandings and feelings about self and other and the relationship between." The concept of health is shaped by culture in the sense that what one particular group believes may aid one's health, another may believe it to be harmful. All human beings share a foundation for human nutritional needs, and although individual bodies are distinct from one another and might require different dietary attention, culture profoundly shapes individual conceptualizations of health.

The consumption of the Coca plant is a common cultural activity within Peru, especially within the Andean region. Although the Coca plant is illegal and strictly prohibited in the United States due to attempts to regulate the extracted drug of cocaine from this plant, in Peru the Coca plant is valued for its medicinal qualities. Because of its nutritional properties, the fact that it contains high levels of essential minerals including potassium, phosphorus, vitamins A, E, B1, B2, B3, C, protein, and fiber, people in the Andes consume the Coca plant on a daily basis. For example, people use it as a remedy for altitude sickness, for fatigue, to quench thirst, to enhance one's mood, to improve

health or boost energy, and as an anesthetic. Coca leaves are most frequently chewed, but also may be made into candy, tea, or other edible forms. All of my informants in Peru frequently consumed this medicinal plant, which they valued greatly. My informants in both sites in Peru fermented their own coca beer from the Coca plants that they personally cultivated on their farms. The day of my arrival at Sachahuares, Sabine's nine-year old son Kyram brought me into the house to introduce me to the *cui* (guinea pigs). We fed the *cui* with branches of Coca leaves taken from the trees, and as we watched them devour the leaves, they squealed with delight.

In New Zealand, one informant hosting my stay was in the process of studying to be a medicinal herbalist. As she pursued her studies, I was able to gain a vast knowledge of different herbs, their medicinal properties, and uses for remedies. Susan would walk with me through her herb garden, pointing out different plants, describing their qualities, functions, and the environments conducive to their cultivation. If at any time I felt unwell, there was always an available organic remedy. For example, my hosts dried chamomile from the garden and brewed it as a tea to calm digestion and foster relaxation after each meal. Susan believed that everything that could aid one's body or mind could be grown on the surrounding land.

My informants on the south island of New Zealand practiced Ayuveda, or the traditional medicine native to India. Kittler and Sucher (2001:366) explain this alternative health approach stating:

> *Ayur* means 'longevity' and *veda* means 'sciences or knowledge.' The purpose of the Ayurvedic system is to ensure a long and active life so that the wisdom of elders may be passed down to future generations. Their diagnosis focuses on *who*

> the person is that has the illness, their tastes, their work habits, their character, and their life history.

The Guthries believed in learning multiple systems from topics of alternative medicine, to spirituality, and farming techniques. In their view, people come closer to finding the balance of individual health and well-being by broadening one's mind. Through the knowledge and experience gained by adopting alternative philosophies, the individual comes closer to discovering what truly works for them. As Kittler and Sucher (2001:376) state, "Ayurvedic medicine is based on the premise that each human is a microcosm of the universe." Everything is composed of the five fundamental elements, air, fire, water, earth, and space, combining to form three different metabolic types with various combinations. Health is portrayed through balance, moderation, and knowledge. Treatment focuses on regaining balance, which is individualized and distinct to the specific body types. Kittler and Sucher (2001:366) continue:

> Ayurvedic therapy uses diet, herbal remedies, and medication to reestablish equilibrium between the sick person and the universe, including the social, natural, and spiritual worlds. Diet is considered most significant. Because the mind, body, and soul are all considered to be interconnected parts of the whole system, meditation is used to address imbalance in the spirit of a person.

Opposing the biomedical model, alternative approaches to health care recognize the duality of the mind and body. My informants understand health through this conceptualization and abandon the concept of mastery over nature that biomedicine adopts.

Upon my arrival to the Cove on the south island of New Zealand, Ama stated, "We don't eat any garlic or onions at all here because we've found them to congest and cloud our consciousness." Instead the Guthries created a spice made from a collection of

different ingredients that essentially was used as a replacement when cooking. The mustard yellow-colored spice had such a similar taste and smell to garlic that if Ama hadn't told me ahead of time, I would have never known the difference. According to this family, garlic and onions had a negative impact on spirituality and, in turn, on the health of the mind, as the digestion of these foods made meditation practices more difficult.

In Peru, Enrique consistently explained and even defended his daily food choices. Sugar is merely one example of a substance that Enrique deliberately chose to eliminate from his diet. Expressing his strong opinions and beliefs in the garden one afternoon he explained, "Sugar is artificially processed. It's destroying children in schools. It has ruined their ability to question." He believed that children are losing their ability to question authority and those in control of their education. Enrique perceived sugar as a mind-dulling drug to which everyone on the planet is addicted, and which ultimately destroys one's ability to object to conformity. Sugar is a significant part of the human diet worldwide (e.g. Mintz 1985), providing both food energy and creating more palatable forms of food. Because of this decision, Enrique altered his eating habits to achieve his vision of a healthy diet. Avoiding the consumption of refined sugar, Enrique and Aybe ate only fruits before noon to receive natural forms of sugar into their diet. When cooking or baking, they added certain foods that were high in sugar content to replace sugar as a global taste enhancer.

For organic farmers, the process of eating brings many outcomes, one of which is medicinal value in which individual health can be repaired, maintained, and enhanced. Ama described the expression of *mindful eating*, or focusing on what exactly is going

into one's body and why. Ama explained her thought process stating, "We all have to eat so why not eat consciously and give our bodies the best possible option? Good food doesn't have to be unhealthy." Members of the organic culture have an extensive knowledge of the potential effects of food on health and nutrition. This knowledge gives food a new importance. As Anderson (2005:8) states, "One of the best ways to improve world nutrition is to pick up the best ideas from the thousands of cultures that humanity has developed." The body itself without the influence of the mind requires satisfaction, care, and love. For organic farmers, nutrition and good health are essential functions of food, which are shared within the global organic culture.

Food, Selfhood, and Personhood

Although eating is performed in social domains, it is an extremely personal act and an expression of selfhood. Williams-Forson (2012:139) discusses the link between food and identity stating, "Powerfully symbolic in its ability to communicate, food conveys messages about where we come from, who we are as individuals, and how we think and feel at any given moment." Decisions people make regarding food and what will or will not be consumed are often statements of identity, as food is also linked to both social and even global identities. Satisfaction and pleasure are interlaced with decisions surrounding consumption worldwide, as global trends can also affect individual perceptions of taste. There are a multitude of variables that determine and impact individual perceptions of what is considered to taste good. As Prescott (2012:11) states, "For many of us, most of the time, an emotional response of like or dislike to the taste of

a food determines whether or not a food is consumed." This hedonic characteristic guides decisions and behaviors, surrounding food. The psychological role that food holds through the strong relationship to memory is also closely related to consumption. As Seremetakis (1994:14) states:

> The experience that embodies sensory, emotional engagement and remembrance is received in an encapsulated form; shifted from its origin into a surrogate container, a storage vehicle, a substance from which it can be released, liberated at moments of stillness.

Human beings connect food to memory, whether the memories are positive or negative. These memories have the ability to completely alter one's desire to consume certain foods in the future, influencing individual perceptions surrounding food. According to Seremetakis (1994:127), "Such cognitive operations on the sensory experience of others are also sensory operations on ourselves that facilitate the reproduction of internal histories (however this is rarely spoken of)." Aside from any biological responses, an individual may choose to eat or not eat something regardless of taste, but instead based on particularized beliefs, ethics, or culture. According to Mintz (1996:7), "The foods eaten have histories associated with the pasts of those who eat them; the techniques employed to find, process, prepare, serve, and consume the foods are all culturally variable, with histories of their own." Individual and group identities are formed in connection with food and the values that surround consumption.

Individuals identify with the choices that they make surrounding the object of food, as well as through the act of eating. The activity of consumption is the palate for expression. As Wicks (2008:282) states, "The connections between nature, culture, eating

and the meaning of food become even more complex when we examine the choice to include certain foods, such as meat, in the diet, or to exclude them." Vegetarianism is one prominent example of the identity and expression of selfhood that food can create. This is a small community as Kittler and Sucher (2001:83) state, "It is believed that only 1 percent of the world's population refuses to eat all types of meat, poultry, and fish and that only one-tenth of 1 percent are total vegans, avoiding all animal products." The exclusion of meat from the diet can be explained in terms of economic or environmental factors. Vegetarianism can also be a voluntary exclusion based on religious, philosophical, ethical, or health motives.

The majority of my informants in New Zealand and Peru were vegetarians, and they explained this choice based on the widespread unethical treatment of animals. There are numerous explanations and theories attempting to understand the decision to refuse meat, and the infliction of pain upon animals is one of them. In New Zealand, the Guthries believed that humans were not above animals on the food chain, but instead, adjacent to them. They perceived meat as lacking nutritional value and ultimately damaging to an individual's health. The decision to avoid meat creates a universal alternative food system in opposition to the dominating role that meat plays in the larger global culture of food. According to Bove and Dufour (2005:46):

> To be aware that there is another way of conceiving food is in itself an act of resistance and a step towards assuming one's identity. It is also a cultural act and an educational act in relation to the generations, children and the family.

This alternative culture of consumption emphasizes the symbolic meaning behind eating meat. For my informants, vegetarianism is a symbolic identity that opposes the mass

production and treatment of animals within mainstream culture. By eating meat, according to my informants, people also consume, or accept these social processes and constructs by association.

Indeed, people consume meaning through the consumption of food, constructing identities based on separation or solidarity. As Mintz (2002:109) states, "Like all culturally defined material substances used in the creation and maintenance of social relationships, food serves both to solidify group membership and to set groups apart." Social groups can unite over similarities or common ideologies, and group identification can be expressed through food. Conversely, food has the ability to separate cultures and ethnicities. Global foodways pose a potential threat to local identities. As Lozada (2005:163) states, "The growing power of such corporations is sometimes considered a major cause of cultural disruption in developing countries, mutating local traditions beyond recognition." Distinct cuisine and cultural representations of food can subsequently be lost and replaced by global foodways. People make decisions surrounding consumption on a daily basis. Though these choices may be supported by social, political, or economic factors, in the end it is an individual choice to eat or choose not to eat a food. Choices surrounding food collectively merge to create identities through which people express themselves. Vegetarianism is one example of a prominent identity in which individuals share globally. Among those comprising the global organic culture, this shared identity connects individuals based on a common belief or set of ideals.

Social Values: Experiencing Food

For many, the act of eating is a vehicle for ritual and social expression. As Mintz (2002:107) states, "Eating in ritual contexts can reaffirm or transform relationships with visible others." Though food can be experienced through the rituals of consumption, it can also be an object of ritual, portraying values and beliefs symbolically. In this sense, the object of the food itself is replaced and enveloped through the symbolic identification that it holds. As the social constructs surrounding food become visible, nutrition may play only a small role in people's food choices. Economic, political, social, and religious values become intertwined within the act of eating.

As individuals perform food multiple times a day, rituals are established and portray set forms of symbolic communication. Anderson (2005:125) states, "Everywhere, food is associated with home, family, and security." Timing, order of food, location, and choice are all characteristics of mealtime. Food is eaten in various forms, all of which are influenced by culture. Explaining the cultural significance cuisine can have on populations, Mintz (1996:96) states:

> I think a cuisine requires a population that eats that cuisine with sufficient frequency to consider themselves experts on it. They all believe, and care that they believe, that they know what it consists of, how it is made, and how it should taste. In short, a genuine cuisine has common social roots; it is the food of a community- albeit often a very large community.

The food consumed within the global organic culture reveals a multitude of practices, embodying shared values surrounding food. The process of cooking from gathering to consumption is dynamic, encompassing a number of rituals. These rituals can be shared or controlled by one or many individuals. Anthropologist Mary Douglas (1972:69)

showed that what makes “a meal” varies from society to society as is thus deeply embedded with “a system of repeated analogies.” Globally different foods are gathered, prepared, heated, and composed to create a meal. Varying in value, time, effort, and desire, preparation is distinctly cultural. Preparation is influenced by culture and family, as recipes can be followed, and creativity can be expressed, while traditions can be past down within families and lineages. Each stage preceding consumption holds significance and ultimately reflects the meaning given to food.

Cuisine can be associated with a geographically, historically, or culturally defined eating community. Belasco (2005:220) explains that cuisine “can be ‘read’ just like any other cultural ‘text’.” From the perspective of members of the organic culture, the act of preparing and cooking a meal is one of social union. Food itself becomes the link to relations within the domain of the kitchen. Within this shared preparation, I found that my informants and I were able to cross social boundaries and develop relations within the confines of the space designated for food preparation. Cooking became the link to developing personal connections with my informants. In New Zealand as my informant, Susan, was preparing dinner one night, she began to disclose her personal narrative to me. After learning that Susan originally grew up in Ireland, I became curious as to how she ended up living in New Zealand. Without hesitation, Susan expressed the impact that a Buddhism retreat had on her spirit while she was traveling in New Zealand, ultimately transforming her perspective and way of life. She described the previous influence that drugs and alcohol, among other destructive behaviors, had in her life. Following her experience at this Buddhist retreat center, Susan described the transformation she had in

her perception of herself, her health, and her future. This experience was a defining moment in Susan's life that unveiled a new set of values and beliefs. This is one example within the organic culture, displaying the connections individuals create with one another through the processes and rituals surrounding food.

The preparation for meals within an enclosed area can provide symbolic safety, warmth, and solidarity. Sabine and I formed a connection, sitting across from each other in a mud hut peeling Noni, a South American fruit that smells like cheese commonly used to flavor meals. It wasn't long before she told me the story of how she met her husband Roberto and decided to start a family and an organic farm bordering the Amazon. In all of my field sites, food played a significant role in the development of social relations. It became a shared opportunity for my informants to connect as individuals. While preparing food, stories are told, relations are made, and social unions are created. Food is a symbolic tie, connecting cultures, sharing knowledge, and forming lasting relations among individuals and groups.

Although the act of eating can take place alone or in the accompaniment of others, food is almost always shared. Anderson (2005:125) states, "Eating together means sharing and participating." This act of sharing, distribution, or generosity can be manifested in countless social exchanges from individual communication with family members, friends, visitors or strangers, to communal gatherings. According to Harper (2003:131), "Eating with others transforms biological hunger into indicators of social relationships." Although eating can be an individual or social act, distinct to each informant's household, rituals surrounding consumption are shaped by social norms,

culture, and traditions. For example, before each meal with my informants in Peru and New Zealand, a distinct version of grace was either said or sung. Giving thanks for the meal, individual health, and various appreciations was a daily ritual present before any consumption. Referring to the act of ritual performance, Langellier (1992:174) states, "The social ritual transforms the community by confirming and reworking accepted values and incorporating new ones." This symbolic expression of gratitude was a shared individualistic form of communication through which my informants portrayed the meaning they attribute to food.

People share knowledge through the processes surrounding food that include cultivation, preparation, cooking, eating and cleaning. Stories are told, relations are made, and connections are formed through the object of food and the act of eating. As an object retaining vast, symbolic meaning, food carries the ability to segregate and divide, but also to connect and unify. Engaging cultures, ethnicities, gender, social status, and age, food holds significant symbolic power that is often taken for granted.

The Global Organic Culture of Food

Because food influences the daily lives of individuals globally it is a dominant value in the organic culture. According to members, health and nutrition are the most common attributes that are lost in modern foodways. With modernity, Mead (1970:179) states, "We began manufacturing, on a terrifying scale, foods and beverages that were guaranteed not to nourish." Food has drifted astray from its original purpose of nutrition and has thus lost its authenticity. Wilk (1999: 244) explains, "Popular discourse also

opposes the authentic local or national culture or cuisine with an anonymous artificial mass-marketed global culture of McDonalds and Disney." Through global production and distribution, food has lost its identification and cultural connection. According to Wilk (1999:244):

> Food is a particularly potent symbol of personal and group identity, forming one of the foundations of both individuality and a sense of common membership in a larger, bounded group. What is much less well understood is how such a stable pillar of identity can also be so fluid and changeable, how the seemingly insurmountable boundaries between each group's unique dietary practices and habits can be maintained, while diets, recipes, and cuisines are in a constant state of flux.

People involved in the organic food culture emphasize the renewed importance of food in the global era. My informants believe that food needs to be resituated into local domains and contemplated for its role within lives in an attempt to reestablish identity. Rejecting the conventional reliance and dependency on mass corporations primarily concerned with economic gain, members of the global organic culture embrace local, homegrown food. Authentic food includes both food rich in nutritional value and involves the social processes through which the food is produced. Knowing where food comes from, how far it's travelled, and what nutritional quality it holds are all significant. This yearning for authenticity motivates both consumers and producers in the local food movement. As Berry (1990:153) states, "The industrial eater is one who no longer knows that eating is an agricultural act, who no longer knows or imagines the connections between eating and the land, and who is therefore necessarily passive and uncritical- in short, a victim." For members of the local food movement, growing or acquiring locally grown food is thought to create a connection to the land, and to reestablish this lost

awareness. Local food is bounded by the region where it is collectively sold and produced. Referring to connections between eating and the land, Weis (2011:442) states, "Such ecological perspectives presume that places have specific, intrinsic qualities (subtended by natural and cultural activities) that are expressed by eating, and so realized by taste." We are what we choose to eat, but just as importantly, we are what we choose *not* to eat. Food and eating engage social relations and through consumption choices, people construct identity.

Individuals desiring authenticity in the availability of food do not make up the majority of the population, as many are burdened economically, which restricts their options for food consumption. For my informants in New Zealand and Peru, defining authenticity is an individualized construct, but one that reflects a shared set of values. The local food movement according to Delind (2006:123), "focuses on reconnecting people to their food supply and reinvigorating the values (and relationships) inherent in community through the production, purchase, and consumption of local food." Organic farming in congruence with various food movements focuses on resituating food into local, real, contexts in which we have authorship of our food, all attempt to reconnect the individual with the choices of consumption. Delind (2006:124) describes the production, distribution, and consumption of local food as, "a rational strategy for initiating change, whether it is change in personal health status, in resource access, in social equity, or in political process." Food does not get more authentic than when it travels from one's personal garden to the dinner table. Delind (2006:123) states, "local food and eating locally become both the symbol and substance for structural change from which flows

enormous social and environmental benefit." Knowing where one's food originated, where it travelled and its quality are of great value to members of the organic culture. Food has become a commodity and ultimately lost its roots with the earth. Fox (2003:21) states, "Apart from the physiological prediction, we can be sure that eating as display – as a code of messages about selves and status, role and religion, race and nation – will persist in an animal that lives by symbolic communication." As an alternative form of communication through which people can express themselves globally, food is as expressive as language. MacClancy et al. (2007:3) state:

> Food is both 'nature' and 'culture,' and bridges many divides: it is both substance and symbol; it is life sustaining in both biochemical and cognitive modes. Both physically and socially, we consume it and make it part of ourselves.

Eating is done multiple times a day among a variety of social situations. Those involved in the organic culture emphasize the importance of individual choices in consumption. Food caries significance and will continue to do so long as people are dependent on its nourishment. There are vast reasons why people choose to eat some things and not to eat others. These decisions, behaviors, and values all reflect the symbolic importance that food plays in everyday life.

CH. 2: CULTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Culture shapes and molds holistically the perspectives of individuals, creating meanings and interpretations in which people define, and construct reality. Our interactions, communication, beliefs, and customs are mediated by symbols that constitute culture and create significance. According to Milton (1996:23):

> A culture may be seen as a whole way of life, as a way of thinking about and understanding the world, or as the process through which that understanding is generated, and still be a mechanism through which the people whose culture it is, interact with or adapt to their environment.

As one of the most prominent variables within peoples' lives, the natural environment holds immense significance. Individuals and societies interact with the environment by adapting to its features and its changes and by transforming it when necessary. The natural environment possesses the ability to influence, determine, and change societies around the world, and it also impacts the distinctive cultures that give meaning to the environment and to the relations between peoples and the environment.

Because of its vital significance to understanding individuals and culture throughout the history of humanity, the natural environment continues to be an object of study for anthropologists who study and interpret the meanings of the interactions between cultures and the environment (e.g. Basso 1996; Haenn and Wilk 2006, eds.; Kopnina and Shoreman-Ouimet 2011, eds.). According to Pilgrim (2012:3), "Human meanings and interpretations are perhaps the most diverse in their linkage to the natural world, based on dependence and daily interactions, values, knowledge, perceptions and belief systems, and how strongly these centre upon nature." The natural environment is

understood through particular cultural values and beliefs. It is itself a cultural construct that shapes the distinct relationship between individuals and the natural world. In studying this relationship, anthropologists have provided a number of theories in an attempt to better understand this association. Milton (1996:23) emphasizes the importance of culture in understanding the human-environment connection:

> culture is *the* medium through which people interact with their environment; that culture is essential to their survival because, without it, they would not be able to obtain from their environment whatever they need to sustain their physical and social well-being.

Milton's emphasis on culture challenges the idea that the natural environment is predominantly a provider of the physical requirements of human sustenance (e.g. food, shelter, water, fuel). This view treats culture as not so much a set of meanings and symbols but a body of knowledge and a set of practices that enable humans to adapt to the environment. But Milton's view of the human-environment connection is more complex and bi-directional. The environment shapes and influences culture, while culture in turn shapes and influences perceptions of and interactions with the environment (Boas 2006). As Milton (1996:40) states, "human beings interact with their environments in such a way that they shape each other." The environment is understood as a culturally specific set of inscribed values and beliefs, representing a distinct cultural construct. Additionally, these beliefs and values are shaped by the social interactions of individuals in society and by the interactions of individuals with the local landscape. According to Strang (1997:176):

> Social processes are also processes of interaction with the environment as a whole, which provides the medium through which values are created and expressed. The landscape is a crucial part of this medium, and the development of

> an affective relationship with the natural environment depends on the location of certain values in the land.

Based on my field experiences in both New Zealand and Peru, I learned that the relationship is one of mutual influence in which both culture and the natural environment shape how people relate to the land, to each other, and to the idea of nature itself.

As Pilgrim (2010:1) asserts, the mutual interdependence of nature and culture is a universal feature of human societies through history:

> Even when considered as a dichotomy, it is clear that nature and culture converge on many levels that span belief systems, social and institutional organizations, norms, stories, knowledge, behaviours and languages. As a result, there exists a mutual feedback between cultural systems and the environment, with shifts in one commonly leading to changes in the other.

Since the origins of humanity, human beings have depended on their surrounding environment for basic necessities. As the global human population continues to increase exponentially, an ever-increasing demand for resources has put tremendous pressure on various resources and ecosystems. As a result, the relationship between people and their environments has changed profoundly in many parts of the world, causing some societies to treat nature as merely a set of resources to be controlled and even exploited. As Pilgrim (2010:1) states, “Thus the division commonly made between nature and culture is not universal and, in many cases, is a product of modern industrialized thought shaped by the need to control and manage nature.” Milton (1996:29) describes the effects of industrialization and globalization that have significantly impacted the environment globally: “The spiritual ties between some non-industrial peoples and their land are contrasted with the way in which industrial society turns land into a commercial good, whose value is assessed in terms of what it can produce.”

Members of the global organic culture define their lifestyle in opposition to this exploitative relationship with the environment. Individuals of this culture define their own customary relationship and ideology of nature with ideas and concepts derived from environmentalism. As Milton (1996:27) states, "For individuals, it may be a deep commitment which informs every aspect of their lifestyle or it may be a marginal concern which has little effect on everyday life." Individuals within the organic culture movement reject an industrialized attitude toward the environment- one bent on exploiting the resources of the Earth for consumption and for profit. Instead, they conceptualize the environment as something that needs to be nurtured and protected from industrialization, particularly industrial agriculture. My informants, for example, view the relationship between people and the environment as one of harmony and interdependence.

Nature and Human Relationships

The concept of "nature" varies cross-culturally. As Pilgrim (2010:3) states:

> Human meanings and interpretations are perhaps the most diverse in their linkage to the natural world, based on dependence and daily interactions, values, knowledge, perceptions and belief systems, and how strongly these center upon nature.

This conceptual space, as Ellen (1996:104) describes, "is linguistically, cognitively and symbolically coherent," creating representations and constructions. Ideologies, beliefs, and understandings that constitute the symbolic construction of nature apply to general populations, societies and to individuals. Unlike models of nature adhered to by natural scientists, anthropologists argue that there is no single construction of nature. Although

nature's form and content vary cross-culturally, much of what people think about nature is never made explicit. Pilgrim (2010:4) states,

> Although relationships/kinships with non-human entities (such as plants, animals, spirits and gods) are easily observable, the relationship with nature as a whole is often more intrinsic and subtle, so that it goes unspoken and unrecognized.

Ellen (1996:104) portrays three cognitive axes underlying all models of nature. The first axis, "allows us to construe nature *inductively* in terms of the 'things' which people include within it, and the characteristics assigned to such things." These material "things" are understood as parts of nature, such as a plant or stone. Ellen (Ibid.) describes the second axis as, "that which allows us to define nature *spatially*, assigning it to some realm outside humans or their immediate living (cultural) space." This is represented through the vernacular words such as "forest" or "wilderness" that cultures use to symbolize spatial areas or regions where nature has a distinctive quality or identity. Ellen (Ibid.:104-5) describes the third axis as, "that which allows us to define nature in *essentialist* terms, as some force which is exogenous to human will but which can to varying degrees be controlled." As these three axes intertwine with each other, they collectively establish a particular way of understanding nature and its role within peoples' lives.

The organic farming culture incorporates belief systems and values that relate to the concept of nature in a way that connects communities and individuals across time and space. While conducting my fieldwork in Peru and New Zealand, I found a similarity in the way in which my informants conceptualized the relationship between human beings and nature. There was a shared conviction that all human beings are a part of nature,

rather than being separate from it. Each person, individually and collectively, is understood as one of countless components that comprise the abstract entity known in the vernacular sense as nature. Descola (1992:14) terms this a "society of nature":

> In such 'societies of nature,' plants, animals and other entities belong to a sociocosmic community, subjected to the same rules as humans; any account of their social life must perforce include these components of the environment which are perceived as forming part of the social domain (1996:14).

According to my informants, the industrialized world has severed the connection between humans and the natural environment. A strong desire to reject industrial agricultural practices and to reconnect with nature thus fuels the actions, principles, and values of those who adhere to an organic model of farming and to an organic lifestyle. This interpretation of nature values organic life and its cultivation and attempts to reestablish the relationship between human beings and the natural world. The processes and practices of organic cultivation are thought to create a powerful and meaningful relation between individual and the land and, to restore a balance between humans and nature that was destroyed by industrialization.

Landscape

As an identifiable piece of the natural environment, the landscape on which one resides holds symbolic significance and is often linked to the construction of individual identity. Taylor (2012:21) states:

> Inextricably linked to this cultural concept of landscape is that one of our deepest needs is for a sense of identity and belonging and a common denominator in this is human attachment to landscape and how we find identity in landscape and place.

In their relation to both tangible and intangible objects, places, and values, people identify themselves through their surroundings. Landscape, although a reality for all individuals, is imagined differently cross-culturally. According to Strang (1997:177-8): "Every aspect of the environment is imbued with symbolic meaning and value, and the landscape is a medium for the expression of these." Landscape often directly shapes the identity, values, and beliefs of those inhabiting the land. It becomes a vehicle for the cultural representation of environmental relations in addition to the symbolic expression of beliefs, values, belongings, and culture. For example, Basso (1996) shows that for the Cibecue Apache, places on the land evoke historical narratives that "stalk" people, encouraging them to act morally. Landscapes act as major spiritual and moral forces that cause people to have wisdom. According to Stewart (2003:3):

> The sense of place and embeddedness within local, mythical, and ritual landscapes is important. These sense of place serve as pegs on which people hang memories, construct meanings from events, and establish ritual and religious arenas of action.

Landscape, then is a source of identity, morality, and meaning.

As a means of inscribing value onto a landscape, the institution of private property causes the local environment to become a material object that can be bought and sold like other objects. When private ownership of the land is sanctioned by the state (or some other legal body), the landscape is no longer a shared moral or spiritual entity, but instead an individually controlled asset. In the colonial era, explorers departed from their homeland in search for "undiscovered" land. Upon arrival, they declared their right of possession and the land became a piece of property. Ownership of the landscape is often

expressed by through the ascription of a name, an identity. This label signifies the importance and meaning of land to those who occupy it. As Strang (1997:217) states:

> The first step taken by newcomers anywhere is to name the country and its important places. The symbolic power of this process is immense: it humanizes the landscape, stamping the identity of individuals and groups upon the land, bringing it into their perceived sphere of control. It is, essentially, the extrapolation of self, the objectification and reintegration of the land.

My informants in both Peru and New Zealand created personalized names for the land on which they inhabited and organically cultivated. In the south island of New Zealand, as Ama drove up the steep hill of the peninsula, passing multiple households, we slowly passed a sign labeled The Cove. This was the name the Guthries had identified their place on the landscape, and this name encapsulated each process, practice, value, and belief that the family shared. This sign created an invisible and immaterial border around the property, only partly distinguishing it from the land around it. Similarly in both residences in Peru, families named the land, which gave each homestead a distinct identity. Bordering the edge of the Amazon, Sabine and Roberto owned a vast territory in the mountains. Titled Sachahuares, this Peruvian landscape was bound along the periphery by various plants, trees, crops, and manmade markers that symbolized ownership. Lastly, Enrique and Aybe lived about an hour outside of the city Cusco. After obtaining an abandoned manor a few hundred years old, Enrique and Aybe decided it would be the perfect location to start their community program for the Peruvian children living in the area. Named Suyai Wari, this manor functions as a home, hostel, school, and organic farm.

Landscapes have been named throughout history, marking individual and collective ownership and identity. Strang (1997:84) states, "Land provides a central medium through which all aspects of life are mediated, and economic considerations are merely part of an intimate, immediate, fundamentally holistic relationship." Cross-culturally, the landscape that surrounds individuals creates a shared set of meanings that inscribe a certain way of relating to the local environment, whether that relationship is defined through owning property and/or giving a place a personalized name.

Global Perspectives on the Environment

> People live in places and communities; they also find a wider field of life and imagination in the landscape that places and communities in habit. The idea of landscape points to life-worlds, their potentialities, their conflicts and their deep associations with feelings of identity (Stewart 2003:236).

It is personal feelings of lost attachment to nature that have motivated all of my informants into their practices of organic farming, feelings that do not necessarily inspire political action or social movements. According to Enrique, the industrialized world is "out of balance." My informants are not trying to change the culture and lifestyles of others, but instead to individually express their values and beliefs through the processes, practices, and choices that they make. Global production has stimulated the decision of my informants' retreat to the individual household. My informants choose to be governed by their beliefs and values in opposition to the global commodification of goods. According to Klinkienst (2006:xxiii):

> In keeping alive their heritage, ethnic gardeners also keep alive a wisdom about our place in nature that is all but lost to mainstream American culture. In this, the garden can be a powerful expression of resistance, as much a refusal of one set of cultural values as an assertion of others.

Using the surrounding land as a means to reconnect with nature and most importantly sustain the land in which they reside on, my informants use facets of the organic culture as a vehicle for these expressions. As Duram (2005:1) states, "People are linked to the environment through their surroundings, at the local and regional levels and through our shared global environment." Both social and ecological factors influence our relationship to nature, including economics, policy, culture, climate, soil, water and vegetation (Duram 2005). There are numerous motivational factors that which can only be interpreted on a holistic level to fully understand the entire approach to organic cultivation. According to Vlek (2007:3):

> as human populations continue to grow, material consumption intensifies and production technology further expands; by consequence the quantity and quality of environmental resources keep steadily decreasing.

As global concepts, *sustainable* and *organic* have intensely culturally-bound meanings. Lockie (2006:11) describes the holistic term of sustainability as, "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Although what constitutes *organic* and *sustainable* farming practices varies from individual to individual, organic farmers collectively share a desire to protect and conserve nature. Members of the global organic culture believe that instead of depleting the earth's resources, the land must be developed, preserved and maintained in a manner that promotes longevity.

The Farm as an Organic Being

> The land is said to 'speak,' and the gardener learns, from wisdom passed down orally through generations, how to listen for its voice and respond with reverence. I began to understand that in preserving and restoring their own culture, these gardeners are also conserving and restoring the land (Klinkienst 2006:xxiii).

As a form of cultivation of the landscape, farming is an expressive activity for my informants, through which they construct and perform their values and beliefs. The farm itself becomes a source of identity for each informant in which they are able to connect to the landscape. As land used for the purposes of cultivation, the farm is thought to embody the nature of the individuals who nurture and raise this living entity. The farm thus becomes an organism requiring care, love, and sustenance. I observed this feature in all of my fieldsites, when my informants explained that each embodiment, plant, animal, section requires attention, energy, and consistent maintenance. Kristinasen (2006:3) quotes Lotter's book, Look to the Land (2003), in which the first use of the term "organic" was used. Lotter (2006:3) states, "the farm itself must have a biological completeness; it must be a living entity, it must be a unit which has within itself a balanced organic life." The farm becomes a living being, which the individual endows with meaning and cultural significance. The farm becomes an integral component of the identity of the individual organic farmer. Strang (2003:235) states, "Farmers themselves know their landscape as products of generations of work, and therefore as artifacts of their labour and 'culture.'"

All components of the farm hold meaning aside from the mere cultivation of plants, vegetables, herbs, fruit, and flowers. According to the words and practices of my

informants recorded in my fieldsites, I learned that the soil, nutrients, and water were all essential parts of the organic nature of the farm and each were valued greatly as one's own family. One day in New Zealand at The Cove, I was given the job to dig up a plot of land, remove the remaining vegetation, and turn the soil. It wasn't long until I found that my informants did not consider this as an act of destruction, but instead one of rejuvenation. James was consistently giving me new perspectives on each and every deliberate choice and process within the farm. The aeration of the soil was essential following the removal of vegetation, as the nutrients and oxygen held between each particle of soil became valued and embellished with meaning. Developing the nutrient content of the soil comprising the landscape was absolutely essential according to James, as it holds the foundation of growth. Delind (2006:136) states, "Soil is now understood to be a complex living system, built up over time through the interactions of a diverse and seemingly infinite cast of characters, humans among them." In Peru, as Roberto led us through the farm on "watering day," I followed behind one of his three sons. Kyram pointed to each visible ginger root, ensuring that I equally share the remaining water within my buckets among the visible roots sprouting from the hilltop. It was obvious to me that this nine-year old boy already had a great respect for each plant, tree, root, and piece of vegetation. Upon my arrival after meeting everyone, Kyram gave me a personal tour of the entire land, describing each crop to me in English and Spanish. Coca trees, lemons, mangoes, cacao, yucca (strain of Peruvian potato), coffee, pineapples, among countless crops in between, there was always something new to see and learn. As he guided me through the landscape, he described each plant in terms of its individual

function, in addition to its vernacular name. This tour became a game of charades at times, but nonetheless, it was extremely educational. I learned that these were not just plants, but instead they were thought to be different members of the family, or kin. Each entity of organic matter that emerged from the soil possessed a social identity and a social status within each informant's household. Klinkienst (2006:242) explains this ideology stating, "The garden is where [organic gardeners] have claimed, or reclaimed, a just and good relationship to the earth. It is where they affirm a sense of who they are and where they come from." My informants spent enormous portions of their days enveloped in practices on their land, developing their crops, and connecting to the earth. Through constant daily interactions with their land, my informants produced and reproduced the relationship between themselves and their farms. It is the spiritual, emotional, and social connection between themselves and the land and its fruit that renders the farm as an organic being.

Farmers learn to accept the multiple processes and practices that alter the landscape seasonally and annually. My informants explained that each decision and choice they make transforms the land in a significant way. These changes create a history and narrative of the farm. As Stewart (2003:235) states, "to recognize a farm itself as a complex form of culture in the landscape, with its own intricate history of continuity and change." As the building blocks of life, and the source of all future changes, seeds are symbolically important as well. According to Delind (2006:140):

> Seeds, too, contain a record of the needs, the decisions, and the environmental conditions that have come together and shaped any particular place and its inhabitants. They embody relationships and values just as surely as they carry

> genetic information. But to keep them (and the diversity they represent) alive requires knowing the stories that accompany them and that explain or unlock their coded messages and meanings.

As Delind demonstrates, the process of planting seeds holds vast significance for organic farmers. These are not simply seeds from a dead plant that get put into the ground and are occasionally watered. The process of planting, as well as the stages that precede and follow it, hold vast meaning for organic farmers. Seeds are not put in the ground and left to magically create a piece of vegetation, though this may occur. While preparing to plant in New Zealand, at The Cove, the first step is to clear the land of dead or unwanted vegetation, so that the soil can be prepared through aeration and hydration. On all of my informants' organic farms, this process was done completely by hand with various shovels, rakes, and other available farming tools. Once the soil is sufficiently prepared, the act of planting carries vast significance, and is ritualized.

Warren, one of my informants, lived on the north island of New Zealand. Though he didn't have expansive acres of land to farm, he transformed his yard into a garden full of vegetables, herbs, and flowers. As we both planted in the garden together in the heat of the afternoon sun, we jointly connected with nature as we followed the ritual with a celebration of music, food, and each other's company. At The Cove the entire family assisted in the process of spreading the seeds for the food garden, including Susan and James' three-year old son, Tadhg. This area was planted to provide the farm's own colony of bees an individualized piece of land full of nectar-rich plants in attempts to maintain their presence on the farm. Ama said a prayer out loud as we held the seeds and showered, in sequence, the prepared soil in silence with handfuls of James'

individualized seed mixture. Klinkienst (2006:242) describes this mystical relationship between humans and nature stating, "…the earth doesn't speak to [organic gardeners] in a foreign language' but speaks to them 'in their own language,' a universal tongue. In their gardens, they are home." Participating in this ritual close to the end of my stay, Ama was ecstatic that we were able to share in the planting process after all of the development work on the farm. Planting is a process that is valued immensely, as it represents the creation of new life. The other processes and practices maintain the health of the farm which are necessary functions to keeping the farm healthy.

The sacredness of planting is also expressed through ritual. For the Guthries, this ritual represented a symbolic extension of the connection between humans and nature as she stated to us with a smile, "Now you girls will always be a part of the land."

Once the plants are well established, processes are required to sustain growth and promote development. These processes include weeding, mulching, and watering. Later, the plants are harvested. My informants described picking vegetables, fruit, and herbs from the farm as one of the most satisfying aspects of their work, as it allowed them to identify with their crops, and to make tangible their love, care, and concern for nature. In New Zealand, the Guthries in particular had a very intimate relationship with the landscape surrounding them. Before dinner each night, Susan would pick fresh vegetables, lettuces, flowers, and herbs for dinner. She had her own personal plot of land. James and Ama described this garden as "Susan's herb garden," bestowing on it an identity. This garden became an extended expression of Susan's interest in medicinal herbalism as it included a personalized compellation of various herbs and teas. This

garden enveloped a community of different natural remedies for promoting good health and treating various forms of illness. Her husband James worked the rest of the land, slowly concentrating the nutrients in the soil while caring for the rest of the farm.

The Guthries performed biodynamic practices on the landscape of The Cove as a way to promote "an understanding of the farm as a living system" (Lockie 2006:7) and "to renew the soil in order to produce nourishing and energizing foods" (Ibid.). This form of agriculture originated from Rudolf Steiner in the early 1920's. Lockie (Ibid.) states, "Biodynamics stresses the integration of science, spirituality and farming through observation of the multiple influences on soil, plant and animal life – influences that include the rhythms of the sun, moon, planets and stars." Practices of biodynamic farming use natural sources such as plants, animal manures, and minerals that Lockie states are used to, "stimulate soil and plant life" (2006:7). According to Leiber (2006:141-2):

> The vision on which this principle is based is the individual design of the holding in the context of the complex interaction of all impacting factors. The pedosphere, ecosphere and landscape, as well as the atmosphere and the cosmic environment (apart from the sun, these are primarily the moon and the planets) form the natural basis. Crop plants, livestock, the farmer as well as the entire socioeconomic environment have an effect at all levels of this natural environment, are influenced by these levels, and thus form an intricate interrelationship. A farm, therefore, becomes an 'individuality' in which the various factors, just like organs, have specific functions and are interlinked through feedback relationships.

James explained that he went to a Steiner school in New Zealand and learned first-hand a number of rituals that make biodynamic farming so different from conventional agricultural practices. One afternoon at The Cove we all participated in a "500 Stir." While one played drums, another continuously stirred the large wooden barrel of warm

water in rapid cyclic rhythms along the edge of the barrel, creating a central vortex. By quickly switching the direction, the contents become thoroughly mixed and extremely oxygenated. Cow manure that had been fermenting for several months in a cow horn was dissolved into the water to stimulate the growth of the land. After about an hour of stirring this wooden barrel, the mixture was poured into several buckets, which we walked around the property using brushes to meticulously spray the entire landscape. This spiritual process was used to increase soil life, through bacteria, fungi, and earthworm production.

Another common biodynamic practice that I observed during my stay with the Guthries was the creation and preparation of compost. After gathering different kinds of seaweed along the coast, we collected additional ingredients for the compost including straw, grass clippings, composted food, and various greens. Essentially the process was like making a lasagna with each ingredient constituting a separate layer. Once we completed four large piles about ten feet long, five more biodynamic ingredients were placed in the center of the compost piles, and were covered with a plastic tarp. These included Valerian flowers that were extracted in water, dandelion flowers composted in the mesentery of a cow, oak bark retrieved from a buried sheep's skull, stinging nettle plants buried in peat, and chamomile blossoms stuffed into the small intestines of a sheep, all of which were allowed to ferment in the ground for several months. James explained that each preparation and combination of elements was designed to enhance and guide a decomposition process. Though the practice of biodynamic farming contains a number of processes and practices that industrialized farmers may consider unnecessary

or time consuming, these rituals connect individuals to nature and to the landscape. Sponsel (2011:50) recognizes the distinctive quality of this relationship stating, "Human-environmental interactions can involve the supernatural as well as the natural, and emotion as well as reason." There is a deep knowledge and use of intentional practices designed primarily for the goal of ensuring the spiritual integrity of the land. Subsequently a relation is developed between the land and individual, one that reveals significant cultural meaning.

Gardening

Organic practices can be deeply spiritual, as they serve to sanctify the connection between individuals and the land. Taylor (2012:31) states, "Cultural landscapes often reflect specific techniques of sustainable land use, considering the characteristics and limits of the natural environment they are established in, and a specific spiritual relation to nature." Beyond the purpose of economic gain, cultivation had many spiritual meanings for my informants. Time spent within the garden or farm carries emotional and spiritual power. According to Fricker (2006:193), "Sustainability, therefore, is also about the non-material side of life- the intuitive, the emotional, the creative and the spiritual, for which we need to engage all our ways of learning (being and insight as well as doing and knowing)." As the land is renewed, regenerated, and enhanced, so too are the lives of the individuals who work it. Organic farming engages the desire to reconnect individuals spiritually to the land and to nature as a whole. Rejecting the notion of manipulating the land for personal gain, or merely viewing the farm as a collection of soulless objects and

purely functional practices, my informants view cultivation and gardening as holding immense meaning. Brook (2010:24) states:

> By engaging with gardening practices in order to nurture the plants and improve the soil and respond appropriately to the wider context of nature and the social realm, the lessons and skills of patience, humility experiencing reality, caring for the other, and being open-hearted are learnt are deepened.

The farm as a whole symbolizes the essence of life itself. Klinkienst (2006:241) states, "The earth is the actual ground of our lives- we grow out of the soil too. If it dies, we die. If it lives, we eat and live. You know this when you grow your own food." Values, beliefs, and meanings emerge out of the relations between humans and nature that are cultivated on the organic farm. The landscape also provides individuals with an identity through which they connect to the environment. As Delind (2006:136) states, "For people who are settled, shared meanings, personal and collective identities, and bodily sensibilities are embedded in the land and the landscape." These shared meanings and identities are valued, embraced, and enacted through daily practices and seasonal rituals.

Broader Significance

> One guiding principle of human behavior in the context of use and abuse of resources is the choice of alternative goals and the strategies to achieve them. This process of choice is rooted in human psychology, stimulated and reinforced by industrial society, and elaborated by economic theorists. Rational choice becomes meaningful only in relation to real issues and purposes, not vaguely defined or artificial categories (Bennett 1996:52-3).

As individuals, we are constantly struggling to find a means to better understand the world and to find more efficient technologies to extract more energy and resources

from nature. Within the era of the 21st century, industrialization has come to play a significant role in lives globally for better or worse. As Strang (1997:290) states:

> increasing reliance on technology and intensive resource use supports all the factors that make it more difficult to locate affective values in the land, and carries people further away from those that permit a holistic and sustaining environmental connection.

The organic lifestyle forms a counterculture to the mass exploitation of resources that defines the industrialized world. Members of the global organic culture seek to create an alternative way of relating to the earth, one that connects them to it through organic cultivation. The soil in which they nurture becomes a vehicle for symbolic meaning. As Delind (2006:136) states:

> Literally and figuratively, soil (like culture) is an embodiment of the work and wisdom as well as the physical remains of previous generations. Through soil (like culture), we are fed by our ancestors as we will feed our decedents. It connects the past to the present to the future and holds a people in place.

My informants in Peru and New Zealand collectively value the relationship of the individual to the land, and this is portrayed through the collective practices of organic farming. Finerman (2003:477) states:

> Home gardens make a contribution far greater than that to diet, ritual life and remedy; the gardens are themselves a manifest representation of the community's most deeply held values: autonomy, status, religious piety, and personal investment in family.

As I have shown in this chapter, the organic farm symbolizes a particular view of the human/environment relationship: one that rejects exploitation and seeks to promote harmony. I have shown that the landscape is always a cultural construct. Values and beliefs are encoded through symbols like "nature" and "earth" and are revealed through the efforts that humans perform to maintain, develop and sustain the land. For organic

farmers, the farm is an organic being, treated as a cherished family member, and each practice involved in its maintenance becomes a performance with vast meaning. The farm is an embodiment of humanity, as well as an expression of individual identity. It is used as a vehicle to channel emotional and spiritual relations with nature. Rituals surround each practice and process involved within organic cultivation. The environment impacts cultures worldwide, but cultures simultaneously impact the environment. As a cultural construct the environment varies in its significance and meaning. The relationship between culture and the environment provides a window into the understanding of cultures globally.

CH. 3: CASE STUDIES FROM NEW ZEALAND AND PERU

Case Study 1: New Zealand:

Arriving at The Cove: As I patiently waited on the fence that surrounded my flat with a small backpack in hand, my Samoan roommate burst through the front door to say goodbye to me, assuming that I would be AWOL on the southern peninsula for the next two weeks. This would be my first wwoofing experience and I couldn't be more excited as my curiosity continued to build, as I anticipated the experiences I might have. The next thing I knew, a small navy blue car pulled to a stop and an older woman excitably exited the vehicle. "*Tara*?" I was reassured as I was subsequently embraced with a mother's hug, seemingly destined for a long-lost child. Perceiving the happiness and excitement from Ama at this very moment, there was no doubt in my mind that this would be an experience to remember.

After a short fifteen-minute drive down the coast and up a steep winding hill, we passed a sign labeled "The Cove," indicating our arrival to the Guthries' property. As we both got acquainted with one another through the car ride, we each learned of our shared first experience within the organization of Wwoofing. Myself and two other girls would be the first wwoofers that the Guthries would host, as they had just recently joined the organization. A synergy of collective learning was frequently expressed by all wwoofers and hosts throughout my stay. The household consisted of Ama, her son James, his wife Susan, and their 2-year old son Tadhg, who was barely speaking words. The one-level house was separated into two different sides connected by the kitchen and family room.

One side included Susan and James' study and bedroom, while the other consisted of Ama's bedroom, her personal office, and a separate guest bedroom for visitors. Partway down the hill, following a grass path bordered by flowers was a yurt where myself and the two other girls would stay. As Ama opened the wooden door to show us our accommodation, the smell of fresh wood immediately filled the air. Three prepared mattresses covered with duvets and pillows were laid out surrounding a center rug and a lamp on one side. The floor, structure, and ceiling created an artistic wooden structure of security with a canvas covering.

Ama went out of her way constantly to ensure we had everything we could possibly need. There was a consistent display of hospitality throughout my stay. I didn't feel like a volunteer, student, or visitor. Instead, I was treated as though I were one of the family. As a foreign volunteer, I did not expect to experience such equality. I was in New Zealand to gain knowledge and to better understand the experience of the organic lifestyle. I was a student and the Cove was my source of boundless cultural information.

As one of my prominent informants, Ama habitually answered my questions surrounding the history and lifestyle choices of the Guthries. Following his studies of biodynamic methods at a school in New Zealand, James was given the opportunity to procure the house on the peninsula of Otago before Ama contemplated selling the property. With Susan pregnant with Tadhg at the time, they remodeled the house and decided to cultivate the land. This was the initial decision that led to the development of the Cove and to the family's decision to become involved in the Wwoofing organization.

Work & the Farm: During the time of my stay at the Cove, the farm was in its early stages of development. Susan was in the midst of her training with the objective of becoming a medicinal herbalist. With balancing her studies in addition to the constant presence of her two-year old son, she was quite busy during the days. Ama would watch Tadhg, while Susan would study, leaving James in charge of his visionary farm. The farm was laid out in respective sections bordering the sides and bottom of the hill that consumed the property. A boundary of rocks separated the land into various terrace-like gardens, which held various types of vegetation. With such a vast area of landscape that included various gardens, all of which were in the early stages of growth, there were endless opportunities for labor assistance.

We sat down collectively on the day of our arrival to discuss the ideal working hours and to agree to a verbal contract. This practice, I came to find, was consistent in all of my field sites. James couldn't have been more thankful for our arrival, which coincided with the preparation for the collection and creation of the compost. As biodynamic methods are centered upon the lunar cycle, it was necessary for us to complete this within the week based on the current stage of the moon. The first day was spent weeding the bordering of comfrey that surrounded the property as a natural boundary, while James started preparing for the compost process. The next day we collected all of the grass clippings left behind from the lawnmower, and took immense clippings of the comfrey, surrounding the landscape. After accumulating these components, we placed them next to the pile of stacked hay that a nearby farmer had delivered for James in front of the cauliflower and broccoli garden. In the afternoon we

spent two hours traveling to two different areas on the coast of the ocean where James previously scouted for fresh washed up seaweed. After we collected as many full canvas bags worth of seaweed that the car trailer could carry, we dropped off the batch and repeated the procedure at a different spot with a different species of nutrient rich seaweed. James could not have been more thankful because the help of three additional people in performing this task was a tremendously more efficient than if he had had to complete it alone. This concluded the work for the day, and we were fully prepared for the masterful creation the following day. After we woke up, ate breakfast and made our way outside to see James, he was ready with a hose to begin the formation of two artistic sculptures. The four of us, divided into teams of two, each collectively creating a ten-by-four-foot flat-topped pyramid about five feet tall. James explained the process by which we had a set layering system whereby a layer of hay was laid down, watered, then comfrey and green seaweed, followed by hay, purple seaweed, and grass clippings. We repeated this pattern until we ran out of every component. This was an artistic process, incorporating elements of architecture to ensure the edges were built higher than the center to avoid collapse or a weak sculpture. It was similar to the creation of a massive lasagna, replacing the edible food with organic matter rich in compatible nutrients composed to ultimately decompose and create a nutrient rich fertilizer for future agriculture. Each layer held an essential ratio of the elements nitrogen, oxygen, water, and carbon that when combined effectively work together to heat the pile and break down the materials. As we completed our structure, and gained Jame's approval, we participated in the biodynamic ritual and placed the components in the central regions of

the pyramid in a distinct row. We subsequently covered the piles completely with black plastic tarp and placed rocks around the edges to contain the processes that would occur underneath the tarp.

We all created this organic entity collectively. It became a symbolic presence of our work that contained vast meaning. I observed an overwhelming sense of joy within James, as he was given the opportunity to transfer his extensive knowledge in agriculture to each one of us. James would take us out to check the temperature and evaluate the progress of each pile, including the additional two structures we made later that week. James was a very soft-spoken individual who frequently kept to himself, but he was able to connect with us through our desire to learn about organic processes, alternative farming methods, and the Earth. The farm as an organic being, created a distinct relationship and ultimate form of language through which James found solace. Our desire to connect and learn about his relationship to the earth and the environment fueled his desire to teach and promote his lifestyle. Compost making was only one example that created such excitement and appreciation in James. As wwoofers, we individually made a presence and impacted the property of the Guthries. From weeding, to the participation in compost making, biodynamic rituals, planting, and bed preparation for vegetation, we connected to the land and the family. In six months when that compost would be ready for fertilization, our work would be transformed into the nurturance for planted seeds. As individuals we were connected to the land through this compost. We were not simply working for our accommodation, but also we were making a contribution to a family and

understanding the meaning behind their lifestyle. We all became participants in the organic lifestyle and were treated as part of the family in return.

Family: The preparation of meals was one of the most prominent examples of the connection that developed between the wwoofers and the Guthries. Before each meal one of us would go into the garden with Susan to pick herbs, various greens, and edible flowers for the salad. Walking around the garden as the sun started its decent with a basket in hand listening to Susan talk about her extensive knowledge of herbs was one of the most relaxing aspects. After helping in the kitchen, we would sit down as a family, say grace, and begin the meal. The dinner table was a sacred place as everyone served each other and collectively enjoyed the meal made of homegrown vegetables. Everyone appreciated each other's company as we overlooked the farm through the large glass windows as the sun descended. After dinner, the three wwoofers, including myself, would do the dishes and clean up while James and Susan would go into the family room and wind down with some Hare Krishna music. James would grab his khol drum as Susan would sit down on the harmonium, and together they would harmonize the mantra. The first night we sat and listened in relaxation until James signaled us to come sit down on the floor with them and participate. We each grabbed an instrument and improvised collectively for at least an hour. This group activity was free of judgment, which created an act of spiritual connection that united us together as a group. Music became the source of spiritual meaning, replacing words with rhythms and harmonious notes. This was a common activity that put a relaxing, meditative close to the evening. Music was another meaningful element in the organic culture.

Way of Life: On the final evening before our departure following dinner, Ama sat down at the kitchen table with us and introduced us to her spiritual side. Ama had previously discussed her profession with us but hadn't expressed this significant part of her life in detail before. Here I reconstruct her story as she recounted it to me:

> Tonight was our last evening spent at the Cove. Aside from another fantastic meal, what ensued afterwards transformed into a strong glimpse into an experience, foreign to most. Ama spent a considerable amount of time discussing her history and individual path. Travelling all over the world, Ama spent her time studying and experiencing medicine, healing, shamanism and an array of enlightenment. Assuming this was her intent in life, Ama didn't question her future until one day she described crossing a street intersection when an overwhelming sense of enlightenment hit her. Immediately she knew what she was meant to do. Despite countless comments and opinions, Ama knew what she needed to do and eventually gained reassurance from those on higher realms. She created a school for the feminine divine stating, The School of the Feminine Divine is the gift of my soul to Mother Earth. It is also my gift to my sisters and brothers on Earth. The name – School of the Feminine Divine - is from my heart. To me it is like a celestial call home. I see is as part of the worldwide shift in energies to bring in and ground the sacred feminine energies, the Mother Divine so that we may all learn to live in balance. Sacred feminine and sacred masculine both honoured equally giving rise to the sacred child within, the holy Self.

She brought out a set of cards to the kitchen table that depicted various codes and symbols. She said that one day the illustrations, "poured in, through her," describing an overwhelming trance-like state. She attempted to explain this unrecognizable feeling of being completely out of her control as if her mind and body became a portal. All she could do was transfer these complex images from her psyche to paper. These codes and symbols were unbelievably detailed, all depicting the common symbol of a five pointed star. All of them contained similarities with vast differences in colors, symbols, images and style. As she spread them across the table in groupings, she told us to pick some cards that we felt drawn to. In addition we had to choose one of the various laminated

pictures of the divine goddesses that were laid out on the other end of the table. Gathered from world religions, each female deity is associated with a different theme relevant to a construct of one's life. The individual relationship to one of the goddesses is read through a spiritual connection. Ama explained how she doesn't know how, but she's able to see the *colors* that each one of us holds, radiating above us, similar to the notion of a chakra. We spent the next few hours in spiritual connection with each other. Ama read the meanings behind each card we chose and did a reading for each of us personally, finding meaning through each choice in relation to our lives in the past, present and future. Ama's ability to describe personal details and characteristics of our lives was remarkable, considering that she had known us for only two weeks. Her ability to spiritually read us personally left us all bewildered. This reading she performed was a lot to digest for each one of us, but collectively summed up our entire experience at the Cove. Without attempting to explain our experience with Ama, we all retreated to the yurt to attempt to describe this enigmatic experience with a pen and paper. Wwoofing at the Guthries was an opportunity to experience an alternative way of life, and to connect with each family member on an individual basis. Through the soil, grass, trees, weeds, plants, and seeds, we connected with the land as James guided us through the meaning that he finds through his connection to nature. One night, when James was out, Ama described Jame's connection to the earth. He gets extremely moody when the earth isn't doing very well, as if his emotional state were directly correlated to the well-being of the Earth. He is always in tune with the phases of the moon and the tides, as Ama described him as almost instinctively knowing what the tides are doing. My informant Susan, displayed profound

appreciation for the endless availability and use of plants and herbs, each of which holds deep meaning in addition to the medicinal value they hold. Ama carried a vast knowledge through the experiences of her life and her choices. The organic way of life for the Guthries encapsulated spirituality, identity, connection with food, music, people, consciousness, and the desire to connect with others in regards to shared knowledge and the organic culture.

Case Study 2: Peru

Arriving at Sachahuares: In contrast to the ease of getting picked up by a car outside of my residential flat in New Zealand, disembarking to Sabine's and Roberto's farm in Peru provided a much more challenging adventure. A taxi to the bus station in Cusco brought me to a six hour "bus" (a rusted purple van) journey that crossed a mountain on barely developed paths, to then catch a *tuk tuk* (three-wheeled rickshaw), to finally catch another "bus" (a white car) that dropped me at the bottom of a small mountain that was a twenty minute hike through another farmer's crops up to the household. This adventure took approximately nine-hours. Finally, I arrived in the mountains of Peru, edging the Amazon just before sunset. As I walked through the metal structure indicating a passageway to the property, the sound of barking dogs signaled my arrival. Little did I know before my arrival that this day, Sunday, was the celebration before the Incan New Year, calling for vast festivities. This day was an expression of family, where food and drinks were used as channels to connect with one another in a celebration of cultural identity. Roberto's cousin Celine, who attended Johns Hopkins University, and her

current boyfriend were visiting. Sabine and Roberto had three sons, Illian who was two, Merko, who was four, and Kyram who was nine, all of which stayed up late into the night for this special occasion. All the children were bilingual, while Kyram was fluent in English, Spanish, and Flemish. Exited to have additional wwoofers staying, Kyram gave me a personal tour of the land. Upon arriving at the patch of lemon trees, we picked about thirty ripe lemons to make fresh lemonade. The accommodation for the wwoofers consisted of a wooden bungalow that had wooden beds with padding and a mosquito net. There were four wwoofers staying on the farm including one American boy, two English girls, and myself. It was 9:30 at night as we ate a delicious dinner of chicken with tomatoes, peppers, onions, and cilantro. Celine made homemade Pisco sours for all of us while Roberto brought out jugs of his homemade fermented Coca beer. After socializing into the night, the exhaustion from a day's worth of traveling consumed us as we retreated to the bungalow. The children had defeated us in the challenge of staying up late.

The following day Celine and her boyfriend left to travel back to Cusco, as we ate porridge with fresh coffee grown on the farm. Work started at 8am sharp. Due to the hot temperatures and humidity of the region, work was split into two shifts with an afternoon siesta around noon. The second shift of work would follow from four to six. Having wwoofed before in New Zealand, I had a general idea of what to expect, but a new country brings a new landscape, which prominently impacts the type of labor. The first morning Roberto, speaking little to no English guided the four of us through the land and to the bottom of an extremely steep mountain. Sabine had mentioned that we were going

to weed the pineapple field, but hearing this I hadn't envisioned the field to reside on the top of a mountain. Roberto started to climb up this dirt mountain, scaling it with ease. For the rest of us, however, the 70-degree gradient required climbing on all fours, grasping at any of the few nearby trees for assistance to avoid slipping and falling down the mountain. With dirt constantly sliding under our shoes, preventing us from finding traction, the task to simply get up the mountain without tumbling down to the bottom took every bit of concentration. Once we finally got to the top where the pineapples were, straw-like grass about three feet tall consumed the field and thus we began the process of hacking down this grass by the roots without destroying any small pineapples and of course not touching the stinging nettles protruding from the leaves of the fruit. This job consumed at least three full days of work. When we finally finished, we looked forward to the next job that didn't require balancing on the steep gradient of a mountain. Little did we know that this was the easiest job we would do throughout our stay at Sachahuares.

The next day we were all handed machetes and brought into a valley where cacao and coffee plants were being overpowered by various trees, weeds, and plants. This is when we all realized that we were truly in the jungles of Peru. Sabine told us to take down everything, including several large trees, except for the cacao and coffee plants, showing us exactly which were which, while also causally mentioning the poisonous plants that we needed to avoid touching. Similar to the pineapple mountain, we started clearing foliage but had to cover the entire area up to the banana trees that were at the top of the hill, surrounding the border of this valley type chasm. This clearing took about two full days to finish though there were a few casualties in coffee plants. Other various

activities included chopping up dried tree branches, collecting firewood, hand grinding spices, watering, fermenting cacao, and clearing other areas of land. In all, work at Sachahuares consisted of a strenuous balance between strength and endurance. Because the farm was located in the middle of the Peruvian mountains, the landscape determined the layout of the farm. Sabine and Roberto adjusted their lifestyle and farming methods to adapt to this uneven ground. For the wwoofers, including myself, this was a bit more of a challenge in adjustment. Climbing up a steep hill with a full five-gallon bucket of water in each hand only to slip, fall, and spill all of the water after making it to the top was quite discouraging. Our frustration was only exacerbated after watching Roberto and Kyram walk on a 70-degree gradient as if it were completely flat. Each task had to be balanced between a cautious, but efficient work ethic.

Family History: Sabine grew up in Belgium and spent a considerable amount of time travelling the world. Roberto was travelling around South America as a famous actor, performing in a variety of plays when the two met at one of his plays in Peru and fell in love. The land that Roberto and Sabine transformed into their farm originally belonged to Roberto's grandfather, and in 2004 the two began the transformation and development of the land. The landscape is divided into multiple small hut-like buildings and areas as if each room of a house became its own individual building separated from the others. Roberto and his friends built every building by hand expect for the main room for meal preparation, which is essentially a small two-room building made from dried clay and bricks. One room contained the table and a few spare tables with hand grinders, while the other contained the fire pit, two coolers of pre-boiled water, a shelf of pots and pans, and

a large cage filled with about twenty *cui* (guinea pigs), half of which were currently pregnant. Various animals (including three dogs and three cats) spent most of their time in this building, which had dirt floors. Outside of the opening to this door included a washbasin and a small hole in the ground supplying running water. The dogs, turkey, ducks, and chickens frequently occupied this area. After each meal the four of us would work together to hand wash the dishes in this basin, while simultaneously preoccupying the children, who habitually wanted to play. Hide and go seek was Kyram's favorite game, along with various card games. After cleaning up, the wwoofers spent a significant amount of time playing with the children, while Sabine and Roberto retreated to their bungalow for relaxation.

Sabine travelled a few times each week to a nearby town, about a half-an-hour drive away. There she privately taught English classes at a public library for additional income. Roberto was in charge of the farm and he worked very hard to try to stay one step ahead of the relentless Peruvian environment. I asked Sabine how she initially got involved in wwoofing, as they have been hosting wwoofers for about two years. She stated that some friends came to visit them about two years ago and mentioned the organization. Ever since then she couldn't be more thankful because Sabine said blatantly that they wouldn't be able to harvest everything without the help of wwoofers. They depend on the presence of wwoofers and their labor for the productivity of the farm. Almost every crop is harvested in the wet season or close to the end of it, which creates considerable work. Though they grow an abundance of vegetables, herbs, and fruit for personal consumption, the family cultivates three main crops for their income: mangos,

pineapple, and coffee. Sabine explained that they usually sell everything in bulk to a few individuals, who then sell the crops at markets. During harvest, Sabine said about 1,500 mangos are picked and carried in a tarp on one's back. Almost everything is then sold in the abundance of a truckload. Harvesting coffee is easier work because they have a coffee mill used to extract the beans, but as Sabine said, they loose a lot of income in the wet season because a significant amount of their crop falls to the ground in the torrential downpour and is thus destroyed.

When I originally asked Sabine about her choice to farm organically, I initially perceived her sense of shock and surprise. If I could possibly translate a facial expression into words, it would be, 'isn't it obvious?' She started to talk about pesticides and irrigation systems that a neighbor had recently started using. She described the damage that Peruvian insects have on plants. Without using pesticides and irrigation systems, the insects get confused with the variation in seasons making it extremely beneficial for the farmers. Conversely, by evading the use of pesticides, there isn't a constant harvest for the crops. Harvesting based on the variation in season creates a cycle that decrease the damage and general presence of destructive insects. While the use of pesticides and irrigation systems might produce a larger crop and potentially more product to sell, according to Sabine the insects eventually figure this out and consequently a vicious cycle of pesticide use ensues. This family lives on and off the land. Everything is deliberately consumed and treated as a piece of the earth, holding vast significance in addition to economic value. If anything, they live only by the mere essentials, by focusing their efforts strictly on the basics. They have what they need to live comfortably

but not much more than that. Their few possessions include books, a radio, games, food, and the animals. There were very few lights and electronic devices on the property. In the kitchen area outside on the courtyard area, in addition to the open roved relaxation area there were hanging light bulbs, but aside from these main areas to spend time, there was no other electricity. They had a few solar panels, but some were not yet in use.

Diet: Our diet while staying at Sachahuares was quite regular with little variation. Each morning we would eat porridge and drink fresh coffee for breakfast. Lunches and dinners included pasta, rice, or the Peruvian potato, yucca. Sabine and Roberto were cooking for themselves and their three children, in addition to the presence of constant wwoofers. With such a large party to feed, meals mainly consisted of filling starches such as potatoes or rice. Contrasting to every other wwoofing host I stayed with, this family was not vegetarian. Sabine explained that although they are not vegetarians they do not frequently eat meat. This choice was not an ideological one, but instead was due to economic factors. During my stay, the only meal consisting of meat was on my day of arrival and that was strictly because it was a national holiday, meant for celebration. All of the meat they choose to consume comes from the animals on the farm, which limits their ability to eat meat. During my time spent on the farm, Sabine and Roberto were heavily breeding the *cui* to eat, as almost half of them were pregnant at the time. While cooking in the kitchen with Sabine one afternoon, she began to describe her beliefs about nutrition and eating to me. She described some of her friends that strictly altered their consumption to an all-raw diet, suspicious of the nutritional impact of cooking food. They would not consume anything that was cooked and although she did not find this

problematic, in her perception this lifestyle was not a viable option for her family. Without hesitation she said that there would be no possible way to manage that with children, who require a significant amount of nutrients for normal growth.

We usually spent our nights playing with the children before we retreated to the bungalow for rest and sleep. We spent the final night before our departure as a unified family, and all took pictures together. Sabine handed us their guestbook to write in and sign. I flipped through each page of this aged, dilapidated book, attempting to find available space. People from all over the world were connected through their experiences at Sachahuares and Sabine was able to recall each individual experience. Words of all different languages filled the pages of this book, in addition to drawings and, most importantly, passages filled with gratitude. This book preserved individuals, their personalities, and experiences, but also symbolized the presence and impact of Sabine and Roberto's farm and family. After signing the book, we spent some time together in the roved porch, portraying our vast gratitude for the experiences that we were able to have and share. As we all started our trek up to the bungalow, it wasn't long before Kyram started yelling and running frantically to catch up with us. He had picked three pink flowers for each of us, and he embraced us each individually with an affectionate hug. I could feel the impact I had on him and I was most certainly going to miss the cheeky personality of that nine-year old. With his two younger brothers at a vast difference in development, Kyram sincerely cherished being able to connect with all of the wwoofers and truly enjoyed our company.

Analysis:

The organization of wwoofing provides vast opportunities to experience organic lifestyles across the globe. Describing it as a form of tourism, Ord (n.d.:7) states:

> Motivations identified are a combination of personal and interpersonal. For themselves, volunteer tourists seek authentic experience, express an interest in travel, and a desire for personal growth. Interpersonally, they show a desire to help, to interact with locals and cultures, and to meet new people.

Ord (n.d.:3) continues, stating, "The WWOOF organization plays a minimal role as a link of contact information between the volunteers and the hosts." It is the responsibility of the volunteer to choose a host and individually contact the family and make arrangements. As a member of the wwoofing organization, there is a set of prerequisites or obligations necessary for becoming a host. These include practicing methods of organic farming and providing a welcoming and safe environment for volunteers, with the aim of providing organic food, practices, and knowledge. My informants who practiced organic agriculture were motivated by their concerns for the environment and soil quality, and for their disapproval of conventional agriculture. Ord (n.d.:9) states, "Organic farming is both an objective method of farming and a subjective ideological orientation." Kotulek (2011:131) states, "WWOOF uniquely creates connection between travelling, education, non-monetary exchange and promoting sustainable lifestyles." Each nation has its own distinct national organization pertaining to that country individually. Though each subset of the network shares a common set of values and beliefs, there are always some regional differences. As Kotulek (2011:137) states, "WWOOF is unique in both its diversity in each country and the similar mission all over the world." Although the organization shares a global purpose and objective,

there is always some uncertainty in terms of what volunteers can expect in local settings. The process and expectations are shared under the umbrella of the organization but culture creates vast similarities and differences. As both a business and way of life, each family and farm is distinct in their culture, beliefs and practices. Despite the perceived differences between hosts, however, one can observe shared goals, aspirations, and meanings globally.

Differences: Mosedale reports that In New Zealand, Wwoof was founded in 1974 with 6 organic farms, but has expanded considerably since then. In 2001, for example, there were 613 hosts, in 2003 there were 802, and in 2009, there were 1,124 (Mosedale, 2009:25-6). Information about this flourishing organization is passed by word of mouth between backpackers, resulting in numerous resources now available on the Internet. In New Zealand, because of the massive amount of hosts, there is, as Mosedale (2009:26) puts it, "no qualifying criteria for hosts other than being organic and even that is a matter of interpretation, as a host with an organic veggie garden would qualify as being able to provide education in organic growing techniques." The volume of hosts in New Zealand was particularly astonishing. Because of the prominence and large desire to participate, I called about twenty different hosts who were fully booked with wwoofers, before I came into contact with the Guthries at the Cove. The same situation occurred when I wwoofed on the north island of New Zealand, as the family I initially contacted actually referred me to their neighbor, Warren.

I found quite a significant difference comparing "wwoof NZ" to "wwoof Peru." As a more recent addition to the global organization compared to New Zealand, Peru

currently has a total of only twenty-nine hosts. Sabine did mention that across Peru, farmers frequently discard the effortful methods of organic farming, choosing to use pesticides. With such a small amount of hosts dispersed across this vast country, there were limited options for location and even those were difficult to find and even more difficult to travel to.

One of the most prominent differences between my stay at the Cove and my time at Sachahuares was the prominent function of each farm. In Peru, the farm for Sabine and Roberto was economic in orientation. As they were dependent on the monetary profit from their crops, this family couldn't decide not to harvest a crop one season or else they would face economic difficulties. Organic farming is their principal source of income. In contrast, the Guthries grew organically out of leisure pursuit, and personal consumption. The farm functioned as spiritual escape and was a source of happiness. The Guthries expressed their connection to Nature and their land through collective rituals and practices, such as biodynamic stirs, composting, weeding, and planting. Roberto and Sabine were burdened by an accentuated amount of variables that hindered their ability to emotionally indulge in the land. This difference can be explained in part due to environmental factors, such as the landscape of the farms. In New Zealand, though the Cove was located on a hill, there was wide-open land with rich soil and uniform rainfall. The land was a vibrant green color and the soil was dark and rich. In contrast, in Peru, the soil was dry with an orange hue. The plants need to be occasionally watered in the dry season, but in the wet season there is a solid portion of the day where it downpours for hours with torrential rain. This distinct climate creates significant differences in practices,

routines, and labor. In addition to environmental practices, the landscape on which the farm resides is just as influential. Sachahuares is located in the mountains of Peru bordering the Amazon. There is barely any flat land, as hills and mountains completely cover the land. Sabine and Roberto adjusted accordingly and planted their crops despite these challenges. The pineapple fields were highest on the land on top of the nearby mountain able to soak up the energy from the sun. The coffee and cacao were situated together in the gully with various plants dispersed across the land. These environmental variables vastly affected the difficulty of work. Watering plants required extreme focus, balance, and patience compared to grabbing a hose and calmly swaying one's arm from side to side. The climate of Peru also profoundly affected the available times that one could work on the land. Little progress can be made in the torrential downpours of the wet season, while it was necessary to take a break from work in the middle of the day in the dry season due to the magnitude of heat. In New Zealand, aside from a rainstorm or cold weather, the climate had little to no affect on work. In addition to differences in weather and climate, location and environment had an impact on the exertion of work. The environment of New Zealand can best be described as extremely relaxing, picturesque, and harmless. The most dangerous creatures at the Cove were the honeybees that resided in the back top corner of the property. During the day in Peru, there is a constant presence of little miniscule biting sand flies, mosquitoes, wasps, bees, among countless other insects that can do damage to both plants and farmers. With the constant presence of insects, various species of ants, spiders, and scorpions, these pests became yet another variable impacting the lifestyle. Their relentless company required attention

and close surveillance, hindering the ease and efficiency of labor. Upon arrival, Sabine showed me her arms and neck, which were covered with small red dots. She explained she doesn't get bit nearly as much as she used to when they first came to this area. By the end of our stay all of us were completely covered in these small red dots, despite our daily dose of DEET insect repellent. The mosquito net draping our bed became our source of comfort and safety from the constant influx of insects, birds, and bats that swarmed the bungalow. We needed to boil all of our water before drinking it, which creates a necessary step that other countries don't require. These are merely some of the environmental variables that caused significant differences in lifestyle and work in Peru and New Zealand.

The lifestyle of each family was quite distinct in their routines, customs, and level of comfort. As I stated earlier Sabine and Roberto's lifestyle can best be described as going back to the basics, requiring mere fundamentals and nothing more. Laundry and dishes were hand washed and air-dried. The animals used for meals were slaughtered by hand and personally prepared. The source of heat to cook meals came from a homemade clay fire stove and the absence of a chimney was frequently noticed, as smoke would consume the structure, billowing out the opening of the door. The floors of the kitchen were dirt. The shower was a handmade enclosure behind the washtub that included a blue tarp and metal sheets where cockroaches would regularly reside due to the wet, dark area.

The Guthries' house was starkly different. Having recently been remodeled at some point within the last few years, the architecture was quite modern. The décor included dark wood, white walls, and white carpet. Bay windows surrounded the entire

backside of the house allowing an influx of natural light and the opportunity to look out over the peninsula from any room. The kitchen was filled with modern technology including a fridge, oven, dishwasher, stovetop, and sink, modeling the depiction of the style of the average western house. Roberto and Sabine built everything on their land by hand. This includes their bungalow, the bungalows for the three boys, the two bungalows for prospective wwoofers, the shower, the bathroom (outhouse type structure), and storage area. In similarity, James built a yurt by hand from canvass and tree branches when he was growing up in high school. This was located on the other side of their property, but out of convenience the Guthries purchased an additional yurt prescribed for the residence of wwoofers. The Guthries paid an individual to update and expand the house while buying the yurt for wwoofers, in comparison with personally hand wrought structures.

The sense of connection between wwoofers and hosts was also varied from my experiences in Peru and New Zealand. The Guthries included the wwoofers in every activity and practice. Following meals, we gathered as a family, interacting and connecting through experiences, stories and knowledge. After eating meals in Peru, the wwoofers spent time interacting with the children. We would relax and play with the children while Sabine and Roberto would spend time in the kitchen or bungalow independently. The wwoofers spent very little communication with the hosts after dinnertime at Sachahuares. I suggest that this might be attributed to both personality of the hosts and to cultural characteristics. Sabine and Roberto invested their physical labor into their farm every day while raising three young boys in the midst of the Peruvian

amazon. Considering this, they took advantage in the evenings to rest while their children were preoccupied. Ord (n.d.:10) described one of the distinct characteristics of wwoofing as, "host farms perceive the volunteers' labor to be valuable, but the labor may be secondary to other perceived benefits such as intercultural exchanges and learning experiences." Ord's observation was especially true in New Zealand, but not in Peru where our labor was of utmost value.

Similarities: Despite the several differences that can be observed from one culture to the next, I suggest that some generalizations can be made cross-culturally in terms of individual beliefs, values, and practices. Cultures present some differences but also, observable parallels. The similarities that I perceived from these two field sites underscore features of a global organic culture. One of the most obvious parallels drawn between the families in Peru and New Zealand is their membership in the wwoofing organization of each respective country. This label symbolizes a host of beliefs and values surrounding the practice of organically sound methods. Common values present within this culture include maintaining the earth's resources through sustainable practices and methods to preserve, sustain and develop the soil for future generations. These values and beliefs are displayed through the organic practices that the families embrace and through which members connect to one another. One example of an organic practice I observed in both New Zealand and Peru was the practice of composting. There is never any waste present on the organic farms I lived on. Anything and everything composed of organic material is composted to create new peat, which is cycled into the earth after full decomposition. After a meal in Peru, whatever food was left over was saved for the

following day's lunch, given to the dogs, or collectively placed into a plastic trashcan outside of the house for future compost. In New Zealand, the second series of compost piles we created had an additional layered ingredient of composted waste from the house. Organic farmers share the value of repurposing what many would consider "trash." This enables the nutrients to be rotated back into the soil.

There is also a shared pride in organic practices that I observed between each informant's households. The families take tremendous pride in their work on the farm, which I have argued, becomes an organism itself that is brought to life through the nurturance that it receives. Each field, plant, tree and vegetable becomes a form of life endowed with the identity that is passed from farmer to organic matter. James's farm was his own creation that he developed with time, effort, and vast energy. I have argued that farms aren't simply created from thin air, but instead are developed and nurtured in ways that parallel the efforts of raising a child. Each farmer creates a system of work on the farm through considerable effort in addition to the inevitable trial and error. When showing me the bees in the top corner area of the land, James explained to me that out of the two hives, only one was occupied by bees and he simply couldn't figure out what was wrong with the isolated hive. He stated that bees can sometimes decide as a colony to migrate elsewhere and for him this was a devastating truth that required diligent research and vast efforts to prevent. In Peru, Kyram treated each vegetable as a prized possession holding vast meaning. While we were sitting down at the table one afternoon before lunch, Kyram was throwing a single yucca back and forth with Merko and just as we suspected, it hit the wall by accident. After receiving a brief scolding in Flemish,

Kyram's facial expression was one of embarrassment and remorse. His mother reminded him of the significance the purple hairy sphere held and, most importantly, that yucca was not a toy for personal amusement. I observed similar encounters underscoring the value of food throughout my time in Peru.

I also observed the importance of the family as a social unit in both field sites. As a unified body, the family is connected through their shared beliefs and values in congruence with the features of the global organic culture. The family is constantly involved together with practices surrounding the farm. Watering and planting are the most obvious and common examples. On watering day in Peru, Roberto, all four wwoofers, and both Kyram and Illian were all involved. Despite the fact that Illian barely knew what was going on, he had his own child-sized bucket that he filled from the stream with which he watered the plants. Although as a two-year-old, he was probably not fully aware of the significance of his actions, his effort held meaning for his father. Each family member was connected to the farm and aware of the relentless effort and attention that it entailed. On a separate occasion one afternoon, Kyram actually grabbed a machete and willingly came out to the gorge to join us in clearing land. He personally warned us about the stinging plants that we needed to avoid, demonstrating his vast knowledge surrounding the diverse environment. My concern over his safety was surprisingly halted after observing Sabine's indifference to the presence of a machete in Kyram's hand. This was not an act of indulgence, but a reflection of everyday expectations of life on the farm.

There is also a shared appreciation of resources within the organic culture. Water, soil, land, nutrients, and all forms of nature hold vast meaning for participants.

Individuals are indebted to the gratitude that such resources provide. There is absolutely no sense of entitlement for anything, whether organic or inorganic. Water itself is a vital resource, not because of the difficulty in restrictions on acquiring but rather due to the function and purpose that it serves. Each vegetable picked from the farm is valued for the countless functions it serves. Below, I recount this in an excerpt from my field notes recounting the opinions of a fellow wwoofer, who was weeding the pineapple mountain at Sachahuares:

> *When you grow your own food, there's an earned aspect to it. It's not just simply picking something out from a supermarket. The whole process creates an earned aspect, that in the end makes everything taste better. The ritual of the growth cycle connects the plant to its grower and once we build this connection, the food intended for consumption then becomes more important. Value is placed upon the foods intended for digestion and nutrition. Picking a fruit off a tree or a vegetable from the ground is a constant reminder of how and where food comes from. You begin to learn and recognize that one doesn't need much to survive. We need food to live and survive. Aside from the basic essentials you realize how little you truly need and how easy life is with this realization. It's once you strip yourself of unnecessary material items that this realization can become aware.*

Each unit of the farm has a purpose, including the ability to sustain life, portray meaning and values, and connect individuals. The flowers on the Guthries' land provided a purpose and tremendous meaning. Each seed was initially collected by hand and combined with about twenty to thirty other seeds to create a mix. This was then spread across a section of the landscape to ultimately create the food garden. These flowers all served the purpose to provide food and sustenance for the bees at the top of the land. Beyond its economic benefits, the farm also was instilled with an aesthetic value. As we walked the dirt path to the cacao fields, Kyram pointed to a tree and gestured to me to pick the orange tinted fruit covered in brown dots. As I plucked it from the tree and

handed it to Kyram, he explained that this was the perfect color for picking. We walked back down the path and after he cracked the hard shell with a machete, he pointed to the inside briefly before throwing a piece into his mouth. As I grabbed a piece he insisted that I save the seed and spit it back into the open shell. This was the fruit surrounding the cacao seed that was saved to ferment for at least three days and then dried into the sun for another couple of days before the roasting process. I found myself being educated by Kyram through the crops that this humid climate was able to offer. This brings me to possibly the most prominent quality found between each informant's household: the value of knowledge; the shared desire to learn, inform, and benefit from the experiences and lifestyles of others. This desire to gain cultural knowledge first hand drives the motivation of wwoofers and hosts globally. Meeting new people, sharing knowledge, and connecting through sustainable practices are several objectives of the wwoofing experience. Both individuals and hosts are transformed by the shared wwoofing experience. It becomes, in a sense, a collaboration of cultures. Values and beliefs, lifestyles, and understandings are exchanged and through this friendships are created, and the lives of both hosts and wwoofers are mutually affected. Sabine described the vast diversity of wwoofers she and Roberto have had since they joined the organization. Individuals from all over the globe have travelled, lived, worked, and experienced their lifestyle. As an identified landscape, Sachahuares has hosted individuals from Turkey, Japan, America, Canada, England along with countless other backpackers. Sabine explained that there is rarely a time when there aren't wwoofers staying with them. The day before I left Sachahuares, Sabine said she had two male backpackers from New

Zealand coming to stay for about two weeks. The constant influx and rotation of wwoofers coming through the farm establishes an appreciation for cultural connection and exchange. Before my departure at the Cove, Ama was so excited for the future of the farm, considering I was one of her first wwoofers. She said that in about two weeks, they were expecting two German girls to come and stay with them. The guest log, present at every single wwoof host in which I stayed, was a symbol of cultural exchange founded upon the experiences of the organic lifestyle. This log of experiences is a symbolic representation of the expansion of organic ideals transferred from hosts to wwoofers. This was the permanent record of our shared experience that would remain on the landscape. It came to symbolize shared values and beliefs, different cultures coming together to learn from one another and ultimately to create memories. In addition, the photos taken at each farm were representations and acts of preservation for the shared experiences. With observable characteristics surrounding organic farming that diverge from strictly agricultural methods, organic lifestyles can be understood as a holistic way of life. Ord (n.d.:17) describes this culture stating, “the meaning of organic is understood as both an espousal of principled farming methods as well as a way of life.” The lifestyle of the organic culture is variable from farm to country, but despite the present differences, a shared set of values and beliefs concerned with the sustainability of ecologically sound farming techniques emerges globally.

Broader Significance: The Culture of Organic Farming?

While these two case studies conducted in Peru and New Zealand feature distinct families living in different countries with their own respective landscape and culture, they share important features. Each host consciously participates in the global wwoofing culture and is connected to the other based on the shared beliefs and values that this organization promotes. I suggest that the significance each family contributes to organic cultivation, methods, and techniques unite them as a culture.

Though each family may uphold specific organic values, significance and methods, I suggest that the philosophy of the term "organic," is globally observable. According to Ord (n.d.:8), "Organic farming is best understood within the broader context of the sustainable agriculture movement, which emerged as a reaction to the "conventional" industrialized method of food production and distribution that characterized the 20th century and the challenges it presents to health and the environment." He continues (n.d.:9):

> Organic farmers see their work as both a business and a way of life, reporting that the quality of life and work that it offers is very important to them. They like the independence, the skill requirements, the diversity of tasks, and the physical work, and disliked 'sitting in a machine all day'. The WWOOF program is a good complement to organic farming because it offers a satisfying kind of work experience and addresses the additional labor burden on the farming family.

The concept or construct o the term "organic" is indicative of global values and ideologies. Ord (n.d.:13) states, "Many of the farms consider organic as a reflection of environmentalist values, ideology, and lifestyle choices."

In this chapter, I have suggested that considering its presence in locations all over the world, the wwoof organization is an expression of an emerging, global organic culture. Indeed, the ideology of wwoof is inter-cultural in nature. Individuals, families, backpackers of all ages and origin have the opportunity to unite and share an intercultural experience with the desire to sustain the environment and connect with others over shared organic values and beliefs. Preparing, planting, growing, sustaining, and repurposing are all processes that are completed organically. Members of the global organic culture value the environment as an organic entity, ultimately responsible for our existence. Food is valued for the nutritious qualities it holds as well as the process through which organic farmers experience it. In contrast to quantity, organic farmers value quality and the practices, techniques, and methods present on each farm portray this significant characteristic, separating themselves from the mainstream industrial farmers concerned solely with vast quantity with minimal effort.

Organic farming as an alternative set of practices does not simply represent a choice of farming technique. Rather, this unconventional approach reveals a cohesive ideology that transcends particular cultures. The organization of wwoofing allows individuals to expand their knowledge, assist farming families in needed labor, and gain an intercultural experience. The practices, beliefs, and values of each family carries vast significance for everyone involved. Though on opposite sides of the planet, my informants in New Zealand and Peru held meaningful similarities in the organic culture that defined their choice of lifestyle. Across oceans, nations, and cultures, individuals are able to connect through this shared organic lifestyle. Wwoofing highlights this presence,

creating a global culture and ultimately becomes the link that creates opportunities that can be experienced cross-culturally.

CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A GLOBAL ORGANIC CULTURE

As the world population continues to increase exponentially, the global production of food has been significantly impacted. With rising concern over food security, contemporary foodways have attempted to meet the world's increased demand for food through mass production. Farmers have replaced quality with quantity and in the process have influenced the worldwide concern over the depletion of environmental resources. The mass production of food has given rise to the organic food movement, whose members are concerned with the authenticity of food, and to the degradation of the environment. The process of attaining food has transformed from subsistence farming into a single trip to a grocery store to buy a vast supply of readily prepared food and ingredients. Individual consumers have been alienated from the process of growing food, which has been replaced by the purchasing of food. Because of this disconnect between consumers and food, there is a lack of value and knowledge regarding the processes involved. This detachment from the land has propagated various movements globally in attempts to reconnect and create an awareness of consumption. The local food movement has grown globally with a focus on authentic food and the cultivation of a lost cultural identity.

In addition to the vast presence of inauthentic food, mass production has played a prominent role in the exploitation of the Earth's resources. The majority of attention is given to the farming techniques and methods of contemporary foodways that generate mass production with minimal costs. The land is striped of its resources and continuously

farmed until the nutrients are depleted. Contemporary farming techniques negate a concern for the future, producing only for the present. With the sole intent to mass-produce food without replenishing the exhausted land, the future of cultivation is severely impacted. Some argue that unsustainable practices in farming are the only approach to feed the entire world with such rapid population growth. This argument endorses the methods used by industrial agriculture, emphasizing the convenience of buying limitless food in one place at one time. This overpowering desire for easy access undermines global efforts to engage in ecologically sound practices.

I have suggested here that the global organic culture has proliferated through the vast global prominence of unsustainable farming practices commonly used in Western contexts. After conducting ethnographic research on wwoofing practices in Peru and New Zealand, I was able to better understand and experience the organic lifestyle through my informants' way of life. I have argued that despite the various individual differences of each family, one can identify some shared features of an emerging global organic culture. In conclusion, I will review these shared values, beliefs and practices that create the foundation and identity for each informant and their choice in lifestyle.

Shared Features of the Global Organic Culture

The most clear and noticeable shared feature of the organic culture is the purpose and motive behind the participation in organic farming practices: sustainability. All of my informants value sustainability in regards to both farming techniques as well as to living sustainably. Although one family may not hold the power or agency to change the global

mass production of food by their choice of farming techniques, they can adjust their own practices and endow them with meaning. In opposition to the exploitation of the Earth's resources and dissatisfaction with conventional farming techniques, my informants made an informed decision to produce food in a manner that is conducive and beneficial to their surrounding environment. Through these lifestyle and farming choices, my informants individually facilitate the future existence of environmental resources that provide sustenance. They each express a shared value for the environment, which they value for habitat, resources, nourishment, and their occupation. They value the environment through the meaning and impact it has upon each person's life. Because of the value embedded within the surrounding landscape, there is a parallel of appreciation and gratitude that ultimately drives the intention to sustain its presence and resources for future generations. My informants asserted that the environment has the ability to ultimately sustain the existence of human beings on Earth. Proponents of the organic culture share a deep connection to the environment and perceive themselves as inherently connected to it. They each choose to live off the land in harmony with the natural environment, and this decision guides their life choices and relationships. Proponents of the organic culture do not understand the environment as a controllable force of renewable resources, but instead as an entity constantly in need of nurturance and care. In attempts to preserve, develop and sustain the landscape, organic farmers practice methods that demonstrate a primary awareness of the health and well being of the environment. They develop the soil, compost waste, and treat their farm as an organic being, requiring attention and care. Furthermore, they imbue the landscape with symbolic value.

A concern with the authenticity of food is another shared feature within the global organic culture. Despite the biological function of food, its ability to provide the necessary sustenance required for existence, food holds vast symbolic meaning. Wilk (1999:244) describes this significance of food, stating that it is a "potent symbol of personal and group identity, forming one of the foundations of both individuality and a sense of common membership in a larger, bounded group." All of my informants value organically grown food, for its superior nutritional quality in comparison to mass produced food. Although individual consumption practices vary cross culturally, all of my informants find the preparation of food particularly meaningful. Rituals surround the process of attaining, preparing, and consuming food, each of which holds significance. Organic food grown on the farm is an embodiment of the effort and processes of cultivation. Harvesting food that was personally cultivated for consumption with constant affection and attention connects individuals to food. Organic farmers profoundly value the authenticity of their food and hold great awareness surrounding nutritional consumption. The mindfulness surrounding eating reflects a close consideration for nutrition and for identity. Aside from the influence of nutritional content, there is a rewarding aspect to the consumption of homegrown food. Individuals experience considerable pride and gratification with each piece of food they harvest from the farm. Members of the global organic culture value food as a pure source of nutrition and sustenance personally cultivated from the land. Members derive satisfaction from this knowledge. Each component of the farm has a purpose and carries meaning far beyond its value as a food source. Wilk (1999:244) describes the symbolic meanings food can

carry stating, “Food and cooking can be an avenue toward understanding complex issues of cultural change and transnational cultural flow.” For organic farmers, very single cacao or chamomile plant expresses the social values that are central in this culture.

The shared lifestyle of organic farming is much more than simply an alternative form of farming that is opposed to conventional methods. I have suggested here that the farm is perceived as an organic- even part of the family, that influences the health of the landscape. Although my informants grow crops for consumption, with close attention, care, and nurturance they endow the crops with authenticity, value, and beliefs. Though these are essential components of the global organic culture, there are a multitude of other shared characteristics. The third feature of the organic culture is the significance of family. The family is imagined as a connected unit sharing a set of beliefs and obligations surrounding the farm. As the farm is treated as a member of the family, each individual regardless of age is aware of its function, necessary upkeep, and symbolic meaning. As I mentioned earlier, there is a deep connection to the landscape that is consistently observable from each member of the family. A shared pride expressed by each family member characterizes the farm, each method, and each piece of consumable product signifying the unified family and each moment of exerted effort made to cultivate the land. Each family member plays a significant role in the development and upkeep of the farm and each of its individualized components. In this sense, the organic farm can serve as a unifying entity through which families and individuals can connect.

Another shared feature within the organic culture is the value and significance of knowledge through cultural exchange. There is a constant value and desire to discover, share, and expand one's knowledge surrounding their individualized conception of personal wisdom. Wwoofing helps facilitate this knowledge, as it is one of the most prominent influential features of the organization. Choosing to participate as a wwoofer first and foremost involves a desire to learn about different organic lifestyles and methods of farming. In parallel, wwoofing hosts desire to share their lifestyle with others. In this respect they are not simply creating and embodying the culture of organic lifestyles, but also attempting to expand this emerging global culture. This culture is curiously cosmopolitan in nature, as both wwoofers and various hosts value traveling and experiencing cultural diversity. The organization of wwoofing connects individuals and families who share a set of values and beliefs exemplified by the global organic culture. The experience of wwoofing becomes a cultural exchange for both wwoofers and hosts as they unite to gain cross-cultural knowledge. Although participants are usually highly educated, the ideology behind wwoofing has the potential to transcend class, as any individual has the opportunity to participate free of cost, omitting potential travel expenditures. There is a necessary cultural capital to simply know of this social movement as I found that all of my informants were highly educated and able to financially choose this lifestyle. I suggest that knowledge and cultural experience replace monetary income in the global organic culture.

These are some of the most prevalent examples of shared features that collectively encompass the global organic culture. Inclusive of practices, beliefs, and values, this

lifestyle is distinctive to each individual and family, but creates parallels nationally and globally. Although Sabine and Roberto could choose to use pesticides on their crops to gain a higher yield, they reject this notion as it conflicts with their most cherished values and beliefs. The mere thought of spraying chemicals on vegetative growth intended for consumption disturbed my informants in both New Zealand and Peru. In their view, food for consumption should come directly from the earth: "By combining both health and nutrition," as my informant Ama stated, "we give our bodies the best possible option." My informants gained satisfaction in satisfying the body with nutritional food, or as Ama described it, "mindful eating." By personally growing their food, members of the global organic culture choose to bring food back to its historical roots. The processes of picking, growing, and nurturing one's own vegetables and plants connect a person to his/her food and to those with whom one shares meals. A shared appreciation for health and taste unite my informants in their consumption of food. Enrique stated one day regarding the concept of yin and yang, "everything needs to be balanced." He described this balance through the representation of waves and their frequency. Describing the imbalance of today's world he explained: "Now, in the present, the waves are closer together with a higher frequency." This imbalance, according to Enrique described, characterizes modern society, which separates the individual from the Earth. Food was one example Enrique used to exemplify this present disconnect, through which he expressed his values and beliefs.

One afternoon, while we were walking through the ruins of an old Incan city, Enrique described to me the current imbalance between humans with nature. He began

explaining his anger and frustration with politics and modern society, both of which are motivated by capital. He further elaborated with the example of drugs and their illegality. "How can a plant, a part of nature, a seed, be illegal?" Enrique asked rhetorically as he laughed to himself, referring to "the sacred plant," ganja. He went on to say that its only illegal because of misuse, comforting himself at the utter incomprehensibility of the choice to make this medicinal, super plant illegal. Enrique would frequently elaborate on his personal conflicts with the values and beliefs of modernity, which ultimately motivated his choice to move from the city. This characteristic dissatisfaction with modern society was observable in all of my informants, portraying another globally shared feature within this culture. There is a strong desire to reconnect to the natural environment and to live off of the land in harmony with nature.

Reflections

In this thesis, I have argued that there is an emerging global organic culture, whose members collectively embody organic practices, beliefs, and values. This lifestyle embraces an alternative approach to the relationship between the environment and the individual. Through wwoofing, the shared values and beliefs surrounding the organic farming techniques connect families, travelers, and cultures from around the world. The wwoofing organization connects these cultures through a variety of shared characteristics. In this sense, the wwoofing organization literally helps to create this global culture by developing a registered archive of hosts worldwide. This is not the only representation of the global organic culture as there are countless individuals globally that

are not involved but still choose to live organically. The wwoofing organization started in 1971 in England and now is growing exponentially in the number of hosts and participating countries around the world. This organization has transcended into a vast social movement with an educational component. My ethnographic research, which I conducted in Peru and New Zealand, has allowed me to observe countless similarities within my informants' practices, methods and beliefs. In addition, I have also observed some minor differences that can be applied to economic, cultural, environmental, and individual factors. Despite these differences, however the observable shared features suggest an emerging global organic culture. With an expanding community accessible to any individual desiring a cultural experience focused on organic farming, a diverse global organic culture encapsulating almost all regions of the world is emerging.

Each family that chooses to live an ecologically sound lifestyle derives meaning from their choice to deviate from the dominant culture in each country. They individually choose to reject the practices that most people perform, to follow their personal values and beliefs regardless of the toll that may take on their lives. They made the decision to decline mainstream farming techniques and embrace an alternative culture. Organic farming and the accompanying lifestyle that it entails is one representation of an alternative culture that is present. I have suggested that wwoofing is an organization that celebrates this culture and creates a set of resources that ultimate help to expand the culture through first-hand experience worldwide.

The value of organic lifestyles is expressed through the quest for personal knowledge and the choice to sustain the Earth for future generations. My informants involved with this culture derived meaning by their choices, beliefs, and practices, involving their relation to the environment. They were united by their desire to improve the land, connect with individuals, and ultimately to spread knowledge and awareness of their lifestyle, the shared features of the global organic culture.

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